

Public Libraries and Intellectual Freedom

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How does KCLS define Intellectual Freedom?

King County Library System affirms the right of everyone to seek out information, ideas and expressive content of any kind within the law. We are committed to facilitating and safeguarding equitable access, privacy, and an extensive range of constitutionally-protected opinions, perspectives and viewpoints.





Why is Intellectual Freedom important?

First Amendment Rights

Intellectual freedom gives people the right to think for themselves. It respects individual dignity and self-rule. - ALA

Individuals hold the right to access information according to their personal needs, not as dictated by organizations or others

Libraries do not ask why information is needed

Libraries as limited public forms:

A forum set aside by the government for an express purpose, in the case of public libraries, as a place to receive information via access to books, programs and online information

Access- libraries offer access to information that may otherwise be restricted, either by cost or other factors

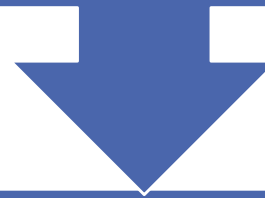
Privacy- libraries require no explanation for access and protect a patron's information history





Intellectual Freedom and Public Libraries

What the library defends is not a book or a movie, but a patron's freedom to read, view, or listen



Factors for public library collections and services:

Scope	Demand	Representation	Socio-economic conditions	Controversial viewpoints	Welcoming Spaces
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Scope and demand

Scope = how broadly and deeply our collection covers a specific topic

Libraries must balance scope with stewardship

Demand = local interest and community needs





Representation and Socio-Economic Considerations

Public libraries seek to represent all people in their collections

Public libraries strive to remove socio-economic barriers to information

Public libraries direct people to other services and resources

Controversial viewpoints and Welcoming Spaces

Libraries collect and provide confidential access to controversial items

Libraries offer spaces where anyone can feel empowered to access information or seek informational guidance

Information needs are personal and individual, access is collective and optional



Placement in the Collection



What was the creator's intention?

What do expert reviews recommend?

What are the developmental needs of the audience?

Does it create a barrier to access?



Inclusive vs Exclusive

Courts, not libraries, decide what is legal information

Offering an item does not block the right to not access. Declining or removing an item does block the right to access

Libraries promote the parent's right to guide their child's access

Book bans and legislation

Nationally and locally organized groups have challenged various public and school library materials

Some states have sought to implement laws that will restrict library collections and punish library and school workers

Some communities even seek to disband their libraries entirely

Banning behavior may be passive and anonymous, for example, hiding or vandalizing books



Freedom to Read: Take Action

Use

- Use your library!

Talk

- Talk to library workers about intellectual freedom

Join

- Join the Friends of your library or participate in your school organizations

Attend

- Attend library and school board meetings when Intellectual Freedom is a topic

Sign

- Sign the Freedom to Read Statement



Freedom to Read: Resources



Library
association
resources:

[American
Library
Association](#)
[Washington
Library
Association](#)



National
campaigns and
petitions:

[Freedom to
Read
Foundation](#)
[United Against
Banned Books](#)
[Everylibrary](#)

CELEBRATE FREEDOM TO READ



Questions?