

Collection Development Policy

Nevada Public Library Policy Manual

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PURPOSE

The purpose of the Collection Development Policy is to guide library staff and to inform the public of the principles upon which selections are made and managed. Library materials are selected to support the mission of the library. The mission statement of the Nevada Public Library is *“Transforming lives & building community through information, education & recreation.”*

All libraries stand strongly for the freedom of thought, the freedom of intellectual activity, and the freedom of communication. Therefore, libraries must select materials with a view to presenting all sides of an issue, not just one particular opinion. Nevada Public Library adheres to best practices as endorsed by the American Library Association:

- The Library Bill of Rights
- Intellectual Freedom
- The Freedom to Read Statement
- The Freedom to View Statement

Introduction: This policy defines the scope and nature of our existing collection, and the plans for continuing development of resources as they relate to library goals, general selection criteria, and the rights of the library users to receive information.

“Library collections” include all resources in all formats acquired for use by the public, including resources obtained through the library’s membership in selected consortia or contracts with other libraries.

LIBRARY GOAL FOR COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

The Nevada Public Library strives to provide a well-balanced and broad collection of materials in a variety of formats for all age groups based on the needs of the community in a timely and cost-effective manner.

The primary goal is to select, organize, and make available print, audiovisual, and electronic materials within the limitations of space and budget that meet the diverse educational, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of its community.

The Nevada Public Library provides materials and services on an equal basis to all residents of its service area in order to achieve the goals of the Library as stated in its Mission Statement.

SUPPORT FOR INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

The library provides an impartial environment in which individuals and their interests are brought together with the universe of ideas and information spanning the spectrum of knowledge and opinions. The library board affirms the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to View, and Freedom to Read policy statements in support of acquiring and managing collections

COLLECTION POLICY OBJECTIVES

The library's materials collection is developed and managed to meet the majority of the cultural, informational, educational, and recreational needs of the library's service area. The Library builds and maintains a patron-oriented collection by anticipating and responding to needs and expectations.

Collection decisions are made in conjunction with the strategic initiatives, especially the following:

- Positioning the library as the preferred partner for lifelong learning
- Embracing diversity
- Developing library services that incorporate both physical and virtual collections
- Committing to excellence in service to improve effectiveness and remove barriers

MATERIALS COLLECTION

Adult collections are intended for mature readers, ages 18+. Adult fiction is selected for its appeal to members of the community and its quality as literature. The library attempts to provide a wide selection of standard fiction titles as defined in recognized bibliographies, as well as the best current titles. Nonfiction items are selected in an attempt to educate and inform readers; some of these titles are also appropriate for younger readers, in particular, young adults doing research for a school project. Items of lasting interest are preferred, but it is recognized that titles of current interest are also appropriate purchases.

Youth collections are selected to include the best available titles of fiction and non-fiction for ages birth through young adults. Titles are chosen that may enhance the intellectual, cultural, social, and ethical development and growth of individuals. Such a collection should provide a background for the development of critical reading and thinking, in addition to recreational reading. There may be some variation in the age appropriateness of each collection. In general, decisions to place particular items in the collections are made by the standard of the average person, applying contemporary community standards nationwide, one would find that the material, taken as a whole, tends to appeal to ages birth through 2nd grade for “E” materials, 3rd through 8th grade for “J” materials, and 9th grade and above for YA materials; and/or the publisher’s suggested age range if available.

- **Board Books** are intended for children from birth to preschool.
- **Easy** collections are intended for children from preschool to grade three.
- **Juvenile** collections are intended for children from grades three through six.
- **Young Adult or Teen** collections are intended for youth in middle and high school.

This statement is required by Missouri Regulation 15 CSR 30- 200.015.

