Collection Development Policy

Reading Public Library
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Table of Contents

Collection Development Policy 1
I. Community to Be Served 1
II. Definitions 2
III. Purpose and Objectives 2
IV. Selection Criteria and Responsibility 2
V. Formats of Materials 3
VI. Gifts, Memorials, and Donations 3
VII. Weeding or Withdrawal of Materials 4
VIII. Procedures for Complaints or Requests for Reconsideration of Materials 4
IX. Intellectual Freedom Statements 4
Library Bill of Rights 5
Freedom to Read Statement 5
Freedom to View Statement 8

I. Community to Be Served

The Reading Public Library (RPL) is located in Reading Pennsylvania, the urban center of the more suburban/rural County of Berks. RPL has a main library, three (3) branches, and a collection of 300,000+ items. The main library is the resource library for the Berks County Public Libraries, a federated system made up of nineteen (19) public libraries, eighteen (18) of which are located outside the City of Reading. The main library also serves as the state-designated District Library Center for all twenty-one (21) public libraries in Berks County. As a District Center, RPL serves a community of 428,849 county residents, including a diverse population of 95,112 in the city. RPL is a Selective Federal Depository Library (designated in 1901), as well as a Depository Collection Library for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, providing public access to government information.

German culture had been prominent throughout Berks County since the 18th century. Late 19th and early 20th century immigration to Berks County introduced other ethnic groups and led to an influx of individuals from Poland and Italy settling in the City of Reading. Since then, the urban community has become more ethnically and racially diverse through the inclusion of a large Hispanic community (approximately 67% of the city's population) and an expansion of the African American community (approximately 11% of the city's population). These ethnicities retain strong identities through secular/non-secular organizations and cultural/community associations.

II. Definitions

Collection Development includes the planning, selection, acquiring, cataloging, and weeding of library materials.

Library materials include, but are not limited to the following: books, periodicals, pamphlets, government publications, reference works, newspapers, microfiche, microfilm, audiobooks, CDs, movies, large print materials, eBooks, eMagazines, museum passes, realia, streaming videos, maps, educational and on-line databases.

A government document depository actively collects publications created by the United States and the Pennsylvania government to make them available to all citizens, both to keep them informed of contemporary federal and state proceedings, as well as to provide a historical archive of the same. Particular strengths in the existing collection include documents covering agriculture, commerce, the military, health, and national security.

III. Purpose and Objectives

One of the goals of RPL is to select, organize, preserve, and make materials freely and easily available to all individuals in the community. These materials are able to aid library patrons in the pursuit of information, education, research, recreation, culture, and in the creative use of leisure time. The primary goal of collection development is to provide the best possible collection with the financial resources available. The decision to select any item for the collection is based on demand, anticipated need, and the effort to maintain a wide and balanced collection.

The library patron is an important part of the selection process. An individual request from a patron for a title may be honored if the request conforms to the guidelines outlined in this policy statement. The library has request forms at the Reference and Circulation desks, and on its website.

The library strives to maintain materials representing multiple sides of an issue in a neutral, unbiased manner when possible. Selection of materials by the library does not mean endorsement of the contents of any particular material. The existence of any viewpoint in the collection is an expression of the library's policy of intellectual freedom, not an endorsement of that particular point of view. The library provides service to all within the framework of its rules and regulations and does not knowingly discriminate in its material selection..

RPL endorses the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read Statement, and the Freedom to View Statement; all of which are included at the end of this policy and are part of this policy statement.

IV. Selection Criteria and Responsibility

The ultimate responsibility for materials selection and the development of the library collection rests with the Library Director, who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Board of Trustees. Selectors, professional library staff under the general supervision of the Director, accomplish the actual selection of materials.

The selection of material is based on RPL's mission and goals, and informational, educational, cultural, recreational value. The library strives to build a collection that reflects the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the community. The following general criteria will be used in selecting materials for addition to the collection:

1) Importance and value to the collection and library users
2) Significance of the subject matter

3) Current appeal, popular demand, and anticipated needs/interests of the public
4) Cost and budgetary constraints
5) Authority, accuracy, and artistic quality
6) Illustrations, photographs, and other visuals
7) Size of text
8) Vocabulary development
9) Sound and visual quality
10) Contribution of a work to the diversity or breadth of the collection
11) Representation of unique or controversial points of view
12) Requests by the public

Selectors evaluate each title on its own merits, considering its relation to the collection as a whole. Selectors prioritize new titles, and replace older titles as needed, based on importance and/or circulation statistics. The collection will include materials for recreational reading, titles that have lasting value (classics), and sources of information covering a wide range of knowledge. Selectors consult professional library reviews as needed in the selection process. Library materials are divided into three (3) core collections based on specific age ranges: Children's Collection - birth through twelve (0-12) year age range, Teen Collection - twelve to seventeen (12-17) year age range, Adult Collection - eighteen plus (18+) year age range. Titles held in one collection may also be included in another collection if they are of an exceptional nature and wide range of appeal.

