

SHARON PUBLIC LIBRARY COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of the Collection Development Policy of the Sharon Public Library is to provide guidelines for acquisition and withdrawal decisions, allocation of resources and long-range collection development in accordance with the library's mission.

Library Mission Statement

The mission of the Sharon Public Library is to serve the informational, educational and recreational needs of all members of the Sharon community through acquiring and maintaining quality materials, programs and services within comfortable facilities offering convenient hours and provided in a manner commensurate with responsible fiscal planning. Emphasis should be placed on information which is of immediate relevance and interest to the community. The Library's mission extends to providing access to the universe of information beyond the Library's own collections through interlibrary cooperation and efficient use of technology.

Role of the Public Library

Public libraries play a unique role in the preservation of democracy by providing an open, non-judgmental institution where individuals can pursue their interests and gain an understanding of diverse opinions. Libraries must continue to play an essential role in safeguarding the intellectual liberty of the public and they must recognize, understand and support freedom of access.

Intellectual Freedom and Access

The Board of Library Trustees, the Library Director, and the library staff recognize the responsibility of the Sharon Public Library to provide materials representing diverse points of view on different topics. Selection is made solely on the merits of the work in relation to collection development and in relation to the needs of library patrons. The presence of an item in the Library's collection does not indicate an endorsement of the item's content.

Selection cannot be restricted by the possibility that certain materials might be considered objectionable by some users on moral, religious, political, or other grounds. Well-intentioned individuals or groups may occasionally question the inclusion of an item in the collection because of fear or doubt about the effects of the material on impressionable persons. Although the staff and trustees understand this concern, it is our position that the risk to society is far greater if

public access to ideas and information is restricted. Neither an individual, nor group, nor library staff has a right to decide what others may or may not read.

All materials are shelved on open shelves, freely and easily accessible to the public. There will be no labeling of any item to indicate its point of view or bias. The library assures free access to its holdings for all patrons, who can select or reject for themselves any item in the collection.

Children are not limited to the children's collections, which are kept separate from other library collections to facilitate use. Responsibility for a child's reading, listening, or viewing of library materials must rest with the parent or guardian, not with the library staff.

The staff and Board of Trustees of the Sharon Public Library believe that the right to read is an important part of the intellectual freedom that is basic to democracy. The library has adopted the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read/View statements as official library policy (see appendix).

Resource Sharing

The Library is a charter member of the Old Colony Library Network, an automated resource-sharing network of 27 South Shore libraries, 25 public and 2 academic libraries. Computer terminals provide bibliographic access to the collections of the network libraries and a daily delivery system ensures fast availability. For those patrons with needs outside the scope of the Sharon Public Library's collection or the collections of network libraries, the Library is able to provide interlibrary loan service through cooperative agreements with the state library system.

Responsibility for Collection Development

The Library Director has responsibility for collection development, operating in accordance with policies set by the Board of Library Trustees. Selection of materials is made by the Library Director as well as professional library staff, who are qualified by reason of education, training and experience. Other staff members and the general public are encouraged to recommend materials for consideration.

Definition of Materials Selection

"Selection" refers to the decision that must be made either to add materials or to retain materials already in the collection. Also, selection can refer to items to be removed from the collection.

Goals of Materials Selection

- To maintain a well balanced and broad collection of materials for information, reference and research.
- To support the democratic process by providing materials for the education and enlightenment of the community.
- To provide recreational resources.

Selection Criteria

Selection is based on recommendations in authoritative reviewing media and on requests from the public. The major considerations in selecting materials are the informational, recreational, and educational needs of the Sharon Public Library community. While budgetary and space limitations make it impossible for a medium-sized library to build a comprehensive collection in all subject and interest areas, the Library does endeavor to offer a collection which is diversified, well-developed and as balanced as possible. Inclusion of an item in the collection does not indicate Library endorsement of its content.

