

FLORIDA PUBLIC LIBRARY

CIRCULATION POLICY

Adopted by the Board of Trustees
October 2, 2017
Revised November 1, 2021
Revised December 8, 2025

FLORIDA PUBLIC LIBRARY CIRCULATION POLICY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Registration Guidelines.....	1
Eligibility for Library Cards.....	2
Confidentiality.....	3
Standard Loan Rules.....	3
Loan Periods.....	4
Library Charges.....	5
Materials Selection.....	6
Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials (Appendix I)	8
Confidentiality Law (Appendix II)	9
Library Bill of Rights (Appendix III)	10
Free Access to Libraries for Minors (Appendix IV)	11
The Freedom to Read (Appendix V)	13
The Freedom to View (Appendix VI)	16
American Library Association Code of Ethics (Appendix VII)	17
Libraries: An American Value (Appendix VIII)	18
Statement on Labeling (Appendix IX)	19
Statement on Ratings (Appendix X)	20

REGISTRATION GUIDELINES

The Florida Public Library (FPL) provides library services to all residents of the Florida Union Free School District. An application must be completed for every person wishing to borrow materials from the Library. Patrons from other library districts are encouraged to use the Library and may do so by using the Ramapo Catskill Library System Library (RCLS) Library Card provided by their home library.

Adult Applicants:

Identification is required for all adult patrons (age eighteen and older) before a card can be issued. Up to two forms of ID, including a current and identifiable picture that includes the applicant's name printed on the picture ID, are required. Acceptable picture IDs include driver's license, passport, school ID, non-driver's identification issued by the DMV. Acceptable proof of a school district address includes tax bill, utility bill, rent receipt, official mail or a family member's library card. The following are not acceptable proof of address: personal mail, personal check, P.O. Box address.

A patron with acceptable picture ID, but without address verification can request that the library mail them a postcard to their street address. Upon receipt of the postcard, it can be brought to the Library and will serve as address verification.

Juvenile Applicants:

Children who have entered Pre-Kindergarten are eligible to receive a library card. A card issued to a child under the age of eighteen (18) must have the signature of a parent or guardian acknowledging responsibility for library materials checked out by the child. The parent/guardian must be present at the time of registration and present up to two forms of ID, unless the application is submitted through the local school district. A guardian must be a person who lives with the applicant at least part of the time or year and is willing to accept responsibility for the child's library materials.

In keeping with the principles of equal access to information and materials for all patrons, it is the policy of the Library not to act in loco parentis. The Library will not restrict any patron, including children, from access to any type or class of materials nor from any information in the Library. Guidance on selection of materials by children is at the discretion of the parent or guardian. We encourage parents and guardians to discuss any restrictions directly with their children.

Local Agencies:

Library cards may be issued to local agencies which serve groups of people. Examples of this may be: schools, day care programs, group homes, etc. Materials checked out on these cards are for use by the staff of these agencies in their capacity as an employee of the agency, not for their individual use. The employee must show proof of ID and proof of employment at the time of registration.

ELIGIBILITY FOR LIBRARY CARDS

Florida Public Library Cards:

Any individual residing in the Florida Union Free School District is eligible for a Florida Public Library card. Individuals who live out of the school district, but who own a business in the district are eligible for a Florida Public Library Card. These individuals should use the business address as their home address. In general, residents in these communities are eligible to receive a Florida Public Library Card: Village of Florida, Town of Warwick (parts of) and Town of Goshen (parts of).

Ramapo Catskill Library System Cards

The Ramapo Catskill Library System is the library system to which libraries in Orange, Rockland, Sullivan and southern Ulster Counties belong. RCLS is the home of the automated circulation system which serves these libraries. RCLS member libraries use a common library card, the RCLS card, which is issued locally at an individual's home library. The Florida Public Library card and its barcode can be used at any RCLS member library. All permanent cardholders in the RCLS service area are eligible for free direct access borrowing upon presentation of their RCLS card.

Temporary Cards

Temporary Florida Public Library cards may be issued to individuals who are residing in the Florida Union Free School District for a period of less than six (6) months. These individuals must supply photo ID and address verification and pay a fee of \$40.00 in cash. At the end of the temporary residence, the \$40.00 fee will be refunded by check and by mail, provided that all materials have been returned in good condition and that all library charges have been paid. Temporary Florida cardholders may borrow a maximum of ten (10) items at a time from the Florida Public Library only and place up to five (5) holds at a time.

Non-Resident Cards

Individuals who live outside the RCLS Service area, but in a community that supports public library services, may apply for an FPL library card. These cards are issued for an annual fee per household. The fee is equal to the per capita Library expenditure for residents of the Florida Union Free School District. This fee serves in lieu of the taxes a resident would normally pay to support the library. This card is considered a family card and can be used by each member of the family residing in the same household and at the same address. These cards may be used at all libraries in RCLS and cardholders are entitled to all FPL borrowing privileges. Please note that residents of the Minisink Valley School District are not eligible to receive FPL library cards.

