

/CITY OF CORVALLIS

COUNCIL POLICY MANUAL

POLICY AREA 4 - LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

CP 93-4.11 Public Library Policy for Selecting and Discarding Materials

Adopted February 21, 1993

Revised October 1999

Revised May 20, 2002

Revised November 7, 2005

Revised November 3, 2008

Affirmed November 7, 2011

4.11.010 General Statement of Purpose

- a. The Corvallis City Council and the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library Board recognize that American democracy functions only if the full range of human thought and ideas are accessible to the people and if proponents of various points of view are free to fully and openly make their cases, however popular or unpopular they may be, before the individual and collective judgement of their fellow citizens.
- b. This principle is guaranteed in the First Amendment of the Constitution which protects the free expression of ideas. It is exemplified by American public libraries which provide access to those ideas in accordance with the Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read Statement, and the Freedom to View Statement, which are appended to this policy.
- c. Thus, the library collection, protected by the First Amendment, is a marketplace of ideas contained in varied and divergent materials.
- d. The collection of the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library is designed to fulfill this ideal. Forms of expression that are unprotected by the First Amendment will not be included in the collection.
- e. This policy covers materials selected for inclusion in the library's collection. Use of the Internet is covered by the library's *Internet Access Policy*; free distribution items are included in the *Library Displays, Exhibits, and Bulletin Boards Policy*.

4.11.020 Selection Policy for Library Materials

4.11.021 Breadth and Diversity

- a. The library collection, consisting of various formats, will be selected and maintained to provide materials to assist each individual to acquire or to adapt the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in self-government, to become more productive, to achieve economic success, and to enhance humanity and the enjoyment of life according to the full exercise of free choice.
- b. The library collection will be an excellent and diverse source of information. In pursuit of excellence, the library collection will include as wide a selection as possible, and subjects will be covered in sufficient depth to meet anticipated and expressed needs.
- c. The library will favor no viewpoint.
- d. The Corvallis City Council and the Library Board recognize that full information on issues of public concern may require access to information sources which exemplify those concerns. Individual items which in and of themselves may be controversial or offensive to some may appropriately be selected if their inclusion in the collection will contribute to the overall value of the collection to the community served.

The Corvallis City Council and the Library Board believe that reading, listening and viewing are individual, private matters. While anyone is free to select or reject materials, the freedom of others to read or inquire cannot be restricted. Parents and guardians have the responsibility to guide and direct the reading, listening and viewing choices of their own minor child(ren). The library does not stand "in loco parentis."

4.11.022 Selection Authority and Criteria

- a. Selection of library materials is vested in the Director of the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library. The Director may authorize members of the staff who are qualified by reason of education and training to assist with selection. Such library materials shall be deemed to have been selected by the Board as advisors to the Corvallis City Council.
- b. Factors to be considered in adding specific materials to the library collection shall include: present collection composition, collection development objectives, interest, demand, timeliness, audience, significance of subject, diversity of viewpoint, physical condition of the material, and effective expression. No materials shall be excluded

because of the race, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political or social view of the author.

- c. The library encourages public suggestion of items and subjects to be considered for inclusion in the library collection. Suggestion forms are available at all service points and on the library's web page.

4.11.023 Concerns and Complaints regarding Materials

- a. The Corvallis City Council and the Library Board recognize the right of individuals to question materials in the library collection. An individual questioning material in the library collection may ask the library staff about such materials. Designated staff members will discuss the matter with the individual and give the patron a copy of this policy.
- b. An individual still questioning library materials may state her/his opinion in writing on a form provided by the library. After the Director receives the completed form, the opinion and the material in question will be reviewed by the Selection Review Committee. The Review Committee, designated annually by the Director, determines if the material meets the criteria of this policy and will reply to the individual in writing as soon as practical.
- c. The Corvallis City Council and the Library Board consider all materials selected under this policy constitutionally protected under the First Amendment unless the materials are determined unprotected by judicial action. Material under court consideration will remain in the active collection and not be considered for removal until the judicial determination is made and all appeals completed.
- d. Patrons wishing to express concerns to the Board about materials in the collection will be heard during a regular meeting under the agenda item "Visitor Propositions" or other public time for public expression.
- e. The Library Board as advisors to Corvallis City Council, after hearing a patron complaint, shall determine if the material has been reviewed in accordance with this policy and that appropriate library procedures have been followed.

4.11.024 Access to Collection

The library collection will be organized and maintained to facilitate access. The Library will not label, sequester, or alter materials because of controversy surrounding the material.

4.11.030 Discarding Library Materials

The Corvallis City Council and the Library Board recognize that discarding materials from the collection is an important part of maintaining the library collection. The discard practices of the library shall include the same factors as the selection policy and is not intended to sanction removal of library materials based upon any controversy.

4.11.040 Review and Update

This policy for the selection and discarding of books and all other library materials is to be reviewed and updated every three years.

Appendix to CP 93-4.11: Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read Statement, and Freedom to View Statement

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.

- 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 18, 1948, by the American Library Association Council; amended February 2, 1961; January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

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 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.

Adopted June 25, 1953, by the American Library Association Council and the Association of American Publishers Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.

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 guarantee 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.

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.