In an attempt to meet the educational and recreational needs of individuals within the Hispanic community who do not read or speak English as a first language, the library will include Spanish-language materials as part of its collection development in a variety of formats. Spanish Language materials are shelved in designated areas at all branches. Directional signs for the collections and the online cataloging records are in Spanish.

V. Formats of Materials

Materials may be available in a variety of formats. Factors governing the choice of format include availability, anticipated use, storage requirements, ease of access, and the format of earlier editions. When all other factors are equal, ease of access by the public will be the primary consideration.

Some formats, such as audiovisual and eaudiovisual materials are made available in part to help meet the needs of visually and reading impaired patrons within our community. Audiobooks, eaudiobooks, and music are especially popular with patrons who wish to listen to such items while commuting to work. Movies are important both for recreational purposes (entertainment titles) as well as for educational purposes (documentaries, how-to videos, etc.).

- Unabridged versions of audiobooks or eaudiobooks will be procured whenever possible.
- When selecting electronic materials additional considerations will be given for
    - ease of use
    - availability of the material to multiple, concurrent, and/or remote users
    - the technical requirements to provide access to the material
    - the technical support and training provided
- Materials for the blind and physically handicapped are available by arrangement with the Free Library of Philadelphia and Library of Accessible Media for Pennsylvanians (LAMP).

VI. Gifts, Memorials, and Donations

The library accepts monetary gifts, donations, and memorials. The library may accept physical material donations under special circumstances. The library reserves the right to evaluate all gifts, donations, and

memorial requests in accordance with the criteria applied to purchase materials. Those that do not meet the library's objectives and policies may be refused. Bookplates may be provided for memorials and gifts, and a letter for tax purposes may be sent to the donor. No other conditions may be imposed relating to any gift, donation, or memorial either before or after its acceptance by the library.

VII. Weeding or Withdrawal of Materials

The withdrawal of materials from the collection (also called weeding) is an ongoing process directly related to collection development. Materials and ematerials that are worn, damaged, outdated, duplicated, expired, no longer accurate, no longer available, or no longer used may be removed from the collection. Professional library staff, under the general direction and supervision of the Library Director, will be responsible for the weeding of the collection.

The weeding of eMaterials that are made available through District shared resources, such as but not limited to eMaterials in the Libby/Overdrive collection, will be handled as directed by the District Services, Programming, and Resource Development Policy.

Because all Government documents remain property of the United States or Pennsylvania government, weeding of the Government documents is dictated by the official instructions to Depository Libraries. Documents must be retained for at least five (5) years before becoming candidates for withdraw, when they are then evaluated according to their usefulness, relevance, condition, and uniqueness.

VIII. Procedures for Complaints or Requests for Reconsideration of Materials

The Library Board considers all materials selected under this policy to be protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. The Board of Trustees recognizes the right of individuals to question materials in the library collection. If a patron claims that a particular item is not constitutionally protected, the burden of proof rests with the patron.

Patrons who object to the presence or absence of any library material may request a review by completing the Request for Reconsideration form. The patron will be able to obtain a "Request for Reconsideration" form at any RPL location. Patrons must clearly state the reasons for exclusion or removal on this form. Patrons may only submit one Request for Reconsideration per calendar year, and may only request the reconsideration of one item per submission. Additionally, once the Board of Trustees has made a decision regarding a contested item, they will not accept any other Requests for Reconsideration for that item within one year from the date of the decision. The completed ‘Request for Reconsideration’ form will be reviewed by a committee comprised of the Executive Director, two (2) staff members, and two (2) Board of Trustee members. After reviewing the Request for Reconsideration and the item in question, the committee will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees will vote to determine the actions, if any that are to be taken. This decision is final. A written response with reasons for the decision will be given to the patron. Items subject to question will not be removed from the collection or otherwise censored during the Request for Reconsideration process.

Requests for Reconsideration for eMaterials that are made available through District shared resources, such as but not limited to eMaterials in the Libby/Overdrive collection, will be handled as directed by the District Services, Programming, and Resource Development Policy.

IX. Intellectual Freedom Statements

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association (ALA) affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.
VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.
Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Freedom to Read Statement

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary

curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.
The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights. We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. *It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.*

   Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.
2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.*

   Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.
3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. *There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.*

   To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.
5. *It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.*

   The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.
6. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.*

   It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.
7. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.*

   The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.
Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.

Freedom to View Statement

The FREEDOM TO VIEW, along with the freedom to speak, to hear, and to read, is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. In a free society, there is no place for censorship of any medium of expression. Therefore these principles are affirmed:

1. To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

This statement was originally drafted by the Freedom to View Committee of the American Film and Video Association (formerly the Educational Film Library Association) and was adopted by the AFVA Board of Directors in February 1979. This statement was updated and approved by the AFVA Board of Directors in 1989.