

Riverside County Library System

MATERIALS SELECTION POLICY

The Materials Selection Policy is adopted by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors to establish policies governing the acquisition and retention of print and non-print library materials available to the public in all sites of the Riverside County Library System.

Selection Policy and Practices: A Summary Statement

Each year, a tremendous number of books, audio-visual materials, and resources in digital format are published. It is the responsibility of the County Librarian to select, within budget limitations, those items that best serve the information needs of the residents of Riverside County. The County Librarian, in consultation with library staff, will oversee the selection, acquisition, and maintenance of the library collection of the Riverside County Library System according to the guidelines contained in this policy as adopted by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors. This policy includes the acquisition of materials by purchase as well as through donation to the library system, governs the process by which the public can request reconsideration of items in the collection, and also includes the process by which obsolete, worn, and damaged materials are removed from the collection.

Criteria for selection of materials

The Riverside County Library System has an inclusive approach to selection and affirms the public's right to choose and read with the freedom essential to a democracy. The Riverside County Library System will adhere to the principles of the "Freedom to Read Statement" of the American Library Association (attached as an addendum to this policy). Each community library provides materials presenting various points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times. Material dealing with controversial views or subjects is judged on the basis of the entire work and not on isolated passages or sections. Matters such as the race or nationality, or the political, social, or religious views of the author are not factors affecting the evaluation of material.

The following criteria are used to evaluate the appropriateness of materials added to the library collection:

- Accuracy of information
- Quality of treatment
- Merit, awards, or critical acclaim
- Timeliness or permanent value
- Popular interest or demand
- Extent to which the subject matter is already represented in the library collection
- Readability or literary style
- Social significance
- Reputation of the author or publisher
- Cost

- Physical durability, attractiveness and other format characteristics
- Inclusion in standard bibliographies or indexes
- Existence of authoritative, published reviews
- For films, a green rating in Metacritic.com or a major award nomination

When selecting materials for inclusion in the collection, the Library also considers the availability of materials and resources in other libraries. The Library recognizes its obligation to provide general reference to fill the needs of customers, however, it is not the purpose of the Riverside County Library System to function as a research library. To strengthen its services and resources, the Library actively participates in resource sharing agreements with other libraries via the Inland Library Network, the Inland Library System, SIRCULS and OCLC.

Persons responsible for materials selection decisions

The County Librarian has the prerogative to delegate to library staff the responsibility of selection and maintenance of library materials. No purchased or donated item may be added to the library collection without prior approval, in writing, by the County Librarian. Recommendations for selections to be added to the library collection shall be sent in writing to the County Librarian. After those items have been approved by the County Librarian, those items shall be purchased or accepted for donation by library staff.

Responsibility for recommendations for county library acquisitions will be made by the Collection Development Coordinator and by library managers with oversight of the zone managers and assistance by other staff.

Access to library materials

Materials held in branches of the Riverside County Library System will be available to all members of the public, regardless of age or any other factor.

Upon request by a parent or legal guardian, library staff will limit access by a minor to videos and DVDs held by the library system. Minors with cards restricted in this way will not be permitted to check out any video or DVD material owned by branches of the Riverside County Library System. The restriction will be in effect until either the minor reaches the age of 18 or the parent or guardian requests that the restriction be removed.

Public comment regarding the library collection

Comments from our library patrons regarding the library collection are welcome at any time. Suggestions for items to be added to the library collection—either specific titles or subject areas—should be provided in writing to any library personnel. The library staff will apply to the suggestion the same criteria that are applied to any item under consideration. If the staff concurs that the item conforms to the selection criteria and is, therefore, appropriate for the collection, the request will be sent to the County Librarian for approval. The customer recommending the book will be notified when the book is received.

Customer complaints about the collection—either that an item has not been purchased that the customer feels is appropriate, or about an item that has been added to the collection—are also welcome and should be submitted in writing using the appropriate form. Requests to add or remove items from the collection shall be forwarded to the County Librarian for review and response. Even those complaints that do not result in a written complaint should be logged by staff using the appropriate form and forwarded to the Zone Manager, Library Administrator and the County Librarian.

Weeding and disposal of library materials

An ongoing process of weeding of obsolete, unused, or damaged materials is essential to maintaining an authoritative collection that is responsive to the needs of county residents. Library staff will remove such weeded materials from the library collection only with the prior written permission of the County Librarian.

The following materials will be considered for weeding:

- Materials containing outdated information
- Materials that have been superseded by a new edition (almanacs, statistics, etc.) unless the earlier edition is still useful as a circulating item
- Bibliographies and reading guides listing books that are dated or obsolete
- Books with outmoded or inaccurate illustrations
- Highly specialized books with no potential readership
- Unneeded duplicates
- Books that have not circulated or been used in a reasonable period of time that indicates that they are no longer needed (this period of time will differ for different types of materials)
- Worn or damaged items

In most cases, Library staff will offer items weeded from the collection to authorized Friends of the Library groups to be sold to the public, with revenues accruing to the Friends to benefit the library. Library staff may also offer weeded items to the following groups:

- Local governments and agencies, including cities and school districts
- State institutions
- Non-profit organizations
- Recycling centers

Weeded items not taken by other governmental or non-profit agencies will be discarded by the library staff with the approval of the County Librarian.

Distribution of religious and political material in the library

The Riverside County Library will not distribute to the public unsolicited literature of religious or political content. Pamphlets and current issues of religious periodicals may be accepted as gifts in order that information on the beliefs and teachings of a wide range of faiths and sects

may be readily available to the public, and be shelved in an area designated by library personnel. Such gifts should not be displayed in commercial cases provided by donors.

Gifts of religious or political materials that are regarded as ephemeral may be shelved together in a magazine or pamphlet file labeled "Gifts." Only current issues of such materials will be retained.

Adding gift materials to the library collection

The Riverside County Library System welcomes gifts of library materials from the public. The decision to add gift materials to the collection will be handled in the same manner as if the items were purchased, as follows:

- Staff will evaluate the materials according to the selection criteria identified above
- Staff will recommend the addition of items meeting the selection criteria to the County Librarian
- No items will be added to the collection without the written approval of the County Librarian.

The Library may not use all donated material in the collection. Any donated material not used in the collection may be given to Friends of the Library groups to be sold and resulting revenues used to support library programs, collections, and services.

Library staff will provide to the donor, upon request, a statement of the number of the number and type of material donated for tax purposes. Library staff will not assign a value to donations for tax purposes.

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 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 prejudice 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.

A Joint Statement by:

[American Library Association](#)
[Association of American Publishers](#)

Subsequently endorsed by:

[American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression](#)
[The Association of American University Presses, Inc.](#)
[The Children's Book Council](#)
[Freedom to Read Foundation](#)
[National Association of College Stores](#)
[National Coalition Against Censorship](#)
[National Council of Teachers of English](#)
[The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression](#)