Electronic Books, Audiobooks, and Database Collection: This collection is a diverse selection of reference and circulating materials that are accessed electronically and is developed with the same criteria as print materials. In some cases, because of inclusion in consortia agreements for electronic resources, local control of selection is not an option. NPL cardholders have access to all titles held in these collections. Parents may restrict access to these collections by opting out of a PIN access code for their child's card. Electronic resources are evaluated with consideration for privacy practices, accessibility, licensing terms, user experience, and the protection of patron confidentiality. (7/2026)

Media Collection: The goal of this collection is to provide instructional, educational, and recreational audio-visual material that will enhance the existing fiction and non-fiction collections.

The Library recognizes that patrons desire information and popular materials in various forms. Purchases in this collection are in the form of audiobooks on CD and Commercial and non-fiction DVD and Blu-ray video discs.

Periodical Collection: This collection consists of magazines and newspapers providing a broad range of general interest subject areas.

Reference Collection: The historical and genealogy collection is intended to preserve materials of importance to our library community and surrounding areas, including Vernon County, southwest Missouri, Missouri state, and, when useful, National resources. The materials themselves and/or the subject areas they represent have permanent value to the community and are made available to the general public for research on local, genealogical, and historical issues.

Special Collections: Nevada Public Library has a collection of non-traditional materials available for use in the library, as well as some items that can be borrowed. This collection is known as NPL's Library of Things Collection. Examples of items in this collection are board games, Book Club kits, educational kits, Maker tools and kits, fishing poles and tackle, and more. Library of Things items are acquired, maintained, and managed in similar ways as other material collections and are guided by NPL Board policy, with the final authority of the Library Director.

PLACEMENT OF MATERIALS

Nevada Public Library staff uses the Dewey Decimal Classification system and Library of Congress subject headings to place materials into proper subject areas and to assign them to shelving categories. Selectors consider age range recommendations in reviews as they choose and classify materials.

Spine labels indicating the shelving location of each material are affixed to library materials and indicate corresponding age range recommendations or classifications.

NPL shelving areas are divided into sections such as Easy, Juvenile, Young Adult, Reference, Media, etc., for ease of use, but customers of any age may use materials in all sections of the library. It is the responsibility of parents or legal guardians, not library staff, to monitor library use by minors. Content of available collections, locally or through resource sharing and consortia access, may not be suitable for all minors. **See also, NPL policy, Public Service to Minors Guidelines.*

RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELECTION

Library material selection is and shall be vested in the Executive Director and, under their direction, such members of the staff who are qualified by reason of education and training. Ultimate responsibility for selection, as for all library activities, rests with the Executive Director, who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Nevada Public Library (NPL) Board of Trustees (the “Board”).

Staff contributes to the development of patron-oriented collections by:

- Engaging in open, continuous two-way communication with library patrons and recognizing that individuals have different ways of expressing their needs based on age, language, economic status, culture, or other characteristics
- Interacting with patrons with understanding, respect, and responsiveness
- Handling all requests equitably
- Working in partnership with one another to understand and respond to community needs
- Understanding and responding to rapidly changing demographics, as well as societal and technological changes
- Recognizing that materials of varying complexities and formats are necessary to satisfy the diverse needs of library users
- Balancing individual needs and broader community needs in determining the best allocation of collection budget for acquiring or providing access to materials and information
- Seeking continuous improvement through ongoing measurement
- Reviewing the collection regularly to identify areas of community interest that may need to be strengthened

SELECTION CRITERIA

Public libraries are diverse and represent a broad demographic. With a patron base that can include infants to the elderly, selection criteria should take into account the various interests and needs of the patrons the library serves. Criteria for the selection of materials should also depend on the goals and mission of that particular library/system. In general, public libraries provide collections containing a wide variety of material formats, including print, audio-visual, electronic materials, and non-traditional materials for special collections.

Selection of library materials shall be made on the basis of their value of interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the regional system. All sides of the issues will be represented, if possible. Library material shall not be excluded or labeled because of the race, gender, nationality, or political, ethical, or religious views of the creator. Staff shall not withdraw material because it contains controversial or unpopular opinions.

In selecting materials and developing collections for adults, as well as for children and teens, the library staff includes materials that represent the broad range of human experience, reflecting the ethnic, religious, racial, and socio-economic diversity not only of the region it serves but also the larger global perspective. Library collections will provide a broad range of opinions on current issues.

