

RESOURCE SELECTION

Purpose

Free and convenient access to ideas, information, and creative expression is vital to the well-being of every citizen. SEPLSO supports the ALA Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read Statement. The guidelines contained within this policy are intended to ensure unbiased and inclusive selection of all subjects and topics from all viewpoints.

The purpose of the Southeastern Public Library System of Oklahoma materials selection policy is:

- a) To provide guidelines for the staff as they select materials for the libraries they are responsible for.
- b) To acquaint the general public with the principles of selection used to acquire materials for the libraries.

Service Population

SEPLSO provides access to ideas, information and creative works for all residents living or working in its service areas. We recognize the diversity of those we serve. In general, resources are chosen to create a broad collection, and efforts are made to represent varied points of view on controversial topics. All learners are welcome to use our collection in their quest for knowledge, but it is not the aim of the library to serve as a substitute for school, academic or specialty libraries.

Responsibility for Selection

SEPLSO staff members, using the criteria listed below, along with reviews and other standard selection tools, select materials for purchase. Branch Librarians and staff have selection authority delegated to them, but the final authority for selection resides with the Executive Director.

Formats Provided by SEPLSO

SEPLSO strives to provide all relevant formats to users. While books as a format remain a staple of library collections, others come and go. Sometimes formats must be removed from libraries for the sake of cost and space. New formats may also be sampled if SEPLSO believes they will help the library to reach more users. The list below describes the basic formats SEPLSO carries.

- A. Hardcover Books. Books are generally purchased in hardcover editions because of their durability.
- B. Trade Paperbacks. This format includes paperback books which are comparable in size to hardcover editions but which are typically lower in cost. They are preferred in those cases where the hardcover edition is extremely expensive and the title would be either used infrequently or would be removed from the collection in a few years.
- C. Mass Market Paperbacks This format includes paperback books that are smaller in size than the typical hardcover or trade paperback book. This format will only be added to the System's collections in rare cases. Individual branch libraries may manage paperback-exchange collections at their discretion.
- D. Serials. Serials includes periodicals, newspapers and annuals or continuations retained in the reference collections. They may include the following physical formats: print, microform, and computer-based. Decisions as to retention of back issue periodicals and reference annuals or continuations are made on a title-by-title case. The following factors must be considered in any retention decision: cost; usage rates; shelf space required or

computer system compatibility; availability of the title in another format such as microfilm or electronic format. The System generally retains those periodicals that have research value in print format. If back-issues of a particular title are available in database format, the Library may decide to retain print copies for a shorter period of time. Any periodical or newspaper that the Library determines should be retained for historic value may be retained in print format indefinitely.

- E. Microforms. Microforms are used primarily for long-term storage and preservation of historical/genealogy records and newspapers. Specialized microform collections may be purchased to complement the System's indexes. Reference materials may also be acquired in this format if the storage requirements or cost of the print format would be prohibitive.
- F. Video. Videos are selected in the DVD or Blu-Ray formats. SEPLSO does not purchase, accept or provide videos on VHS or older formats.
- G. Audiobooks. Audiobooks are selected primarily in CD format, but newer electronic formats are often purchased as well. SEPLSO does not purchase, accept or provide audiobooks on cassette or older formats.
- H. Large Print Books. Books printed in larger than 16-point type are defined as large print. The System attempts to provide a variety of titles in this format, particularly in fiction for the purpose of providing an alternative format for visually challenged customers. The large print format may also be considered for those books that are out of print in regular print formats.
- I. Downloadable Materials. Books and music that can be downloaded from home to a computer or other devices such as e-readers and tablets.
- J. Electronic Resources. This format includes on-line databases available via the Internet. Citation databases provide references to sources of information rather than the actual text or information. Full-text databases include complete articles, documents, and any other resources that provide actual text and information.
- K. Other media.

The following are formats that SEPLSO will not carry:

- Rare books: Since it is the public library's function to make materials available to all users, The System does not collect rare or unusual materials that require special handling.
- Textbooks: The System does not buy textbooks used by local schools, colleges or universities.
- Outdated media such as audio cassettes or VHS.
- Works of art.

Selection Criteria for Purchasing New Materials

The following criteria are considered by selectors when purchasing new materials:

- a) Citizen demand or interest.
- b) Inclusion of an unrepresented or underrepresented subject within the current collection. SEPLSO strives to create a balanced collection that represents all viewpoints and all subjects. Materials that are important documents of the times may be added.
- c) Reputation of the author and publisher. Preference will be given to well-reputed publishers and authors.
- d) Artistic merit. Materials that have achieved recognition with awards or lauded by peers within their profession will receive favorable consideration.

- e) Cost. As SEPLSO strives for responsibility with taxpayers' dollars, we try to purchase materials in formats that last longer and are reasonably priced.
- f) Professional judgement. Materials that have received positive reviews in standard library reviewing sources will receive favorable consideration.

Because it is not possible to personally read, view, or listen to the large number of books and audio-visual materials published, selectors rely on reviews, lists of award-winning titles and standard bibliographies to guide them in selection. Reviews found in professional and general periodicals, as well as regional newspapers, are the primary source for critical review information.

Policy on Controversial Materials

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

In order to represent the diversity of thought within the System's service area, it is very important that the System's collection contain materials representing differing points of view on public issues. The System does not endorse particular beliefs or views, nor does the selection of an item express or imply an endorsement of the viewpoint expressed by the author. Library materials will not be marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of the contents, nor will items be sequestered, except for the purpose of protecting locally significant items from theft or damage.

There may be occasions when a resident of the System's service area may be concerned about a particular item in the System's collection. If the resident wishes the System to reconsider material that is in the collection, a Request for Reconsideration form is available at branch libraries. This form must be completed in its entirety and returned to a Library staff member who will forward it to the Executive Director. Once the form is received, the Executive Director will form a committee of professional librarians who will meet to review the Statement, as well as the criteria used in selecting the item, and the reasons for including the item in the collection. A written response from the Director will be sent within four weeks.

In the event that the resident who initiated the Request for Reconsideration is not satisfied with the response of the Director, they may arrange to meet to discuss the matter with the Director. This must be done within fourteen days of receiving the written response. If the resident is not satisfied after this meeting, they may ask to be placed on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Southeastern Public Library System of Oklahoma Board.

The Board, after hearing the complaint, may either wish to appoint a special review committee or make a decision regarding the item in question. In either case, a letter will be sent to the resident informing him of the Board's decision. The decision of the Southeastern Public Library System of Oklahoma Board is final.

Policy on Gift Materials

The Library may accept any and all gifts of material, subject to the clear understanding that the disposition of donated material is reserved to the Library based on the same standards used for purchase of resources. Donated items which are not added to the collection will be discarded on

the same basis as library resources. If requested, donor recognition labels may be added to gift items.

Collection Maintenance: De-selection, Replacement

De-selection (weeding) and replacement decisions, like selection decisions, are based on the overall goals and mission of the library. The following categories of materials should be considered for de-selection: worn or mutilated items; duplicate copies of seldom used titles; materials which contain outdated or inaccurate information; superseded editions of specific titles; and materials no longer of interest or demand.

Library Bill of Rights, American Library Association

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

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

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

The ALA 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.

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](#)