

Oakland Public Library, Maine

POLICIES

OF THE

OAKLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

Adopted by Town Council: February 14, 2024



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Oakland Public Library Policies

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Mission Statement

The Oakland Public Library is a source of reliable information and materials in many formats. It strives to meet the educational, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of the entire community in a welcoming and respectful atmosphere.

GENERAL POLICIES

User Policy

1. All residents and/or taxpayers of the Town of Oakland are eligible to use the library's services free of charge. Others may use the library free of charge but will be assessed a yearly fee for borrowing privileges.
2. Oakland students in kindergarten (aged 5 years) through age 17 years old may receive a library card with parental/guardian permission. Preschoolers' materials will be checked out under a parent's/guardian's card.
3. Users must report any change of address or telephone number to the library.

Circulation Policy

1. Most library materials are loaned for a two-week period. Some materials have shorter circulation times. Items such as reference materials and some historical materials do not circulate but may be used at the library.
2. Patrons may request that a particular item be reserved.
3. Any materials borrowed from the library may be renewed for an additional two-week period, if not on reserve. The library staff will not automatically renew books for any patron.
4. Materials returned late will be assessed a fine per item, per day. Circulation privileges will be withheld if a patron accrues excessive fines. The Library Director may impose limitations on those patrons who continually abuse borrowing privileges.
5. It is essential that materials be returned on time. It is costly and time-consuming to search for overdue materials. Other patrons are denied the use of materials that have not been returned. Because all library materials are the property of the Town of Oakland, failure to return any materials is theft of property and a civil offense. Should any patron retain materials six months overdue without a replacement or return agreement, the library shall turn the patron's name over to the Police Department.
6. Damage to library materials beyond reasonable wear, and all losses, shall be paid for by the borrower.

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Other Services

1. Internet service is available at the library. The Oakland Public Library's *Internet Acceptable Use Policy* must be read, understood, and signed before access is granted.
2. A photocopy machine is available for public use. A per copy fee is charged.
3. Special programs are offered by the library throughout the year, for example: Preschool/Children's Storytime, Summer Reading Program, Book Talks, Book Groups, etc.
4. The library has a Large Print collection and is a participant in the Maine State Library Talking Book Collection for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.
5. Interlibrary loan services are available upon request. A postage fee may be charged.
6. Under special circumstances, library materials may be home-delivered.

Patron Responsibilities and Rules of Conduct

The Oakland Public Library's facility must be a safe space where people show respect for one another and share the space civilly. Library users must follow the rules of conduct below. The library addresses rules violations and reserves the right to have violators removed.

1. It is the patron's responsibility to maintain necessary and proper standards of behavior. Any conduct deemed inappropriate to the library or disturbing to other patrons can result in a written incident report (*see attached form*). Continued infractions may be grounds for removal from the library, suspension of library privileges, and/or police action.
2. **Be safe.**
Library users are not permitted to:
 - Engage in any illegal activity.
 - Smoke any substance, or use tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol, or illegal substances on library property.
 - Block entrances, aisles, or access to library materials.
 - Use sports equipment on library property.
 - Sleep in the library.
 - Be in the library without shoes or a shirt.
 - Perform medical procedures, handle medical equipment, or manage their own body in a way which may put other people at risk of infectious disease or other harm.
3. **Show respect for other library users.**
Library users are not permitted to:
 - Create a public disturbance.
 - Use obscene and/or abusive language or gestures.
 - Engage in harassment or threatening behavior.
 - Engage in sexual acts.

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- Solicit or gather signatures on library property.
- Engage in bathing or public nudity.
- Engage in cell phone use that disrupts other patrons or use cell phones in areas designated as quiet zones. Cell phones and pagers must be turned to vibrate or silent while in the library. Use of cell phones is permitted in the downstairs foyer area.
- Photograph, audio-record, or video-record any private third party lawfully entering, using, or occupying library property without the express consent of such third party. The security system of the library is exempt from this requirement.

