

Materials Selection Policy
Commerce Township Community Library
Revised 3/28/2007
Revised 10/10/2017

The Commerce Township Community Library Materials Selection Policy exists to serve as a guide in the selection of materials and to inform the public about the principles upon which selections are made.

Principles of Selection

The objective of the Commerce Township Community Library is to provide groups and individuals of all ages in the community, with an organized, well balanced collection of materials which will stimulate education, advance knowledge, enhance recreation and serve as a core of reference information. Every effort shall be directed toward offering quality materials for all segments and ages of the immediate community, while being cognizant of the surrounding areas.

Maximum effort shall be directed toward maintaining a standard of excellence in materials selection for all segments of the community, striking a balance between public demand and diversity of material. The Library collection reflects, as closely as possible, the interests of all members of society, and attempts to meet the community's present, and future needs. The role of the Library is to provide access to materials which will allow individuals open access to information, and to allow said individuals to make their own decisions.

The Library recognizes that some of the materials chosen may be offensive or irrelevant to some individuals. Library users are free to limit their own library use to books and materials which are consistent with their individual tastes, and to reject for themselves and their children materials of which they do not approve. No user may restrict the freedom of others to read or inquire.

The inclusion of an item in the collection is not to be considered an endorsement, official or otherwise, by the Library. The Library neither approves nor disapproves of the views expressed in materials included in the collection.

Materials in the collection are arranged in a way to facilitate access to information. No restriction is placed on their use except for the purposes of protecting them from theft or damage.

Selection Criteria

Ultimate responsibility for materials selection rests with the Library Director who operates within the framework of policies approved by the Commerce Township Board of Trustees.

The day-to-day work of selection and evaluation is the responsibility of the staff of professional librarians.

The selection of materials is characterized by open-mindedness and responsiveness to the

changing needs of the citizens of Commerce Township. Materials are evaluated as complete works and not on the basis of a particular passage or passages.

All acquisitions, whether purchased or donated, are evaluated by the following standards. An item need not meet all of the criteria to be acceptable, nor will any single criterion be decisive.

- Public demand.
- Quality of content, including accuracy, timeliness, literary or artistic merit.
- Quality and suitability of the format.
- Social significance.
- Reputation of author and/or publisher.
- Inclusion in list/s of recommended titles, standard bibliographies, and/or award winners.
- Importance of subject matter to the collection.
- Scarcity of material on the subject and availability elsewhere.
- Price.

Suggestions from patrons are encouraged and will be given due consideration.

In selecting library materials for children, the Library's objective is to provide a collection that meets the informational, recreational, and cultural needs of children from birth to 17. However, resources of the entire Library are accessible to them as the need arises. Selection of adult material will not be restricted by the possibility that these materials may come into the possession of minors.

The collection contains materials which express a wide variety of views and are suitable for all ages and abilities. It is, therefore, the responsibility of parents or legal guardians to guide the reading, viewing, and listening choices of their children and young adults, and to decide what their children may or may not use from this collection.

In providing materials for student use the Library cannot provide multiple copies of individual books or textbooks for school assignments, nor can it duplicate subject materials extensively.

Collection Maintenance

In order to maintain a vital, current collection which meets the needs of the community, examination of materials is an ongoing process. When library books lose the value for which they were originally selected, they should be **reviewed and considered for withdrawal**. An item is considered for discard when it is:

- Obsolete, misleading or outdated.
- Worn beyond use.
- Damaged.
- No longer circulating and/or used for reference purposes.
- One of many copies of a formerly popular title.

Space availability and low circulation over a period of time are other factors that may influence the withdrawal decision.

Withdrawn materials are not automatically replaced. Replacement is considered in relation to adequate coverage in a specific subject area, availability of more current or better titles, suitability according to this selection policy and demand for the title.

Discarded library materials may not be reserved for specific individuals. They may be offered for sale, on a first-come, first-served basis, at the library. Donations of discarded materials may also be made, at the discretion of the Director, to neighboring libraries, educational institutions or charitable organizations.

Gifts

The Library accepts gifts of materials with the understanding that the Library may make whatever use of the material it feels appropriate. No restrictions on the Library's use of gift materials may be made by the donor.

Gifts become Library property upon receipt; they may not be reclaimed. Materials not needed in the collection will be placed in the Library's book sale; donated to other libraries, educational institutions or charitable organizations; or discarded. Donated materials added to the collection are subject to the same withdrawal and replacement criteria as materials purchased by the Library.

It is the policy of the Library not to accept special collections of gift materials if the condition of acceptance requires that they be kept together as a separate physical entity. Further, the Library shall not accept as a gift any printed or manuscript items, or any other objects, if the condition of acceptance requires permanent exhibition of the item or object.

Upon request a note of receipt will be issued for donated items. However, it is the donor's responsibility to determine the fair market value of the donated materials.

Reconsideration of Library Materials

Any library patron who is a resident of Commerce Township may question the presence of an item in the Library's collection. If the patron concludes that a specific item does not meet the guidelines of the Materials Selection Policy, he or she may complete a "Request for Reconsideration of Library Material" form. The completed form will be reviewed by the professional staff including the Library Director, and the patron will be informed of the disposition of the request.

Patrons not satisfied with this disposition may then appeal to the Library Advisory Board through the Library Director, who will forward the request to the Board along with staff recommendations. After reading the item in question and full consideration of the specific material, the Library Advisory Board shall make its determination in the matter. The patron shall be notified of this action in a timely manner. If the patron is still not satisfied with the disposition of the matter, the patron may appeal it to the Commerce Township Board of

Trustees for final determination.

This policy, as well as any Library policy, will be made available on the Library's website, or in print format upon request.

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.

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.