

Materials Selection

Purpose

The Wolcott Public Library's Material Selection Policy serves as a guide for the selection and withdrawal of library materials. It also serves to inform the public as to the criteria upon which library materials are selected and withdrawn. This library supports intellectual freedom and subscribes to the Library Bill of Rights, The Freedom to Read Statement, and the related supportive documents of the American Library Association.

General Selection Policy

The selection policy seeks to serve the general user by building and maintaining an excellent and well balanced collection, within the limitations of budget and space. The Wolcott Public Library selects materials in accordance with guidelines stated by the American Library Association in the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom of Read statement.

Authority and responsibility for selection of materials is delegated by the Library Board of Trustees to the Library Director and the Director's designated staff. Materials shall be considered in terms of their merits and the audience for whom they are intended. The goal is to satisfy the informational, recreational, and educational interests of the community by being inclusive, not exclusive, in developing the collections.

Sources for Selection

Reviews in library and publishing industry periodicals are primary sources for materials selection. Reputable bibliographies, booklists by recognized authorities, and the advice of competent individuals and/or entities in specific subject areas also are used. Suggestions from library staff and the general public are considered, as well.

Criteria for Selection

Library materials are diverse in topic, format, and other characteristics. Each type of item must be considered in terms of its own merit and the audience for whom it is intended. No single set of selection criteria can be applied to all cases.

In general, the selection of books and other library materials will take into account the following criteria:

1. The appropriateness of the item to the needs and interests of library users and of the community as a whole
2. The timeliness and accuracy of the information
3. The competence of the presentation
4. The contribution of the item toward strengthening the existing collection
5. Suggestions from library staff and the general public
6. The value of the item based on literary or scholarly excellence and other inherent quality, considered without regard to popular demand
7. Budgetary limitations

In selecting fiction, it will be the library's goal to provide items which meet the needs of users of varied backgrounds, reading tastes, and interests.

It is the library's goal to build a balanced collection composed of materials of current popular interest as well as materials of permanent value. Popular demand items play a major role in material selection. On the other hand there are many great works of literature that are keystones of modern knowledge and culture but may not necessarily be high demand items. It is the library's policy to select popular-demand items as well as materials of permanent value, regardless of whether or not they will be widely used.

Materials for Children and Teens

As a rule, the children's collection contains materials best suited to the abilities and interests of library users from birth through grade 6, while teen materials are those best suited to the abilities and interests of library users from grade 7 through grade 12.

Children's and teen materials will be selected with the same care and judgment and following the same criteria as are adult materials.

Providing textbooks is the responsibility of the schools. The library's role is to provide supplementary materials to enrich the resources available to students and teachers through the educational system. Selection of materials for children and teens should not be made to duplicate school texts, but rather should consider the usefulness of the items for general library purposes. Textbooks may be purchased if such items constitute the best available source of information on a subject. Multiple copies cannot be purchased in response to student demands which the schools should properly be expected to meet.

Choice of Library Materials by Minors

The role of the parent or legal guardian in supervising the reading, listening, and viewing choices made by a minor child is recognized by this library.

The library staff and trustees are charged with the responsibility of providing free and equal access to library materials and services to all eligible people. Moreover, it is impossible for them to know or predict the opinions of parents and guardians regarding the specific borrowing selections made by minor children.

Therefore, it is the policy of the Wolcott Public Library that parents and guardians, not the library staff or trustees, are responsible for monitoring and approving the selection of materials made by minor children. It is the parents or guardians - and only these - who may restrict their children - and only their children - from borrowing specific library materials. Parents or guardians who wish their children not to have access to certain materials should accompany or otherwise advise their children. The library staff and trustees cannot and do not act in place of the parent or guardian.

Selection of materials for the community as a whole cannot be inhibited by the possibility that specific items of an advanced nature may come into the possession of minor children.

Withdrawal

An up-to-date, attractive, and reliable collection can be maintained only by purchasing and retaining appropriate materials, and by removing items that are damaged, outdated, inaccurate, duplicating, and otherwise no longer useful. The collection should be evaluated by authorized and qualified staff on a systematic and continuous basis to identify materials that should be withdrawn.