4. Show respect for staff.

Library users are not permitted to:

- Impede staff from performing their duties.
- Engage in harassment or threatening behavior.
- Touch library staff.
- Inquire into the personal lives of staff.

5. Show respect for the facility.

Library users are not permitted to:

- Mutilate, damage, or deface any library materials or tamper with, displace, or unplug furniture or equipment.
- Bring pets into the building, other than service animals or animals used for library programs with permission granted by library staff; all animals must be under control at all times.
- Bring food or drink into the building. In special circumstances, food and drink may be served and consumed in the downstairs foyer area only. Other areas must be pre-arranged and approved by library staff.
- Have uncovered beverages.
- Put feet on tables, chairs, shelving, or other furniture.

6. Manage your personal property.

Library users may not:

- Leave personal property unattended, inside or outside the facility. Personal items left at the library by patrons will not be the responsibility of the library staff. Any items left for more than thirty (30) days will be disposed of at the discretion of the Library Director.
- Bicycles shall be left outside on the bicycle rack at the patron's own risk.
- Bring in personal property that exceeds a total volume of 24" wide x 32" deep x 36" high.
- Place personal property where it will block entrances, aisles, or access to library materials.

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7. Unattended Children Policy.

Definition of Unattended Children: Unattended children are children of any age who are apparently unaccompanied by a parent, guardian, and/or responsible caregiver in the library.

The Children's Library is reserved for use by children, their parents or guardians, and adults interested in children's literature.

- a. The Oakland Public Library is dedicated to providing a welcoming environment that encourages children to visit and use the library. Library staff is available to assist and support children with their use of library resources. Library staff will not assume responsibility for the supervision of young children in the library. Children younger than ten (10) years of age must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or designated person while in the library, even if the child is attending a library program.
- b. Parents, guardians, and/or caregivers are solely responsible for the safety and behavior of their children. They are advised that children, like all library users, are expected to comply with the library's Rules of Conduct Policy. Parents, guardians, and/or caregivers must inform themselves as to scheduled library closing times and be aware that a library facility sometimes may have to close unexpectedly due to emergencies or safety issues. It is the responsibility of parents, guardians, and/or caregivers to inform their children what they should do if they must leave the library unexpectedly.
- c. Disruptive children will be given one (1) warning and then asked to leave if the behavior persists. Parents/guardians may be notified of continued inappropriate behavior. Older children are expected to behave in a manner comparable to that of adult patrons.
- d. Library staff may call the police or other appropriate agency if a child is left unattended when the library facility closes or if a child otherwise appears to be at risk.

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Patron Behavior Incident Report

This form is to be used in conjunction with the Patron Responsibilities Policy:

It is the patron's responsibility to maintain necessary and proper standards of behavior. Any conduct deemed inappropriate to the library or disturbing to other patrons can result in a written incident report. Continued infractions may be grounds for removal from the library, suspension of library privileges, and/or police action.

Date: _____

Patron Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Description of Incident:

Warned Verbally _____

Repeat Offense _____

Library Staff Member(s) _____

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Computer and Internet Use Policy

The library provides computers and internet access to its patrons seeking information, communication, amusement, or employment. The internet does contain unregulated material that may be offensive and/or inaccurate. The Oakland Public Library has no control over what is found on the internet. If a patron is offended, or believes material found on the internet is inaccurate, the patron should contact the original producer or distributor of the information. The resources provided by the internet greatly enhance the library's traditional resources. In providing the community with access to the internet, the library offers an opportunity for people who may not otherwise have access to a computer.

Intellectual Freedom and Right to Privacy

The same standards of intellectual freedom, privacy, and confidentiality supported by the Oakland Public Library for traditional resources and services also apply to electronic media and the use of the internet. The library has a policy of open access to all parts of its collections including access to electronic resources. The use of these resources is not restricted by age, gender, race, or residency. Use is not prioritized by information need because all needs are valued equally. Supervision of children younger than 18 years of age is the responsibility of parents, guardians, or caregivers.

