

# **BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

## **I. Objectives**

The purpose of the Bethlehem Public Library is to provide all individuals in the community with carefully selected books and other materials to aid the individual in the pursuit of education, information, research, pleasure, and the creative use of leisure time.

Because of the volume of publishing, as well as the limitations of budget and space, the library must have a selection policy with which to meet community interests and needs.

The American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read Statement, and Freedom to View Statement have been endorsed by the Bethlehem Public Library Board of Trustees and are integral parts of this policy.

## **II. Responsibility for Selection**

The ultimate responsibility for selection of library materials rests with the library director who operates within the framework of the policies determined by the Bethlehem Public Library Board of Trustees. This responsibility may be shared with other members of the library staff; however, because the director must be available to answer to the library board and the general public for actual selections made, the director has the authority to reject or select any item contrary to the recommendations of the staff.

## **III. Criteria for Selection**

Materials acquired to meet objectives outlined in section I will meet professional standards of quality in content, expression and format.

The Library will not attempt to furnish materials for formal courses of study offered by schools of any type. The public library has materials for self-study, but it is not primarily designed to furnish reading required for academic study.

For subjects considered controversial, materials from more than one point of view should be represented, as long as those materials meet the criteria for selection.

The main points considered in the selection of materials are (in no particular order, and with knowledge that not all points will be considered for all items):

1. individual merit of each item
2. popular appeal/demand
3. intended audience of the material (e.g. items written for a general audience, rather than a highly specialized one)
4. existing library holdings
5. budget
6. local interest

7. timeliness
8. availability of material through other library sources
9. author's reputation or stature
10. accuracy of content

Reviews are a major source of information about new materials. The primary sources of reviews are (but are not limited to) Booklist, Library Journal, School Library Journal, NY Times Book Review and Core Collection books by publisher H.W. Wilson. Sources may be in print or on the internet.

The lack of a review or an unfavorable review shall not be the sole reason for rejecting a title which is in demand. Consideration is, therefore, given to requests from library patrons and books discussed on public media. Materials are judged on the basis of the work as a whole, not on a part taken out of context. No book will be necessarily chosen if it is considered of little merit.

Library patrons are an important part of the selection process. An individual request from a patron for a title may be honored if the request conforms to the guidelines outlined in this policy. Due to limited budget and space, not all patron requests can be purchased. Interlibrary loan may be used to obtain materials that are beyond the scope of our collection.

#### **IV. Digital Materials**

Bethlehem Public Library subscribes to the New Hampshire Downloadable Books Consortium in order to provide our patrons in good standing with downloadable eBook, audio books and magazines. These materials are selected by a committee of New Hampshire librarians, and their selection may not always conform to this policy.

The library also has access to several databases for research, which are licensed through the New Hampshire State Library.

#### **V. Interlibrary Loan**

Because of limited budget and space, the library cannot purchase all materials that are requested. Therefore, interlibrary loan is used to obtain from other libraries those materials that are beyond the scope of this library's collection.

In return for utilizing interlibrary loan to satisfy the needs of our patrons, the Bethlehem Public Library agrees to lend its materials to other libraries through the same interlibrary loan network. The Library is a member of NHAIS, the New Hampshire inter-library loan consortium. As a part of that consortium, the library makes every effort to have its current holdings listed in a catalog that is accessible by other libraries throughout the state.

All libraries have discretion as to whether to lend to another library. The policy of the Bethlehem Public Library is that no item that has been acquired or published in the prior six (6) months will be available to lend to, nor will be requested from, another library. Exceptions to this may occur at the Library Director's discretion.

## **VI. Gifts and Donations**

The Bethlehem Public Library encourages and appreciates gifts and donations intended to strengthen the library collection. The library accepts gifts of books and other materials with the understanding that they will be added to the collection only if appropriate and needed. If they are not needed because of duplication, condition, or do not conform to the selection criteria outlined in section I, the Library Director can dispose of them as he/she sees fit. Donors should request a meeting with the Library Director if considering a significant donation.

Memorial gifts of books or money are also accepted with suitable bookplates placed in the book. Specific memorial books can be ordered by the library on request of a patron if the request meets the criteria established by the Board. Gifts of specific titles will be accepted only after consultation with the library director. Book selection will be made by the director if no specific book is requested.

By law, the library is not allowed to appraise the value of donated materials, though it can provide an acknowledgment of receipt of the items if requested by the donor.

The Library will not accept the following donations:

1. Magazines or journals
2. Cassette tapes or VHS tapes
3. Encyclopedias
4. Any non-fiction book that could be considered a textbook, or has outdated information
5. Moldy, mildewed, badly stained, extensive highlighting or notes, or otherwise damaged items.