Gifts

The library accepts gifts of books and other collection materials without commitment as to final disposition. It assumes unconditional ownership of all items donated and retains the right to use or dispose of them as it sees fit.

Gift items must meet the same selection criteria as purchased materials. Items in poor physical condition or written in will not be kept. Duplicate copies of items already in the collection will be added only if needed. Gift materials will not be accepted with restrictions or conditions that necessitate special and separate housing, processing, or treatment.

Gifts of an archival nature will be treated differently. Items donated for archival purposes will be added to the collection to preserve the history of the town. If the library cannot maintain and/or preserve the item(s) in a cost efficient manner the item will be sent to the State library archives or Yale University archives, this will preserve the history of the town.

The library cannot give a dollar valuation for gifts of materials, but it will provide the donor with a statement verifying the number and type of materials donated and accepted, upon request.

Collection Maintenance

An up-to-date, attractive, and reliable collection is maintained by purchasing, retaining, and replacing useful materials, and by removing, on a systematic and continuous basis, items that are damaged, outdated, inaccurate, duplicating, no longer in demand, and/or otherwise no longer useful.

Requests for Reconsideration of Materials

Any patron who wishes to object to the presence of a particular item in the collection may do so by completing the Request for Reconsideration of Material form. After reviewing the complaint the Library Director will present the complaint to the Library Board of Trustees with his/her recommendation. The Library Board will review the complaint and the recommendation and will authorize the Director to issue a timely and final response to the user.

BALANCE AND NEUTRALITY

Public libraries have a responsibility to provide books and other materials presenting diverse points of view on the problems and issues of our time. It must be understood, therefore, that ownership of library materials does not constitute an endorsement by the library of the ideas or viewpoints expressed within those materials.

Selections of library materials are not made on the basis of any anticipated approval or disapproval by specific individuals or groups, but solely on the merits of the works in relation to building the collection and serving the needs and interests of library users and the community as a whole. While aware that one or more persons may take issue with the selection of specific items, the library does not have to remove from the collection items purchased in accordance with the criteria specified above. Nor will materials be marked in such a way as to indicate official approval or disapproval of viewpoint and content. Items are not separated from the general collection except for the purposes of protecting them from damage or theft. In all cases, the quality of resources will be judged on the content as a whole, not by detached excerpts.

Approved by the Wolcott Public Library Board, September 8, 2008

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September 8, 2008

WOLCOTT PUBLIC LIBRARY

*469 Bound Line Road
Wolcott, CT 06716
Phone: (203) 879-8110
Fax: (203) 879-8109*

Date _____

Dear _____:

I would like to thank you for your generous donation of _____. They will be sold at our next book fair conducted by the Friends of the Library.

Thank you for your support and we look forward in seeing you in our library.

Sincerely,

Kathy Giotsas, MLIS
Library Director

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Request for Reconsideration of Material

Title _____

Author/Artist/Composer_____

Publisher/Producer _____

Type of Media Book Video DVD
 CD Audio-book Magazine

Requested by _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Day _____ Evening _____

Complaint represents: Self

Name of Organization _____

Other Group _____

1. To what do you object? (Please be specific: cite pages, frames, etc.)
 2. What do you feel might be the result of reading/viewing/listening to this item?
 3. For what age group would you recommend this item?
 4. Is there anything good about this item?
 5. Did you read/view/listen to the entire item? YES NO
 6. Are you aware of the evaluation of this item by authoritative sources?
 7. What do you believe is the theme of this item?

€ Withdraw it from the collection

 Refer it to the Library Board

Signature _____ **Date** _____

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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 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 ALA Council; amended February 2, 1961; amended June 28, 1967; amended January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 24, 1996.

The Freedom to Read Statement

Approved by the Wolcott Public Library Board of Trustees
September 8, 2008

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.

Approved by the Wolcott Public Library Board of Trustees
September 8, 2008

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

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