



City of Rio Communities

Public Library Policies Manual

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Mission and Goal Statements

A. Mission Statement

Mission Statement: City of Rio Communities Public Library connects all Citizens to resources, technologies, and programs, that enrich personal, educational, and cultural growth.

B. The general library goals of the City of Rio Communities Public Library shall be:

1. Provide a safe environment for all patrons
2. Provide diverse and accepting atmospheres for all patrons
3. Attract all age groups, including youth and children
4. Maintain a wide variety of materials, books, and attractions
5. Establish space for meetings, programs, and events
6. Stay up to date on materials and technology
7. Raise sufficient funds to maintain smooth library operations and sufficient library hours
8. Open one evening, one half-day weekend as part of the library hours
9. Establish a friends of the Rio Communities Library (non-profit)
10. Conduct periodic outreach to expected library patrons

Who May Use the Library

A. The library will serve all residents of the community and the public library system area, which includes Valencia County and adjacent communities. Service will not be denied or abridged because of religious, racial, social, economic, or political status; or because of mental, emotional, or physical condition; age; or sexual orientation.

B. The use of the library may be denied for due cause. Such cause may be destruction of library property, disturbance of other patrons, or any other illegal, disruptive, or objectionable conduct on library premises.

Patron Responsibilities and Conduct

It is a patron's responsibility to maintain necessary and proper standards of behavior in order to protect his/her individual rights and privileges of other patrons. If a patron creates a public nuisance, that patron may be restricted from the Library and from the use of the library facilities. Those who are unwilling to leave or do not leave within a

reasonable amount of time, after being instructed to do so by the staff, will be subject to the law.

Young Children:

The Rio Communities Public Library encourages visits by young children, and it is our desire to make this important visit both memorable and enjoyable for the child. Library staff is not expected to assume responsibility for the care of unsupervised children in the library.

Therefore, it is library policy that all children under age ten (10) must be accompanied by a parent or designated responsible person while in the library. Also, if the young child is attending a library program, we require the parent/responsible person to remain in the library throughout the program.

Disruptive Children:

Children of all ages are encouraged to use the library for homework, recreational reading, and program attendance. The library staff realizes that the library will be noisier at busy times and that children by nature can cause more commotion. However, children (whether with parents or not) who are being continually disruptive will be given a warning that he/she must settle down or will be asked to leave the library. If after a second warning the child continues to be disruptive, he/she will be asked to leave the library. If the child needs to contact a parent, they may do so and then wait with a staff person until the parent arrives.

Services of the Library

The library provides materials and resources for information, entertainment, intellectual development, and enrichment of the people of the community. The library should endeavor to:

1. Select, organize, and make available necessary books and materials.
2. Provide guidance and assistance to patrons.
3. Sponsor and implement programs, exhibits, displays, book lists, etc., which would appeal to children and adults.
4. Cooperate with other community agencies and organizations.
5. Secure information beyond its own resources when requested. (Using interlibrary loan and other resource sharing methods provided through the system and state.)
6. Lend to other libraries upon request.
7. Develop and provide services to patrons with special needs.
8. Maintain a balance in its services to various age groups.
9. Cooperate with, but not perform the functions of, school or other institutional

libraries.

10. Provide service during hours to the extent practicable which best meet the needs of the community, including evening and weekend hours.
11. Regularly review library services being offered.
12. Use media and other public relations mechanisms to promote the full range of available library services.

Responsibilities and Authorities of the Library Board (Ordinance 2020-75)

The Library Board shall be the Community representative for the City of Rio Communities Public Library and shall have the responsibility and obligation to:

1. receive gifts, bequests and donations of all kinds;
2. advise the Governing Body in formulating rules and regulations for the administration of the City of Rio Communities Public Library, not in conflict with the ordinances of the City of Rio Communities nor with the laws of the State of New Mexico;
3. post rules and regulations for public use of the library in appropriate places in the library for public inspection and information;
4. assist the Library Director in developing an annual library budget in sufficient time for the library budget to be included in the total budget for the City of Rio Communities;
5. notify the Mayor and Library Director of any vacancies on the Board and recommend persons to fill vacancies;
6. recommend to the City Manager of the City of Rio Communities nominees for appointment and/or employment of a Library Director
7. recommend to the Governing Body of the City of Rio Communities names for consideration in the appointment of Library Board members.
8. advise the library director in all matters pertaining to the management and operation of the library;
9. recommend to the City of Rio Communities Governing Body any action to maintain or administer the City of Rio Communities Public Library.