The following criteria provide the general framework within which selection takes place:

- Whenever possible material should receive favorable reviews from professionally recognized review sources. When unavailable, judgment is made by a trained staff member.
- Material should contribute to the balance and variety of the Library's collection as a whole.
- Materials are evaluated with regard to artistic worth, authority, competence of presentation, comprehension by the intended age level, and contribution to the total collection.
- Other considerations include: contemporary significance, usefulness or interest, importance as an historical record, availability through the Old Colony Library Network or through interlibrary loan, requests from users of the Library, and physical quality of format and binding.
- Non-fiction material is evaluated with regard to authority, authenticity, accuracy and timeliness. Presentation of ideas should be logical and clear.
- Material is selected to meet the needs and interests of the general public, not to duplicate research or special collections found elsewhere. Materials are selected in various formats, both print and non print, to meet the needs of library users.

- The relative permanent value of material is taken into consideration. Some items are selected knowing use will be short lived while other materials are selected for long term significance.

Selection Tools

Selection tools include, but are not limited to:

- Reviews in professional journals or periodicals which specialize in a particular subject
- Individual subject expertise of staff or community members;
- Suggestions from Sharon Public Library patrons
- Coverage in area bookstores and newspapers
- Publishers catalogs
- Standard bibliographies

Scope of the Collection

Sharon Public Library considers all types and formats of media in the realm of human expression and part of the human record. Materials will not be rejected for acquisition solely on the basis of medium. The Library will attempt to provide materials in non-book format when it is felt that they fulfill the collection's role and mission to augment individual experience.

The popular adult collection highlights genres and topics for which local interest and need is known to exist.

In the development of its collection, the Library recognizes that it is impossible for a medium-sized public library to provide a balanced comprehensive collection that is strong enough to meet all community needs. As a member of an automated resource sharing network and the state supported regional library system, Sharon Public Library supplements its resources with materials borrowed from other libraries through these larger entities.

Formats

Because the Sharon Public Library functions in a rapidly changing society, it keeps a flexible attitude towards changes in communicative material, in relation to both new forms and new styles of expression. It must, for example, be responsive to the increased output and improved quality of such forms as audio/video formats, electronic formats, and other new/emerging technologies/formats. Materials in these forms are selected when they are suitable in content and effective in treatment; they are judged in terms of the "Criteria for Selection."

Collection Development for Adult Materials

Fiction

Every attempt is made to provide a wide selection of the various types of fiction, and to include the best works of the past and present. Each work is judged on individual merit and the needs of the collection as a whole.

The number of copies purchased is determined primarily by anticipated demand or by the number of patron reserves requested on the title.

Nonfiction

Selection often involves striking a balance between demand for current highly requested titles and the need to maintain and develop a collection of standard works of lasting value. Occasionally a work may be added despite an unfavorable review or in a format not generally chosen (i.e. textbook) if it fills a gap in the collection where a better work is unavailable or if the Library has received patron requests. Works are selected to provide a range of viewpoints on issues, recognizing the individual's right to read controversial opinions.

The Library cannot normally support, except through interlibrary loan, the professional needs of individuals whose interests require highly technical or very specialized information. In addition, the Library cannot take the place of an academic facility as a source for a wide range of highly academic materials.

Paperbacks

Mass market paperbacks are generally purchased only when it is the only available format for an item or when budgetary constraints warrant a less expensive acquisition. The Library maintains a "paperback book exchange" where patrons "take one/leave one." This collection falls outside of collection development and is maintained only in that staff keep the shelves clean and tidy and filled with books. Both children's and young adult paperback collections fall under the selection criteria for those respective collections. Trade paperback titles are, for purposes of collection development, not considered separately from other formats.

Large Print

The Library selects books printed in large type format to provide a range of materials designed to meet the special needs of patrons with vision difficulties. The Library orders individual titles of note, including popular new items and reprints of classics. Large print materials are also acquired for the children's collections.

Periodicals & Newspapers

The Library provides periodicals in a wide range of subjects of reference value and recreational interest.

Periodicals are selected according to the following criteria:

- Indexed in one of the Library's indexing services
- Inclusion in or exclusion by standard indexing sources
- Cost
- Requests by patrons
- Whether the periodical has local or regional interest
- Availability at other libraries in the area
- Whether a subject area needs to be expanded to help balance the collection

Periodicals are kept as long as space allows and their continued use requires.

The Library maintains current files of major newspapers – local, regional and national interest. Sharon newspapers are retained on microform.

A small periodicals collection is maintained in the Children's Library. Primary areas of interest include literature, natural science, science, history, arts, and parenting.