Access

The workstations owned and operated by the Oakland Public Library as well as any wireless device that connects to the internet through the library's network and used on library property will be used for educational, informational, and email only. They may not be used for unauthorized, illegal, or unethical purposes. Patrons may not send, receive, or display text or graphics that may be construed as obscene, or harmful. Computers in the children's area are for use by children 17 years and younger. They are equipped with a filter that limits their access to inappropriate sites. Our wireless service is filtered and provides internet access from anywhere in the building and in areas of the parking lot. It can be disarmed by library staff for adults needing more in the way of educational sites. Computers in the adult service area are for the use of individuals who are 18 years and older. Workstations should remain quiet areas and are designed to be used by one person at a time unless the operator is receiving instruction. No food or drinks are allowed in the computer area.

Children and Teens

As with all library materials, parents, guardians, and caregivers are responsible for their children's use of the internet. Oakland Public Library's computers are not to be used for unauthorized disclosure, use or dissemination of personal identification information of minors – this is prohibited. The staff does not control the websites that children and teens may select on the internet. Though, as previously mentioned, the children's computers are filtered. Parents, guardians, and caregivers are strongly encouraged to work with their children to develop acceptable family rules for internet use. To the extent practical, steps shall be taken to promote the safety and security of minors when using the Oakland Public Library online computer network to access electronic mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, or other forms of direct electronic communications.

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Downloading

Patrons may download information of pictures from the internet to their own USB storage devices or to their own email accounts. They may also use the library's printers to print copies of downloads at a charge. Under no circumstances should a user attempt to save downloads to the hard drive of any library computer. The library assumes no responsibility for damage to USB storage devices, or non-library computers that may result from downloading files from the internet.

Use of Workstations

The library recognizes that group work can be a valuable learning experience. However, if a group causes a disturbance or distracts other patrons, they will be asked to correct their behavior, disband, or leave the building. Suspension could happen if the Oakland Public Library staff feels threatened, or other patrons are in harm's way. In general, workstations are designed for use by one person at a time. All workstations are available on a first-come basis. Time on the computer is limited to 30 minutes. This time may be extended if no one else is waiting for a computer. Patrons who wish to use a computer must sign in at the service desk and log their start time. The library's online catalog can be accessed from the public computers at any time.

Patrons are expected to be knowledgeable in basic computer operations. Library staff do not offer individualized instruction. The library staff is not required to assist patrons with devices, wireless cards, configurations, or documents/files. The library and library staff cannot accept the liability of handling patron equipment and files.

Updated with Public Meeting on December 2, 2014

Updated with Public Meeting on January 24, 2024

Adopted by Town Council on February 14, 2024

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Reading Room Policy

Purpose

The Reading Room of the Oakland Public Library is primarily intended for use by library patrons. It is also available for use by community groups for presentation of informational or educational meetings and programs.

Policies

1. The Reading Room will be made available on an equitable basis regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting its use. Such use of the Reading Room does not imply endorsement by the library staff or the library board of said individuals or groups.
2. The Reading Room may be used for:
 - a. Meetings which are open to the public during the library's normal operating hours;
 - b. Lectures, panel discussions, film or slide presentations, group discussions, workshops or other similar functions;
 - c. Educational, cultural, intellectual, governmental, or charitable activities.
3. The Reading Room may NOT be used for:
 - a. Any purpose which may interfere with the regular operation of the library;
 - b. Programs involving sales, advertising, solicitation, or promotion of commercial products or services;
 - c. Personal, company, or family parties.
4. No admission fee, registration fee, nor donation may be sought from those attending meetings.
5. Users will agree to abide by all regulations of the library relating to the use of the facilities and accept responsibility for all damages caused to the building and/or equipment beyond normal wear and tear.