## **VII. Weeding**

An up-to-date, attractive, accessible and useful collection is maintained through a continual withdrawal and replacement process. Collections should change over time to reflect changes in the community, society and in the library's goals. When libraries do not weed regularly or consistently, patrons have trouble finding interesting and relevant materials. Weeding also helps identify gaps in the collection so that new purchases can be made and space can be created for new materials.

Bethlehem Public Library uses the CREW (Continuous Review, Evaluation and Weeding) method for weeding. CREW uses the acronym MUSTIE to indicate when an item should be removed from the collection.

- M**isleading and/or factually inaccurate;
- U**gly (worn out beyond mending or rebinding);
- S**uperseded by a new edition or a better source;
- T**rivial (of no discernable literary or scientific merit);
- I**rrelevant to the needs and interests of the community;
- E**lsewhere (the material may be easily borrowed from another source).

Other criteria include age, condition, frequency of circulation, and duplicate copies. Decisions are based on some combination of these criteria. Replacement of worn volumes is dependent upon current demand, usefulness, more recent acquisitions, and availability of newer editions.

The responsibility and authority for weeding all materials rests ultimately with the Library Director and is authorized by the Board of Trustees. The Director may delegate weeding of materials in selected areas to members of the Library staff. Withdrawn materials will be handled in a similar manner and under the same authority as donated materials.

### **VIII. Potential Problems or Challenges**

The Bethlehem Public Library recognizes that some materials are controversial and that any given item may offend some patrons. Selection of materials will not be made on the basis of anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the basis of the principles stated in this policy.

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

Library materials will not be marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of their contents. Viewpoint-neutral labels may be used, but these are different in intent from attempts to prejudice or discourage users or restrict their access to resources. Labeling as an attempt to prejudice attitudes is a censor's tool, which is opposed by Bethlehem Public Library and the American Library Association.

No library material will be sequestered except to protect it from damage or theft.

### **IX. Challenged Materials**

The Bethlehem Public Library selected materials based on the criteria in this policy. The Library does not advocate particular views or beliefs but attempts to provide free access to a well-balanced collection of topics, appropriate for opinions to all members of the community. Each individual has the freedom and responsibility for making choices about what to read.

Although materials are carefully selected, there can arise differences of opinion regarding suitable materials. Patrons requesting that material be withdrawn from or restricted within the collection may complete a "Request for Reconsideration of Material" form which is available in the library. The Library Director will reconsider the items carefully to determine whether it meets the above criteria, and relay that finding to the patron. In addition, the Director will report the book challenge to the American Library Association. If a patron is dissatisfied with the Director's decision, they may contact the Library Board of Trustees and the request will be placed on the agenda of the next regular meeting of the Library Board. The Library Board's decision will be rendered in writing and considered final.

Adopted: February 10, 2020

Revised and approved August 15, 2023

**Appendix A**  
**Bethlehem Public Library**  
**ALA 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 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

**Appendix B**  
**Bethlehem Public Library**  
**ALA Freedom to Read Statement**

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. *It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.*

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.*

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. *There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.*

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet

prepared. In these matters values differ and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

*5. It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.*

The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

*6. It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.*

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

*7. It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.*

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.



This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.

**Appendix C**  
**Bethlehem Public Library**  
**ALA 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.  
Endorsed January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council

**Appendix D**  
**Bethlehem Public Library**  
**Request for Reconsideration**

The Bethlehem Public Library Board of Trustees have established a materials selection policy and a procedure for gathering input about particular items. Completion of this form is the first step in that procedure. If you wish to request reconsideration of a resource, please return the completed form to the library director.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Do you represent self? \_\_\_\_ Or an organization? \_\_\_\_

Name of Organization \_\_\_\_\_

1. Resource on which you are commenting:

\_\_\_\_ Book (e-book) \_\_\_\_ Movie \_\_\_\_ Magazine \_\_\_\_ Audio Recording \_\_\_\_ Other

Title

\_\_\_\_\_

Author/Producer

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What brought this resource to your attention?

3. Have you read the Library's Collection Development Policy? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

3. Have you examined the entire resource? If not, what sections did you review?

4. What concerns you about the resource? Please be specific, citing pages or sections.

5. Are there resource(s) you suggest to provide additional information and/or other viewpoints on this topic?

6. Is there anything good about this resource?

7. Are you aware of critical judgment of this resource? If yes, please summarize such judgments.

8. What action are you requesting the committee consider?

\_\_\_\_\_ Withdraw it from the library collection

\_\_\_\_\_ Restrict its use. To whom? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Reevaluate for collection development

\_\_\_\_\_ Other. Please be specific \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of complainant \_\_\_\_\_

Library Card Number \_\_\_\_\_