Volunteers and Friends

The Library Board encourages individuals and groups to volunteer their time and efforts in the service of the Rio Communities Public Library. In appreciation of volunteer services, the Library acknowledges the need to organize volunteer activities and provide for appropriate recognition befitting the benefit to the library and the communities it serves.

Annual recognition will be given based on the number of hours of service. This will include a listing of volunteer names in a newspaper release, a certificate of appreciation, and the addition of a book to the collection in each volunteer's name.

A library friends' group is a formal association of people who unite to plan and execute, in conjunction with library goals and the needs of the library director, programs and events to benefit the library. In particular, a friend's group is often heavily involved in fund-raising for the library and often oversees periodic book sales. Friends' groups always serve at the pleasure of the library board which is the only body with legal authority to set policy for the development of the library.

Personnel Policy

See Ordinance 2018-65 Personnel Policy Manual

Materials Selection/Collection Development Policy

A. Objectives

The purpose of the Rio Communities Public Library is to provide all individuals in the community with carefully selected books and other materials to aid the individual in the pursuit of education, information, research, pleasure, and the creative use of leisure time.

Because of the volume of publishing, as well as the limitations of budget and space, the library must have a selection policy with which to meet community interests and needs.

The materials selection/collection development policy is used by the library staff in the selection of materials and also serves to acquaint the general public with the principles of selection.

The Library Bill of Rights and The Freedom to Read Statement have been endorsed by the Public

Library Board and are integral parts of the policy.

The materials selection/collection development policy, like all other policies, will be reviewed and/or revised as the need arises.

B. Responsibility for Selection

The ultimate responsibility for selection of library materials rests with the library director who operates within the framework of the policies determined by the Rio Communities Public Library Board. This responsibility may be shared with other members of the library staff; however, because the director must be available to answer to the library board and the general public for actual selections made, the director has the authority to reject or select any item contrary to the recommendations of the staff.

C. Criteria for Selection

1. The main points considered in the selection of materials are:
 - a. individual merit of each item
 - b. popular appeal/demand
 - c. suitability of material for the clientele
 - d. existing library holdings
 - e. budget
2. Reviews are a major source of information about new materials. The primary source(s) of reviews is (are) at the discretion of the library director as is authorized by the library board.
3. The lack of a review or an unfavorable review shall not be the sole reason for rejecting a title which is in demand. Consideration is, therefore, given to requests from library patrons and books discussed on public media. Materials are judged on the basis of the work as a whole, not on a part taken out of context.

D. Interlibrary Loan

Because of limited budget and space, the library cannot provide all materials that are requested. Therefore, interlibrary loan is used to obtain from other libraries those materials that are beyond the scope of this library's collection.

In return for utilizing interlibrary loan to satisfy the needs of our patrons, the Rio Communities Public Library agrees to lend its materials to other libraries through the same interlibrary loan network, and to make an effort to have its current holdings listed in a tool that is accessible by other libraries throughout the state.

E. Gifts and Donations

The library accepts gifts of books and other materials with the understanding that they will be added to the collection only if appropriate and needed. If they are not needed because of duplication, condition, or dated information the director can dispose of them as he/she sees fit. The same criteria of selection which are applied to purchased materials are applied to gifts. Memorial gifts of books or money are also accepted with suitable bookplates placed in the book. Specific memorial books can be ordered for the library on request of a patron if the request meets the criteria established by the Board. It is desirable for gifts of or for specific titles to be offered after consultation with the library director. Book selection will be made by the director if no specific book is requested. The Rio Communities Public Library encourages and appreciates gifts and donations.

By law, the library is not allowed to appraise the value of donated materials, though it can provide an acknowledgment of receipt of the items if requested by the donor.