Procedures

1. The Oakland Public Library will not charge a fee for the use of the Reading Room. Donations will be accepted.
2. The Reading Room may be reserved no more than 60 days in advance. Any such reservation(s) must be noted on the Library Director's Master calendar. Groups may reserve the Reading Room for a complete year if they meet on the same day of each month or every second month.
3. Individuals requesting use of the Reading Room will sign a copy of this policy to show that they have read and understood it.
4. Library programming will have priority use of the room. The Reading Room must remain accessible to library patrons during meeting times.
5. Groups using the Reading Room must leave it in a neat, clean, and orderly fashion, with furnishings in their original position. If not, the group/individual will be given notice that another such offense will result in denied access.
6. Food and drink are not allowed in the Reading Room. Refreshments may be served in the lower-level foyer area only. Smoking and alcoholic beverages are prohibited on library property.
7. Nothing may be attached to the walls of the library. Any signs (informational or directional) must be approved by the Library Director. All meetings must be supervised by an adult.
8. The library is not responsible for any items brought to the library by any group or individual attending a meeting.
9. The Library Board and Staff do not assume any liability for groups or individuals attending a meeting.
10. According to State Fire Code, the maximum capacity of the Reading Room is 75 people.

I have read, understood, and agree to comply with the Reading Room Policies.

Date _____

Printed name and signature _____

Address and telephone number _____

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Public Notice Bulletin Board Policy

Bulletin board materials may be submitted for posting by nonprofit organizations for civic, educational, or cultural purposes. Limited space allows only short-term notice. The Library Director must approve all postings and may prohibit postings that do not meet library standards. Library staff will place and remove postings promptly. The library will not be responsible for returning materials.

Displays and Exhibits Policy

As an educational and cultural institution, the Oakland Public Library welcomes exhibits and displays of interest, information, and enlightenment to the community. Displays of handiwork, historical material, nature study, or any other material deemed of general interest may be exhibited for a limited time. The Library Director shall accept or reject material offered for display on its suitability and availability of space.

The library assumes no responsibility for the preservation or protection, and no liability for possible damage or theft of any item displayed or exhibited. All items placed in the library are there at the owner's risk.

Areas available to the public for displays and exhibits are the glass exhibit case or other designated space depending on the exhibit. A release must be signed by the exhibitor before any artifact can be placed in the library.

Oakland Public Library Display and Exhibit Release Form:

I, the undersigned hereby lend the following works of art or other material to the Oakland Public Library for exhibition purposes. I hereby release said library from responsibility for loss, damage, or destruction while they are in the possession of the library.

Location for exhibited items: _____

Date(s) of exhibit: _____

Items will be picked up by: _____

Description of materials on exhibit:

Printed name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email address: _____

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Materials Selection and Collection Development Policy

Purpose

The materials selection and collection development policy provide the guidelines for building the library's collection of materials and other resources to meet the educational, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of the community. The policy is used by the library staff in the selection of materials and serves to acquaint the general public with the principles of selection.

The *Library Bill of Rights* and *The Freedom to Read Statement* have been endorsed by the Oakland Public Library and are integral parts of the policy (See Appendix). The ultimate responsibility for selection of library materials rests with the Library Director who operates within the framework of the policies determined by the Oakland Public Library Advisory Board.

Criteria for Section

1. The main points considered in the selection of materials are:
 - a. Individual merit of each item
 - b. Popular appeal/demand
 - c. Suitability of material for the clientele
 - d. Existing library holdings
 - e. Budget
2. Consideration is given to reviews, recommendations of library patrons and staff, and the development of the library collection.

Reconsideration of Library Materials

Although materials are carefully selected, there can arise differences of opinion regarding suitable materials. Patrons requesting the material be withdrawn from or restricted within the collection must complete a "*Statement of Concern About Library Materials*" form that is available at the library. The inquiry will then be placed on the agenda of the next regular meeting of the Oakland Public Library Advisory Board.

Supplemental Materials

The library is a participant in the Maine State Library Talking Book Collection for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Interlibrary loan is available to obtain materials from other libraries. A postage fee will be charged. Special collections are occasionally available.