Reference

Reference materials are those designed by the arrangement and treatment of their subject matter to be consulted for definite items of information rather than to be read consecutively. They can provide quick, concise, and current information or they may serve as an index to other materials in the collection. Since they are typically used daily by the public and library staff to answer specific questions, they are designated for use within the Library. In selecting for the reference collections, the primary concern is the information needs of the Library's clientele. Reference materials may be located in the Adult Reference or Children's Reference sections.

In addition to the general selection criteria mentioned above, the following criteria are considered in acquiring materials for the reference collections:

- Usefulness of the publication, considering the existing collection
- Favorable reviews or inclusion in basic reference collection guides
- Reputation of the author or publisher

- Currency of the topic
- Date of publication
- Cost
- Expense for ongoing maintenance, if the title in question is a serial publication which will require frequent updating

Duplicate copies of reference materials may be purchased for the circulating collection if the price is not prohibitive.

Local History

The Library makes an effort to collect and maintain materials having to do with the history of Sharon. The Elizabeth Farrar History Room is the area of the Library where most of the local history collection is housed.

The collection is meant to be used by beginning and experienced scholars alike, as well as persons using the collection for informational, leisure or recreational purposes.

There are materials in this collection whose age, character or rarity makes special handling or separate security measures necessary. In order to balance the dual goals of preserving historical material while providing maximum access to the information contained, the Library provides access through means best suited to meet both goals.

These include providing copies of rare materials in photocopied or microfilmed format for general use whenever possible and supervision when original works are in use.

At least one copy of every title is kept permanently for reference and research in the History Room. Duplicate or photocopied materials are provided whenever possible in the circulating collection, and reference copies are made available in the Reference Room.

Books of Local Relevance

An attempt is made to acquire all published works on Sharon. In addition, books on Norfolk County and Massachusetts resources and history are acquired according to their relevance to the Sharon area. Town histories and genealogical research materials are selectively acquired. At least one copy is housed in the History Room and does not circulate.

Because Sharon was the home of Revolutionary War soldier, Deborah

Sampson Gannett, the library makes an effort to acquire all books on this subject, including children's materials.

Multiple copies are acquired according to availability, demand and value. Duplicate copies are housed in reference and/or circulating nonfiction if appropriate.

Some rare and valuable books which are not a part of the local history collection may also be housed in the History Room. These may also include works by local residents.

Collection Development for Children

The principles which guide the selection of materials for children are fundamentally the same as those for adult materials. The collection is carefully chosen for children of all ages and abilities with emphasis on materials which entertain, stimulate the imagination, develop reading ability, and enable children to learn about the world around them.

In choosing materials for this group, the selector uses age appropriateness as a determining selection principle. Materials are evaluated for reading level, interest level, and treatment of the subject for the age of the intended audience.

Materials are chosen to assure a well-rounded representation of all points of view as with adult books.

The selectors do not assume that all children and young adult materials will be suitable for every individual. Responsibility for overseeing a child's reading choices rests with parents.

The collection does contain materials of use in completing school assignments. These materials are purchased to complement, not take the place of, school resources. Textbooks are not purchased unless they contain better subject coverage than other books. Some duplication of materials is found between the adult, young adult, and children's collections when appropriate.

Since the preschooler's door to learning is vital to the Library's mission, priority is placed on maintaining a collection that contains a wide variety of picture books. Items that are well reviewed as well as those requested by patron demand and interest are purchased as budget allows. Board books are purchased to encourage interaction with the youngest users. Beginning readers comprise an area of high demand. Selection includes both fiction and non-

fiction titles. Since a large quantity of this genre is produced strictly for monetary gain and not for literary or educational merit, selection is based on reputation of the author and publishing house in addition to positive reviews.

Children's Non-Fiction

The children's non-fiction collection is broad based with emphasis on multiculturalism, science, biographies, and the creative arts. Regular units of study in the school curriculum also influence selection.

Children's Fiction

The fiction collection includes popular authors and well reviewed titles with particular emphasis on titles of fantasy, mystery, and adventure, sports, science fiction, and historical fiction.

Children's Paperbacks

The paperback collection provides a format for second copies of popular hard covers as well as books that are no longer available in hardcover. Series books in this format are purchased based on patron request.