F. Weeding

An up-to-date, attractive, and useful collection is maintained through a continual withdrawal and replacement process. Replacement of worn volumes is dependent upon current demand, usefulness, more recent acquisitions, and availability of newer editions. This ongoing process of weeding is the responsibility of the library director and is authorized by the Library Board. Withdrawn materials will be handled in a similar manner and under the same authority as donated materials.

G. Potential Problems or Challenges

The Rio Communities Public Library recognizes that some materials are controversial and that any given item may offend some patrons. Selection of materials will not be made on the basis of anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the basis of the principles stated in this policy.

Responsibility for the reading of children rests with their parents or legal guardians. Selection of library materials will not be inhibited by the possibility that materials may come into the possession of children.

Library materials will not be marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of their contents, and no library material will be sequestered except to protect it from damage or theft.

H. Challenged Materials

Although materials are carefully selected, there can arise differences of opinion regarding suitable materials. Patrons requesting that material be withdrawn from or restricted within the collection may complete a "Statement of Concern About Library Resources" form which is available in the library. The inquiry will be placed on the agenda of the next regular meeting of the Rio Communities Board.

Circulation Policy

A. Registration

All borrowers must be registered and must have a valid local or system patron card to borrow library materials.

Patrons must fill out an application form to register for a new library card. The following statement will be printed on the registration form for the patron's information and acceptance:

I agree to be responsible for all items borrowed with the library card issued in the above name, including items borrowed with it by others with or without my consent unless I have previously reported the loss of my card. I promise to comply with all library rules and policies both present and future, and to give prompt notice of change of address or loss of library card.

Signature _____

Identification is required. A driver's license or student ID is preferred, however, any other official ID or recent nonpersonal piece of mail may be acceptable.

Applicants under 13 years of age must have a parent or guardian give their consent on the application form before a new card can be issued. This parental signature is not required for children who are renewing cards.

Materials cannot be checked out until a library card is issued.

All library cards expire after five (5) years. In order to renew a library card, patrons must produce identification and must clear all outstanding fines and bills.

B. Lost or forgotten cards

If a patron loses his/her library card, he should notify the library as soon as possible and request a replacement.

All patrons, adult, and juvenile are expected to bring their library cards with them if they intend to check out items. An individual who repeatedly ignores this expectation may be denied the privilege of checking out materials until they present their card at the library.

C. Loan periods

1. 3 weeks for books.
2. Generally, reference books do not circulate. Upon request, some reference materials may be checked out overnight.
3. Interlibrary loans are due the date indicated by the lending library.
4. Books may be renewed once if there is not a waiting list for the title.
5. Current issues of periodicals do not circulate.
6. Non-current periodicals may be checked out for one week and may not be renewed.
7. Two weeks for cassettes, audiobooks, and compact discs.
8. One week for DVD's.
9. Audio Visual materials are nonrenewable.

The director may establish the loan period for special collections, materials which are temporarily in great demand, such as for student projects, or materials added to the collection which are in a new format, e.g., computer software.

The 1st 30 days after receiving a new library card, patrons can borrow up to 3 items including 2 DVD's. There is a limit of 10 items 30 days of having card including 2 DVD's a patron can borrow at one time, with one exception immediate access to all resources for a known school assignment.

D. Reserves

Reserves may be placed by patrons either in person or over the phone. Patrons will be notified by email or telephone when the materials are available. There is no charge to the patron for placing a reserve or for interlibrary loan services.

E. Fines and charges

There are no fines for overdue materials. A first notice is sent after the material is due. If the material is not returned within 7 days, a bill will be sent for the material with the cost of replacement of the material and a service charge for processing, cataloging and postage. Patrons who have been sent an overdue notice shall be denied borrowing privileges until those overdue materials are returned or paid for if lost and/or damaged.

F. Damaged materials

If materials are damaged so as to be judged by the librarian as being unsuitable for the collection, the patron must pay the replacement cost. A notice of these charges will be sent to the borrower; a sample of the notice follows:

Dear _____ At, the time a library patron borrows materials from the public library collection, the patron assumes the responsibility for the care and timely return of the materials. Recently materials checked out on your library card were returned to the library damaged beyond the point of being usable in the Library's collection. The titles and costs of these materials are listed below:

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Your assistance in clearing this matter promptly will be appreciated and will be necessary in order to retain your borrowing privileges.