Gifts and Donations

The library welcomes gifts of books and other materials, but inclusion of gift items in the collection is governed by the same principles and criteria applied to the selection of items for purchase. (See **Gift Policy**).

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Statement of Concern About Library Materials Form

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email _____

Resource on which you are commenting:

- ☐ Book ☐ Audio-Visual Resource ☐ Magazine
☐ Newspaper ☐ Content of Library Program
☐ Other: _____

Title: _____

Author/Publisher: _____ Producer/Date: _____

1. What brought this resource to your attention?
2. To what do you object? Please be specific as possible.
3. Have you read, listened to, or viewed the entire content? If not, what parts?
4. What do you feel the effect of the material might be?
5. For what age group would you recommend this material?
6. In its place, what material of equal or better quality would you recommend?
7. What do you want the library to do with this material?
8. Additional comments:

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Gift Policy

Purpose

The library welcomes gifts of books and other materials. Inclusion of gift items in the collection is governed by the same principles and criteria applied to the selection of items for purchase. The library reserves the right to dispose of items not added to the collection in a manner it deems appropriate. Such items are often sold to benefit the library.

Types of Gifts

1. Books, pamphlets, periodicals, audiovisual materials, and other items are accepted with the understanding that the library has the authority to make whatever disposition of the materials deemed advisable, discarding them if conditions warrant.
2. Gifts of money, stocks, real property, art objects (such as portraits, antiques, and other museum objects) are accepted or rejected on the basis of suitability to the library's mission, décor, and availability of space for display, as well as the understanding that the library has the authority to make whatever disposition is deemed advisable, which may include sale, transfer to another agency, and so forth.
3. Memorial gifts will be accepted under the same conditions as all other gifts. A small plaque may be placed on these items at the discretion of the Library Director and/or Advisory Board.

Additional Terms of Acceptance

1. At the discretion of the Library Director, special collections of gift books that are deemed usable may be integrated into the regular collection.
2. Items requiring special housing or special handling may be unacceptable.
3. The library will not provide an appraisal for gifts of materials which are accepted for its collection or for sale. If requested, donors will be furnished with a receipt indicating how many items were donated. Gifts to the library may be deductible for income tax purposes. A tax advisor should be consulted for further information.
4. The Library Director may refer decisions on unusual gifts with significant policy implications to the Library Advisory Board for consideration.

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Advisory Board

Purpose

The Oakland Public Library Advisory Board is a strong advocate for the library. It represents the community and acts in an advisory capacity to the Library Director and to the Town government.

Board Responsibilities

1. Developing library policies
2. Assisting the Library Director in long range planning
3. Overseeing fund-raising

Board Membership

1. A Board Member must be a cardholder at the Oakland Public Library.
2. The Board is made up of eight members plus alternates.
3. New members must be approved by the Board.
4. Members are appointed for three-year, renewable terms and serve with no term limits.
5. The Board meets at least four times per year, usually in March, June, September, and December – first Tuesday of the month.
6. Members may be asked to resign for non-attendance at two of the year's meetings or non-support of the mission of the library.

Volunteers and Friends

Purpose

The Oakland Public Library Advisory Board encourages individuals and groups to volunteer their time and efforts in the service of the library. Volunteers are also recruited from community groups and local schools and through announcements posted on the library's bulletin board.

Volunteer Opportunities

1. Book processing
2. Children's Storytime
3. Special programs such as readings, demonstrations, or exhibits
4. Fund-raising
5. Landscaping
6. Library Aids/Substitutes
7. Newsletters
8. Other

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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 the 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
Amended February 2, 1961 and January 23, 1980
Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996,
by the ALA Council.

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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 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 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.

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The freedom to read is guaranteed in 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 of 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

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stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences I 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.

Oakland Public Library, Maine

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out 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.

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A Joint Statement by:

American Library Association

Association of American Publishers