Children's Resource Collection

The Children's Resource Collection contains books and videos on topics that are of interest to both parents and teachers. Consideration will be given to purchasing titles that are in the adult collection if demand merits an additional copy. Books on sensitive issues which are written for children shall be shelved in the general collection and not in this area.

Collection Development for Young Adults

Young adult materials serve as a bridge to the adult collection and are aimed at addressing the needs and concerns of young adult patrons. Needs of young adults differ in kind and intensity from those of adult users. They often look to the Library for materials and resources to meet academic demands. Materials are selected using the same general criteria used in selection of the adult collection but with the focus on the experience, maturity, and interests of young people.

In general, young adult service is geared to grades 7-12, overlapping somewhat with children's services at one end of the range and those for adults at the other.

Young Adult Fiction

The themes in young adult fiction generally center on the struggle to develop

an identity and set of values and to find a place in the larger community. The young adult fiction collection consists of material written for and/or appealing to this particular age group regardless of genre. Every effort is made to provide teenagers with fiction that deals with their concerns in open, honest ways, and which meets their recreational and academic reading needs. Paperback format is selected where possible since this is the preferred format for this age group.

Young Adult Non-Fiction

Teenagers read non-fiction to gain information on topics of concern to them such as personal appearance, sex education, crisis and coping, school assignments, etc. Young adult non-fiction is selected in all subject areas represented in the adult non-fiction collection. As there are many potential users for this material, young adult non-fiction is chosen with all library users in mind and, in part due to space constraints, shelved along side adult non-fiction titles rather than separated out. Titles are chosen for their timeliness and appeal. The staff makes every effort to purchase factual books which are clearly written and attractive in format.

The general reference, audio-visual, and periodical collections include materials for young adults. The resources of the entire library are available to users in this age group.

Collection Development for Audio/Video Materials

Audio Books

The Library purchases abridged and unabridged versions of both fiction and nonfiction titles with an emphasis on unabridged versions. An attempt is made to provide titles in the two most popular formats, CD and cassette. Availability and budgetary constraints often dictate one format over another. Selection is made on the basis of favorable reviews. Technical quality is also an important criterion.

Language Tapes

The Library purchases foreign language instructional tapes in most languages. Emphasis is on beginning languages, but an effort is made to purchase tapes for advanced studies in the most commonly used languages

Compact Discs

The Library attempts to provide a representative selection of the most significant and broadly-known music in each of the following genres: classical, jazz, blues, popular, rock, folk/ethnic, new age, soundtrack/film scores and

musical theater. Selection is based on artistic and technical quality, inclusion in standard discographies, favorable reviews, and recommendations by library users.

Juvenile Audio Cassettes/Compact Discs

The children's room audio/CD collection consists of music, storytelling, and poetry. The collection includes book/cassette kits as well as books on tape/CD. Every effort is made to ensure the collection includes a print copy to complement the audiobook format. Selection criteria in this area follows that of adult criteria.

Microforms (microfiche and microfilm)

Currently the library collects one newspaper in microfilm.

Microforms are added to the collection for one or more of the following reasons:

- Acquire materials not available in print
- Compress space required to store materials
- Preserve materials in the process of degenerating
- Serve as a backup copy for some of the high demand items

The following factors should be considered when deciding whether print or microform will be the favored medium:

- Potential use of material
- How long the print format will last
- Storage space
- Equipment for reading and printing
- Costs of various formats.

Video Formats

The Sharon Public Library maintains a video (VHS and DVD) collection that complements rather than competes with local video rental stores. Videos are considered for collection inclusion based on favorable reviews, prior viewing, patron demand and the reputation of the makers and distributors.

Video programs are evaluated as a whole and not on the basis of particular scenes or segments. A work will not be excluded from the collection just because it presents an aspect of life honestly or because it exhibits frankness of expression. An item need not meet all of the selection criteria to be acceptable. In some instances, materials may be judged primarily on artistic merit, or

because of scholarship, or as valuable historic records, or as critical to the information needs of the community. In some instances, criteria may be substantial demand.

Non-Fiction Videos

Nonfiction videos are purchased when the format provides a useful way of providing information to library patrons. All general subjects will be acquired. Documentaries, plays and dramatizations of classic literature, local and regional topics, how-to, travel, concerts, operas, and ballets are considered important to the collection.

