



Wadleigh Memorial Library

49 Nashua Street Milford, NH 03055

POLICY: 200 - 002

GROUP: MATERIALS SELECTION

TITLE: **Weeding Policy**

Policy Overview

Weeding the collections is as vital a procedure as adding to the collections. The goal of consistent and routine weeding is to ensure that the collection remains useful and relevant to the community. Each item, through its quality, reliability, current usefulness and appearance must contribute to the reliability, reputation, and attractiveness of the Library. Weeding should be done without bias by individuals whose personal preferences or interests will not dominate their work. Librarians are expected to include in the collection, when available, materials that reflect all sides of controversial issues. Withdrawn materials in good condition will be disposed of in a responsible manner.

Responsibility for the Collection

Librarians are responsible for judging the needs of their collection and community. Final authority for collection development and weeding policies rests with the Library Board of Trustees. They have delegated the responsibility of implementing this policy to the Library Director who may in turn delegate specific areas to various staff members.

Weeding Criteria

General Considerations

Every title requires individual judgment. Each book is considered from the standpoint of its value to the community as well as in relation to other books on the shelf. Materials are candidates for weeding if they are factually inaccurate or so out of date they do not include current information, worn or damaged beyond mending or rebinding, superseded by a new edition or a better book on the subject, irrelevant to the needs of the community and/or unused by our patrons. Duplicate titles no longer in demand should be withdrawn. The availability of materials through interlibrary loan allows books of limited appeal to be weeded and space given to more useful material. Generally speaking, items which have not circulated in 3-5 years should be weeded - exceptions being works of historical or literary value and unique or singular titles. See below for more specific criteria.

000s: General

Almanacs (may also be in 300s) and books on computers are seldom useful after 3 years.

100s: Philosophy & Psychology

Popular psychology and self-help books (may also be in the 600s) quickly become outdated. More scholarly works on psychology should be replaced after 5-8 years.

200s: Religion & Mythology

The collection should reflect the interests of the community. Try to have something current on each of the major religions. Shelf life is generally 10 years except for areas of rapid change. Books on mythology may be kept indefinitely unless in poor condition.

300s: Social Sciences

Circulate older volumes of almanacs no more than 3-5 years. Law, government, and education materials are often used for school reports and debates so they may have some historical value; otherwise they should be replaced after 10 years. It is very important, however, to remove outdated statute information. Books on finance, college guides, job guides, and educational testing books become outdated quickly; replace every 3-5 years. Be sure the collection is balanced and current—especially for controversial topics.

400s: Languages

Foreign language and ESOL materials can wear out quickly and may need frequent replacement. It is only necessary to keep dictionaries and grammar instruction for languages spoken or studied in our geographic area.

500s: Pure Sciences

Basic, historical works on science (ex. Darwin's *Origin of Species*) should be retained indefinitely unless in poor condition. Mathematics, general biology, natural history, and botany books have a shelf life of 10 years or more but other sciences may be dated much sooner as new research supersedes earlier data. Continuously update new scientific materials and withdraw outdated volumes.

600s: Applied Sciences & Technology

Outdated medical materials can be misleading and even dangerous. With the exception of anatomy and physiology, books on medical topics more than 7 years old should be strongly considered for withdrawal. Try to keep up to date on what's "hot" and withdraw the rest. Materials on collector's items may be kept beyond 10 years unless in poor condition. Repair manuals for older cars and appliances should be retained as long as such items are generally used in our geographic area. Cookbooks, unless they do not circulate or are associated with a long past fad, should be retained unless in poor condition.

700s: Arts & Recreation

Histories of art and music should be kept if they are still circulating or fill a gap in the collection. Books on crafts may be retained if they contain basic technique and are well illustrated. Photography books should be checked for outdated technique and equipment. Books on sports should be weeded if they deal with personalities no longer of interest. Other areas should be evaluated for their currency.

800s: Literature

Regarding classic works of literature, keep the most recent edition that's in the best condition as well as relevant literary criticism. Be sure to check school reading lists to avoid withdrawing multiple copies of a work commonly studied in school.

900s: History, Travel and Geography

History books should be evaluated for demand, factual accuracy and interpretation. A balance of perspectives is ideal. Personal narratives and war memoirs from any of the wars may be weeded in favor of broader histories. Regarding travel and geographical materials, don't keep anything older than 2-3 years unless it has a significant amount of background or history information that you can't get anywhere else. Travel narratives may be kept longer - especially if they are of high literary or historical value. All local material and accounts in which local people have participated should be retained unless in poor condition or unused.

Biography

Unless the person is of permanent interest or importance, biographies should be weeded as demand stops. Keep biographies with literary value unless in poor condition or unused.

Fiction

Discard works which are no longer popular; second and third copies of a work; and dated best-sellers. Retain works of durable demand or high literary merit.

Audiovisual

Worn out, damaged, and rarely used items may be weeded, as may items in outdated formats.

Reviewed and Approved 11/17/24

Reviewed and Approved 12/21/21

Approved and Amended 8/21/18

Approved 11/15/05

Board of Trustees

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; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

The Freedom to Read Statement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We therefore affirm these propositions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

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

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

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

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics

or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

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

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

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

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 for Free Expression](#)
[The Association of American University Presses](#)
[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](#)

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 guarantees 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.