Thank you in advance for your prompt response to this matter. Sincerely,

G. Confidentiality

New Mexico Library Privacy Act

§ 18-9-1 Short title.

This act [18-9-1 to 18-9-6 NMSA 1978] may be cited as the "Library Privacy Act".

History: Laws 1989, ch. 151, § 1.

§ 18-9-2 Purpose.

The purpose of the Library Privacy Act [18-9-1 to 18-9-6 NMSA 1978] is to preserve the intellectual freedom guaranteed by Sections 4 and 17 of Article 2 of the constitution of New Mexico by providing privacy for users of the public libraries of the state with respect to the Library materials that they wish to use. History: Laws 1989, ch. 151, § 2.

§ 18-9-3 Definitions.

As used in the Library Privacy Act [18-9-1 to 18-9-6 NMSA 1978]:

A. "Library" includes any Library receiving public funds, any Library that is a state agency and any Library established by the state, an instrumentality of the state, a local government, district or authority, whether or not that Library is regularly open to the public; and

B. "patron record" means any document, record or other method of storing information retained by a Library that identifies, or when combined with other available information identifies, a person as a patron of the Library or that indicates use or request of materials from the Library. "Patron record" includes patron registration information and circulation information that identifies specific patrons. History: Laws 1989, ch. 151, § 3.

§ 18-9-4 Release of patron records prohibited.

Patron records shall not be disclosed or released to any person not a member of the Library staff in the performance of his duties, except upon written consent of the person identified in the record, or except upon court order issued to the Library. The Library shall have the right to be represented by counsel at any hearing on disclosure or release of its patron records. History: Laws 1989, ch. 151, § 4.

§ 18-9-5 Exceptions.

The prohibition on the release or disclosure of patron records in Section 4 [18-9-4 NMSA 1978] of the

Library Privacy Act shall not apply to overdue notices or to the release or disclosure by school libraries to the legal guardian of the patron records of unemancipated minors or legally incapacitated persons. History: Laws 1989, ch. 151, § 5.

§ 18-9-6 Violations; civil liability.

Any person who violates Section 4 [18-9-4 NMSA 1978] of the Library Privacy Act shall be subject to civil liability to the person identified in the released records for damages and costs of the action as determined by the court. History: Laws 1989, ch. 151, § 6.

The Rio Communities Public Library adhere strictly to all sections of this Statute regarding the protection of the confidentiality of its users.

Reference Service Policy

The Rio Communities Public Library:

1. will provide information in the form of short answers to specific questions and guidance in locating material for patrons who appear in person, call on the telephone, or request information through correspondence;
2. will assist patrons in the use of the Library and teach basic research methodology, when appropriate (this includes providing help in developing a research strategy and advice on whether a trip to the Library would be worthwhile for individuals who telephone);
3. will provide bibliographic verification of items both in the Library and not owned by the Library and will assist patrons in obtaining materials through interlibrary loan, when appropriate;
4. may refer library users to other agencies and libraries in pursuit of needed information;
5. may use not only the Library's resources in printed form but consult appropriate digital resources as well as the regional resource library and other agencies by

telephone in pursuit of "ready reference" information.

Programming Policy

A "program" is a planned interaction between the library staff and the program participants for the purpose of promoting library materials, facilities, or services, as well as offering the community an informational, entertaining, or cultural experience.

Programming includes such activities as story times, films and activities on no-school days, summer library program for children, speakers for young adults, and book or author discussion groups for adults.

The board, in conjunction with the library director, will establish a budget and goals for programming to facilitate the effective implementation of this service.

Public Relations Policy

- A. Public relations goals of the Rio Communities Public Library are:
to promote a good understanding of the Library's objectives and services among governing officials, civic leaders, and the general public; to promote active participation in the varied services offered by the library to people of all ages.
- B. The Board recognizes that public relations involve every person who has connection with the Library. The Board urges its own members and every staff member to realize that he or she represents the library in every public contact. Good service supports good public relations.
- C. The director will be expected to make presentations and to participate in community activities to promote library services. A reasonable amount of library time will be allowed for preparation and speaking. Materials to be used by press, radio, or television will be approved by the director.
- D. The board will establish a publications budget to cover costs related to printing, publication, supplies, and miscellaneous needs related to the public relations effort.