Feature Films Classics

Motion pictures considered classics by film critics will be added to the collection as the budget allows. The collection will include important works by acclaimed producers, directors, actors and actresses.

American Feature Films

Features will be purchased to satisfy the public's demand for recreational materials, and to serve differing tastes and interests. Owing to the relatively high cost of some video materials and a limited library budget, it is impossible for the Library to adequately satisfy public demand for high-interest feature films. Higher consideration will be given to films that are favorably reviewed and to features that have won a major award.

Foreign Films

The Library will endeavor to collect foreign films that have won a major award in their country or ours and have received critical acclaim.

Children's Videos

Children's videos are selected if they are literature-based and extend the reading experience, if they are informational and/or educational, or if they fulfill patron requests or interests. Videos that are designed specifically to sell a product are not purchased.

Children's CD-ROMs

CD-ROMs for the children's circulating collection will be purchased to reflect broad areas of the collection. Criteria for selection will include materials which are informational, educational, or creative in nature and which have received good to superior ratings in selection tools. Technical requirements of the platforms using the material will also be a consideration.

Rental Collection

The Sharon Public Library maintains a small collection of popular/high demand titles available on a first-come/first-serve basis for a nominal rental fee. The collection is funded by and the proceeds benefit the Friends of the Sharon Public Library. The collection is maintained by library staff. Titles are chosen, both fiction and non-fiction, based on popularity and anticipated high patron demand. Every title purchased for the rental collection must also have been acquired for the circulating collection ensuring that library patrons have access to the same title without being assessed a rental fee. Once the popularity/demand for a rental title eases, the title is removed and placed into the Friends book sale.

Russian Language Materials

The Town of Sharon has a growing population of Russian-speaking residents. As a result, the Library has responded to this community's need for materials in their native language. With particular attention focused on print materials, the Library is making a concerted effort to acquire the works of recent popular Russian language authors; popular titles translated into Russian are also acquired. Due to budgetary and time constraints, the Library has a standing order arrangement with designated publishers to provide a selection of titles that include contemporary bestsellers, both fiction and non-fiction. The Library should make an effort to acquire Russian language materials in other formats, including video, audiobooks, and periodicals. Russian language materials are also acquired, albeit on a smaller scale, for the children's collections.

Web Links

The Sharon Public Library web site has been created to advance the Library's mission as an information center supporting the educational and recreational needs of its users and to provide access to materials beyond the local collection. The web site provides guidance for patrons exploring Internet resources and assists Internet users seeking information about Library programs and services.

Responsibility for Web Link Collection Development

Library staff evaluates and selects links to other web sites that have proven useful in answering patron questions or have been reviewed by reputable individuals. Patrons are encouraged to suggest links for inclusion on the web site. However, because the site is not intended as either a full or partial public forum, addition of a link is the responsibility of Library staff.

General Web Link Selection Guidelines

The major considerations for selecting materials are the informational,

recreational, and educational needs of the Sharon Public Library community. Sites are selected to enrich, broaden and complement material in the Library's collection. Because standard collection evaluation tools are not yet available for Internet resources, selectors will review the links and use evaluation review sources in print publications and online sources. Link selection is based on relevancy, quality, currency, and navigability. While the Library cannot control the accuracy or availability of the information accessed through the Internet, selectors attempt to select sites noted for reliability, authority and accessibility.

Specific Selection Guidelines

The following criteria provide specific selection guidelines for Internet resources:

- Content
- Accurate information
- Factual information
- Substantive information
- Relevant information
- Current information

Design

- User friendly interface
- Well-organized and presented
- Easy to navigate
- Multimedia links are properly labeled
- Requires a minimum of additional software or hardware
- All links work properly

Access

- Accessible through major browsers released within the past three years
- Site uses standard HTML
- Site loads easily
- Site is freely accessible; does not require registration
- Site is consistently available
- Site has a static URL
- If special software is required, instructions are easy to follow and application is easy to install

Authority

- Creator(s) clearly identified
- Sources of information clearly documented
- Contact information clearly stated
- Ability to ascertain status, affiliation, qualifications and reputation of creator

Currency

- Regularly maintained and up-to-date
- Changes and grows to reflect new information

Scope

- Purpose of the site clearly stated
- Appropriate for the intended audience
- Subject breadth, depth and currency clearly stated

De-selection

Selected links may be removed from the Library's website if they change and no longer meet the above criteria.