Collections contain popular works, classic works that have withstood the test of time, and other materials of general interest. Works are not excluded or included in the collection based solely on the subject matter or on political, religious, or ideological grounds. In building collections, library staff is guided by the principle of selection, rather than censorship. Furthermore, the selection of a given item for a library's collections should not be interpreted as an endorsement of a particular viewpoint.

Accessibility Statement: Nevada Public Library strives to provide equitable access to collections and resources for individuals with disabilities and considers accessibility when selecting materials, formats, and services. (7/2026)

To build a collection of merit, materials are evaluated according to one or more of the following standards. An item need not meet all of these criteria in order to be acceptable.

General Criteria:

- Present and potential relevance to community needs
- Suitability of physical form for library use
- Suitability of subject and style for the intended audience
- Cost
- Importance as a document of the times
- Relation to the existing collection and to other materials on the subject
- Attention by critics and reviewers
- Potential user appeal
- Requests by library patrons

Content Criteria:

- Authority
- Skill, competence, and purpose of the author
- Reputation and significance of the author
- Objectivity
- Consideration of the work as a whole
- Clarity
- Currency
- Technical quality
- Representation of diverse points of view
- Representation of important movements, genres, or trends
- Vitality and originality
- Artistic presentation and/or experimentation
- Sustained interest
- Relevance and use of the information
- Effective characterization
- Authenticity of history or social setting

Special Considerations for Electronic Information Sources:

- Ease of use of the product
- Availability of the information to multiple simultaneous users
- Equipment needed to provide access to the information
- Technical support and training
- Availability of the physical space needed to house and store the information or equipment
- Available in full-text

Public Library Reviewing Sources and Selection Aids:

To select library materials, the staff makes use of selection aids such as reviews, basic general lists, current general lists, bibliographies, and professional book review journals.

Meeting Patron Demand

Fiction and nonfiction titles for select high-demand authors, series, and/or subjects may be purchased automatically through established standing order plans in an effort to make them available upon publication. Hold lists should be monitored to meet patron demand. Additional copies of high-demand titles may be purchased as the budget allows, typically adding additional copies on a 5:1 holds ratio.

Patron Requests

NPL patrons are encouraged to recommend the purchase of library materials. Patron suggestions for materials will be considered for purchase using the selection criteria reflected elsewhere in this policy.

Access to Materials

Nevada Public Library is a member library of MALA (Mid-America Library Alliance) and Missouri Evergreen. Cardholders may borrow books from libraries across the state of Missouri and have access to over 6 million items through this free service. Patrons seeking materials that are not owned by NPL may place requests/holds through the Missouri Evergreen interlibrary loan process. This service greatly expands the range of materials available to Library cardholders.

GIFT MATERIALS

Accepting gifts and donations is an important way for the public library to benefit from the generosity of the community it serves. Gifts and donations of materials are reviewed using the same criteria as purchases. The library reserves the right to dispose of any gifts that are given to the library. The library will determine how to best incorporate such materials into the existing collections.

Materials not added to the library's collection may be set aside for disposition at a future book sale. The proceeds from this sale shall accrue directly to the benefit of the library, in a fashion consistent with accepted library policies and services as determined by the Board of Trustees. Any items unsold by the Library may then be donated to another organization or discarded.

Funds may be given for the purpose of acquiring materials recommended by library staff as prescribed in this policy, or for the purchase of specific items suggested by the donor. When the library receives a cash gift for the purchase of materials, the library staff must make the selection with the general selection principles outlined in this policy.

All public libraries contain materials that some patrons may find objectionable. Libraries may omit from the collection materials that some patrons feel are important. In either case, the library has procedures that patrons may use in requesting the reconsideration of materials.

No special collection can be set up, no restrictions are permitted as to whether an item may circulate, and no directions as to future use of it are accepted. The use of gift material is the same as that for purchased material. Gifts may not be reclaimed by the donor after acceptance by the library.