Equipment Use Policy

A computer is available to patrons on a first-come, first-served basis. Instructions for operating hardware are displayed near the computer. There is no charge for use of the computer; however, in order to make the service available to as many patrons as possible, a time limit for usage has been imposed. That time limit is thirty (30) minutes.

Library staff is available for general assistance in using the computer. However, staff are not expected to train patrons in the use of application programs. Tutorial manuals will be provided when available.

A multi-use copier/printer is available. Printer paper will cost \$.10 for black and white ink and \$.50 for colored per side and must be paid for at the conclusion of the session.

Copy machine users are advised that there are restrictions on copyrighted materials. Any violation of copyright is the responsibility of the copy machine user.

Internet Use Policy

The Rio Communities Public Library is providing access to the Internet as a means to enhance the information and learning opportunities for the citizens of the library's service area. The Library Board has established the Internet use policy to ensure appropriate and effective use of this resource.

Access to the Internet is available to all patrons; however, pursuant to the Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA)

https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/childrens_internet_protection_act_cipa.pdf this service may be restricted at any time for use not consistent with the guidelines. Parents of minor children must assume responsibility for their children's use of the library's Internet service; prior to being granted access to the Internet, anyone under 18 years of age, along with a parent or guardian, must sign the Internet Use Agreement. All users must sign the log-in chart prior to beginning their session.

Expectations:

Users should be aware that the inappropriate use of electronic information resources can be a violation of local, state, and federal laws and can lead to prosecution. The user will be held responsible for his/her actions using the Internet. Users are expected to abide by the policies below which include generally accepted rules of network etiquette. Unacceptable uses of the service will result in the suspension or revocation of Internet use privileges.

Warnings:

The Internet is a decentralized, unmoderated global network; the Rio Communities Public Library has no control over the content found there. The library will not censor access to material nor protect users from offensive information, and it is not responsible for the availability and accuracy of information found on the Internet.

The library cannot assure that data or files downloaded by users are virus-free. The library is not responsible for damages to equipment or data on a user's personal computer from the use of data downloaded from the library's Internet service.

The use of the Internet and e-mail is not guaranteed to be private. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities will be reported to the proper authorities.

Guidelines:

- Users may use the Internet for research and the acquisition of information to address their educational, vocational, cultural, and recreational needs.
- Users may use the Internet for the receipt and transmission of electronic mail (e-mail) as long as they use a free email service which will establish and maintain an account for them; the library is unable to manage e-mail accounts for any organizations or individuals.
- Internet use is offered in thirty (30) minute sessions on a first-come, first-served basis; each user is allowed one session--if there is no patron waiting for the service at the end of a session, the user can have another session, but once having had the service for 30 minutes the user must abandon use of the Internet if another patron requests use of the service.
- Users will respect and uphold copyright laws and all other applicable laws and regulations; they will not use it for illegal purposes.
- Users will respect the rights and privacy of others by not accessing private files.
- Users agree not to incur any costs for the library through their use of the Internet service.
- Users shall not create and/or distribute computer viruses over the Internet.
- Users shall not deliberately or willfully cause damage to computer equipment, programs, or parameters.

Meeting Room Policy

The library or another room in the City Hall multi use complex shall follow the building use policy of the City.

The fact that a group is permitted to meet at the library does not in any way constitute an endorsement of the group's policies or beliefs by the library staff or Board.

The room may be reserved no more than ninety days in advance.

It is understood that library programming will have first priority in room use.

Refreshments may be served and shall be provided by the group. No smoking is allowed.

A refundable cleaning/damage deposit is required as stated in the building use policy. The people using the room shall leave it in neat, clean, orderly condition; if not, the group/individual will forfeit the deposit and may be given notice that continued offense will result in additional deposits or denied access to the meeting room.