Withdrawal of Materials

The systematic removal of materials no longer useful is an essential part of maintaining an effective library collection. A withdrawal policy insures that the collection remains vital and useful by: discarding and/or replacing items in poor physical condition; eliminating items with obsolete, misleading or superseded information; and reducing the number of copies of titles whose relevance to the community has lessened.

The Library's professional staff will evaluate the materials collection for repair, replacement, and/or discard on an ongoing basis, using the CREW method of evaluation developed by Joseph P. Segal. This process (Continuous Review, Evaluation and Weeding) uses the following criteria to evaluate a title's current usefulness to the collection: Is content misleading or factually inaccurate? Is item worn out and beyond mending or rebinding? Has item been superseded by a new edition or a better book on the subject? Is this item trivial or of no lasting literary or scientific merit? Is the material irrelevant to the needs and interests of our community? Date of publication, last date circulated, and average number of circulations per year are some of the useful indicators of the above criteria. For a description of CREW guidelines by Dewey classification, see appendix.

Materials withdrawn from the Sharon Public Library will be disposed of in a manner consistent with their quality and condition. Disposition includes but is not limited to: Friends of the Sharon Public Library book sale, offered to another library or institution, or discarded/recycled. Materials removed because of dated content or poor condition will be discarded/recycled.

Gifts Policy

The Library accepts gifts of materials, but reserves the right to evaluate them in accordance with the criteria applied to purchased materials. The Library may choose not to accept gifts which do not meet the Library's objectives and policies.

A receipt providing a description of the material and the date of donation will be provided upon request. However, the Library will not provide monetary appraisal of any gift for income tax or other purposes.

The Library retains unconditional ownership of the gift and makes the final decision on the use or disposition of the gift. The Library reserves the right to decide the conditions of display, housing, and access of gift materials. Items with restrictions necessitating special handling or preventing integration of the gift into the general collection will not normally be accepted.

Review of Policy

In order to maintain a dynamic selection program which reflects current community needs, this policy should be reviewed whenever necessary by the Sharon Public Library Board of Trustees. Revisions should be developed by the staff and presented to the Board for its acceptance. This evaluation will be performed at least once every five years.

Policy Adopted, Sharon Public Library Board of Trustees, 21 January 2004

APPENDICES

CREW Method of Collection Evaluation (Continuous Review, Evaluation and Weeding)

The CREW method, explained by Joseph P. Segal in *Evaluation and Weeding Collections in Small and Medium-sized Public Libraries: The CREW Method* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1980), involves judging materials using the following criteria:

Misleading, factually inaccurate

Ugly, worn out, past repair

Superseded by a new edition or other material

Trivial, having no lasting merit

Your library collection has no use for this book-some other library may be able to use it.

Worn out

Out of date

Rarely used

System (interlibrary loan) can supply

Trivial or faddish

An example of a formula is: 10/3/MUSTY. The 10 indicates that the item's copyright is 10 years or older. The 3 means that it has been 3 years since the last recorded circulation of the item.

Library Bill of Rights

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.

Adopted June 18, 1948. Amended February 2, 1961, and January 23, 1980, inclusion of “age” reaffirmed January 23, 1996, by the ALA Council.

The 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 avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as citizens 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 citizen, by exercising critical judgment, will accept the good and reject the bad. The censors, public and private, assume that they should determine what is good and what is bad for their fellow citizens.

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 need the help of censors to assist them in this task. 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.

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 or unpopular with 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 with any expression the prejudgment of a label characterizing it 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 the citizen. 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.

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 not freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive.

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 citizens 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; revised January 28, 1972, January 16, 1991, July 12, 2000, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee.

Freedom to View Statement

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

1. To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.

3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.
6. This statement was originally drafted by the Freedom to View Committee of the American Film and Video Association (formerly the Educational Film Library Association) and was adopted by the AFVA Board of Directors in February 1979. This statement was updated and approved by the AFVA Board of Directors in 1989.

Endorsed by the ALA Council January 10, 1990