Financial donations to be used for material purchasing follow the same guidelines used in any other selection decision and are accepted according to NPL Financial Policy (Gifts). Donors are encouraged to submit to the library a list of purchase suggestions to consider, and the library will gladly provide a list of needed materials upon request. Memorial donations may be accepted through the Nevada Public Library Foundation.

COLLECTION MAINTENANCE & WEEDING

Staff will not remove materials based on individual bias and interests. The community should be able to find information in the library on all subject fields. Weeding and collection maintenance are based on the availability of newer, updated resources or the circulation statistics and use of materials.

Retention and Weeding

Weeding of library materials is an integral component of collection development. An established weeding plan is essential for maintaining a viable, up-to-date, and useful collection.

The library continually withdraws items from the collection, basing its decisions on many factors, including publishing date, frequency of circulation, community interest, and availability of newer or more valid materials.

Withdrawn books are set aside for Library book sales. The proceeds from such sales are used for the benefit of the library. Books that are not sold will be disposed of at the discretion of the Library.

Items dealing with local history are an exception, as are certain classics and award-winning children's books. Fiction that was once popular but is no longer in demand and non-fiction books that are no longer useful are withdrawn from the collection.

Book-plated items are subject to the same criteria for retention and weeding.

Materials in poor condition may be repaired, rebound, or replaced, at the discretion of the technical services staff and/or the Library Director.

Materials withdrawn because of loss, damage, or general condition are not automatically replaced.

Note: Some electronic formats (e.g., Missouri Libraries to Go (Libby) and some databases) are subscribed to or purchased as a total collection and, therefore, items are not selected individually nor curated locally.

Library Display Policy

Displays in the library support the library's mission by providing opportunities for patrons to access materials for education, information, and recreation. Nevada Public Library's goal is to provide displays and exhibits in library facilities to highlight the library's collection and inform the public on a variety of topics and viewpoints.

Display Guidelines

Library displays are planned, curated, and implemented by library staff. While any item in the library's collection can be utilized for purposes of a display, library staff use a set of criteria to determine which topics to promote and which materials are selected. The Library strives to include a wide variety of relevant topics and viewpoints as well as offer displays and exhibits that appeal to a range of ages, interests, and information needs. Displays intended for a specific age group will only feature materials drawn from the corresponding collections. Displays with a possible age-specific sensitivity will be limited to adult areas of the library.

Responsibility

Library staff or community members may suggest a display topic; however, the curation and approval of such displays is at the discretion of the Director and is carried out by library staff.

Display Guidelines for Staff – Types of Displays

Monthly Displays

Every month, library staff will change out displays around the library to highlight different topics throughout the year. These topics can include, but are not limited to, seasonal displays, cultural or heritage displays, specific topics, such as health awareness, interpersonal skills, mindfulness, and education, etc., that cover a wide variety of viewpoints, and specific genres or classes of materials. Monthly displays are planned by library staff, and materials are selected and vetted to ensure that they are appropriate for the display topic and location.

Pop-Up Displays

Pop-up displays are smaller displays that are thematic and timely as they pertain to ongoing happenings in the library and literary world. Pop-up displays are generally not planned ahead of time, but still undergo the same process of selection and curation as the monthly displays. Topics generally include one-off or sporadic events or situations, including, but not limited to, popular author deaths, when books are turned into movies, when promoting library and City of Nevada events, popular author birthdays, and smaller displays to target a specific group, audience, or task, such as "dinner and a movie."

Digital Displays

Displays that occur in the library's online presence, including, but not limited to, the library's social media pages, the library's digital signage, the library's digital resources and applications, and any digital promotional materials that are dispersed through digital avenues such as emails or text messages. These digital displays are promoted in conjunction with already vetted physical displays and programs throughout the system.

POLICY REVIEW and REVISION

Internal or external changes may impact the Collection Development Policy and result in the need for policy revision. The Board shall review this policy at least every three years or whenever changes in law, professional standards, technology, or library operations require revision. (7/2026)

Policy revision may be necessary when professional association policy statements are removed or revised to reference the most up-to-date association policy statements.