The library is not responsible for any equipment, supplies, materials, clothing, or other items brought to the library by any group or individual attending a meeting.

The Library Board, Librarian and staff do not assume any liability for groups or individuals attending a meeting in the library.

Displays and Exhibits Policy

As an educational and cultural institution, the Rio Communities Public Library welcomes exhibits and displays of interest, information, and enlightenment to the community. Displays of handiwork, historical material, nature study, or any other material deemed of general interest may be exhibited. The librarian/director shall accept or reject material offered for display based on its suitability and availability.

The Library assumes no responsibility for the preservation or protection, and no liability for possible damage or theft of any item displayed or exhibited. All items placed in the Library are there at the owner's risk.

Areas available to the public for displays and exhibits are the glass exhibit case, the meeting room, and the general bulletin board. A release must be signed by the exhibitor before any artifact can be placed in the library. An example of the release follows:

Rio Communities Public Library Display and Exhibit Release

I, the undersigned, hereby lend the following works of art or other material to the Rio Communities Public Library for exhibit purposes only. In consideration of the privilege of exhibiting them in the Library, I hereby release said Library from responsibility for loss, damage, or destruction while they are in the possession of the Library.

Exhibition to be held in the _____

During _____

Description of materials loaned _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Public Notice Bulletin Board Policy

Bulletin board materials may be submitted for posting by nonprofit organizations for civic, educational, or cultural purposes. Such organizations may submit literature publicizing a specific event. Limited space generally allows only short-term notices. The director must approve all postings and may prohibit postings which do not meet library standards. Library staff will place and remove postings promptly.

Each item posted must be dated and signed. A request for return of items, along with name and telephone number of person to be contacted, should be printed on the back of

each article. Unless such arrangements are specified, items must be picked up the day following the date of the publicized event if the owners want them returned. Otherwise, the library will not be responsible for returning materials.

Disasters Policy

Fire

Do not panic, but do not under-estimate the potential danger to customers or staff represented by a fire. At the first indication of smoke or flame, investigate the situation to determine location and extent of the fire. If the fire can obviously be contained and extinguished quickly and safely by staff, proceed to do so. However, if there is any doubt about whether the fire can be controlled, immediately call 911 or the fire department and then clear the building.

The time to think about fires is before they happen. Familiarize yourself with the type, location, and application of the fire extinguisher(s) in the building. Orient all staff and volunteers to this information. If you share a building with another agency and it occasionally initiates fire drills, library staff should respect those training exercises and respond as they would in the case of a real fire.

Health emergencies

Staff members should exercise caution when administering first aid of even a minor nature because of the safety of the injured individual and the potential liability of the staff member. Without specialized training it is not advisable for staff to undertake more than keeping the sick or injured patron comfortable and protected from needless disturbance until medical help can be obtained. Since each case is unique, staff members should use their own judgement to do what is prudent and reasonable.

The Rescue Squad/Police (911 if available) should be called immediately in the event of any serious problem. No medication, including aspirin, should ever be dispensed to the public.

Bomb threats

Keep the caller on the line as long as possible. Ask the caller to repeat the message and try to write down every word spoken by the person. If the caller does not indicate the location of the bomb or the time of possible detonation, **ASK FOR THIS INFORMATION.**

Pay particular attention to peculiar background noises such as motors running, background music and any other sounds which may indicate where the location from which the call is originating.

Listen closely to the voice (male, female), voice quality (calm, excited), accents and speech impediments.

Immediately after the caller hangs up, call the police. Clear the building. The police will handle the actual bomb search.

Inclement Weather

The library will follow the recommendation and actions of the city (or village) between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Closing during other days and hours will be at the discretion of the Librarian/Library Director.

DRAFT

APPENDICES:

Library Bill of Rights (<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statements/pols/statementsif/librarybillrights.htm>)

The American Library Association 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.

Although the Articles of the *Library Bill of Rights* are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices. See the documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as [Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights](#)

The Freedom to Read Statement

(<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/ftstatement/freedomreadstatement.htm>)

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:

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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.

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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.

Form: Statement of Concern About Library Resources

See Librarian for Form

Form: Library Card Application:

See Librarian for Form

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