No revision should be undertaken while a formal challenge to a library resource is occurring.

Evaluating new material formats to meet patron demands may also require collection policies to be revised.

RECONSIDERATION OF MATERIALS or RESOURCES

The library fully endorses the principles documented in the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement of the American Library Association. Materials and resources available in and through the library present a diversity of viewpoints, enabling citizens to make the informed choices necessary in a democracy. The library also selects a wide variety of library materials and resources that satisfy the diverse interests of our community. The library upholds the right of the individual to secure these resources, even though the content may be controversial, unorthodox, or unacceptable to some. The library's varied collection is available to all; however, it is not expected that all of the collection will appeal to everyone.

There may be occasions when a member of the library may be concerned about a particular item in the library's collection or the age appropriateness of a library presentation, event, material, or display. Library members should discuss their concerns with the Circulation Supervisor or the Executive Director. If the patron is not satisfied with the response to their request, the staff will provide the patron with information and a **"Request for Reconsideration of Materials/Resources"** form to request a formal review of the library resource.

The following criteria are necessary for a formal review to be considered:

- NPL cardholder who lives within the legal service area, but not on behalf of a group.
 - Challenges targeting children's materials, events, or displays are limited to the parent/guardian of a minor child with a library card at NPL.
- The "Request for Reconsideration of Materials/Resources Form" must be completed in its entirety.
- One material title/event/display per form.

Any challenge that includes a material, display, event or presentation that has been subject to a formal review within the previous *twelve months* will not be re-reviewed. The decision of the committee from the previous review/action will be shared with the challenger in the form of a summary letter.

Members of NPL questioning the inclusion of any book or other library material in the Library's collection will be directed to an available copy of this Collection Development Policy and other applicable supporting documents.

Procedure for Review of Material/Event/Display

INFORMAL COMPLAINT The process begins with a librarian discussing the complaint with the patron who brings it to the service desk. During that interaction, the librarian will explain that the library has materials for everyone and everything goes through a selection process or is purchased because of patron requests. The librarian should offer to assist the patron in finding alternate materials that would better meet the needs and interests of the patron and/or their family members. If the patron chooses to go forward with the challenge, the complainant should be provided with a request for a formal reconsideration form.

FORMAL COMPLAINT: The following steps will be used when an individual feels that further action is necessary to address concerns about a library resource. The material in question will not be removed, relocated, or restricted solely because a reconsideration request has been submitted. (7/2026)

1. A concerned patron who is dissatisfied with earlier informal discussions will be offered a packet of materials that includes the library's mission statement, selection policy, reconsideration form, and the Library Bill of Rights.
2. Patrons are required to complete and submit a reconsideration form to the Library Director.
3. The Director, along with a committee of two other staff or Board members, will review the reconsideration form and the material in question, to consider whether its selection follows the criteria stated in the collection policy.
4. Within 15 business days, the review committee will make a decision. The Library Director will send a letter to the concerned person who requested the reconsideration, stating the reasons for the decision.
5. If the individual is not satisfied with the decision, a written appeal may be submitted within 10 business days to the Board of Trustees by email at boardrecords@nplmo.org or by personally attending a Board meeting with a public comment request. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to limit the length of public comments.
6. The decision of the board is final.
7. The results of all challenges will be reported to the Library Board as part of the Director's monthly report. The summary of action is part of public record as defined by Missouri Sunshine Law. ***"Requests for Reconsideration of Materials/Resources" forms are considered a "library record," the disclosure of which is prohibited by RSMO182.817. Therefore, public disclosure of challenge results will have identifying information of patrons redacted from published results.***

Intellectual Freedom Core Documents

First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Library Bill of Rights and Interpretations

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

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
6. 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.
7. 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.

Code of Ethics of the American Library Association

As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations. The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision-making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

1. We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
2. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
3. We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.
4. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.
5. We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.
6. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
7. We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.
8. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.
9. We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.

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.