Replacement Cards

If an individual's library card is lost, stolen or damaged, a replacement card may be obtained by paying a fee of \$5.00 per card. Replacement cards will be issued only to the individual named on the card. If no registration card is on file, the individual must register as a new applicant with required ID. An individual may have only one library card at a time. Once replaced, a card is no longer valid and should be destroyed if found. The Library encourages patrons to make every attempt to locate lost cards before replacement as the \$5.00 fee is not refundable even if the original card is later found. The cardholder is responsible for all materials checked out on their card, therefore lost or stolen cards should be reported immediately to prevent liability for future borrowed material.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The choice of books and other library materials and the use of the informational resources of the Library are essentially an individual's private matter. The Library shall make every reasonable and responsible effort to see that information about a patron and their choices remains confidential. In accordance with Article 45, Section 4509, of the New York State Civil Practice Law and Rules (Appendix II attached), no personally identifying information about a library patron, including but not limited to, a patron's name; whether an individual is a registered borrower or has been a patron; a patron's address; a patron's email address; a patron's telephone number; or the Library's circulation records and their contents relative to any patron shall be given, made available, or disclosed to any individual, corporation, institution, government agency, or law enforcement agency without a court order or a court-ordered subpoena.

STANDARD LOAN RULES

The Florida Public Library subscribes to the borrowing policies of the Ramapo Catskill Library System. Library materials are loaned to all registered Florida Public Library patrons and to patrons of other libraries who have current RCLS library cards. Patrons are responsible for all materials checked out on their library cards. There may be no more than fifty (50) items checked out at one time on each card.

Check out of DVDs, video games, Playaway Launchpads, museum passes, literacy kits, hotspots and items in the Library of Things will be limited due to their popularity. Any materials borrowed from the Library are subject to a due date and the patron is expected to respect that date. A late fine will be imposed if materials are returned to the Library after the due date.

The patron must have their library card with them at the time they check out or renew materials either in the library or by telephone or the patron may have their library card barcode stored on a Florida Public Library approved app. At this time, the only approved app is the RCLS Go App. A photo of the library card will not be accepted. The Library card and its number is the means by which patrons are identified in our records. Most materials may be renewed and this can be done in person, by telephone or online.

Patrons may reserve library materials in person, by telephone or online. Staff members will research the location of materials and, if necessary, place an out-of-system request through Southeastern Access to Libraries (SEAL) or through OCLC on the RCLS website.

LOAN PERIODS

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Reference materials are those which are in such high demand or of such high value that they may not be borrowed from the Library. If necessary, a patron may make duplicate copies of the pages of Reference materials at a cost of \$.20 per page.

IN-HOUSE ONLY MATERIALS

In-House Only materials are those which may be used by staff and patrons only on Library premises. Materials in the Professional Collection may be used by patrons in house, by request. Other materials may be temporarily assigned In-House Only status due to high demand for school assignments. Copies may be made at a cost of \$.20 per page.

NEW BOOKS, 14 DAY BOOKS,

A new book may be checked out for a period of fourteen (14) days and renewed twice if there is no reserve on the title. A new book is one which has been added to one of the Library's collections within the past six (6) months or one which is experiencing unusually high demand.

BOOKS, BOARD BOOKS, BOOK/AUDIO KITS, BOOKS-ON-CD, CDs

Books, Board Books, Book/Audio Kits, Books-on-CD and CDs may be checked out for a period of twenty-one (21) days and may be renewed twice if there is no reserve on the title.

PERIODICALS

Magazines may be checked out for a period of twenty-one (21) days and renewed twice if there is no reserve on the title. The Library keeps magazines as space allows. Most magazine articles may be accessed through the Library's online databases.

NEW DVDs, DVDs, VIDEO GAMES

DVDs and video games may be checked out for a period of seven (7) days. New DVDs may be checked out for three (3) days or seven (7) days for multiple disc titles. A new DVD is one which has been added to the collection within the last six months or one which is experiencing unusually high demand. All materials may be loaned through Interlibrary Loan unless specifically marked as non-circulating. A total of ten (10) DVDs including a maximum of five (5) new DVDs and five (5) Video Games may be checked out per library card (a total of fifteen (15) visual disc media items.) DVDs and Video Games may be renewed twice if there is no reserve on the title.

MUSEUM PASSES

Museum passes may be checked out by FPL cardholders only for a period of three (3) days and may not be renewed. A maximum of one (1) pass may be checked out per household at the same time.

LIBRARY OF THINGS, PLAYAWAY LAUNCHPADS

Playaway Launchpads and items in our Library of Things collection have a lending period of seven (7) days. Patrons may borrow up to two (2) pieces of equipment. Mobile hotspots are limited to one (1) device per household. You must contact the library to renew these items.

INTER-LIBRARY LOAN (ILL)

All materials owned by the Library, with the exception of Reference materials, In-House Only materials, Launchpads, museum passes, mobile hotspots and board books, may be loaned to patrons of other RCLS libraries through Inter-Library Loan, subject to the usual loan periods, renewal policies and overdue fines. Materials borrowed from other libraries through ILL are subject to the loan periods, renewal policies and overdue fines of FPL. ILL requests may be made in person, by telephone or online.

SOUTHEASTERN ACCESS TO LIBRARIES (SEAL)

All materials owned by the Library, with the exception of Reference materials, In-House Only materials, Launchpads, museum passes and board books may be loaned to patrons of libraries outside RCLS through Southeastern Access to Libraries (SEAL.) All other materials owned by the Library may be checked out for twenty-eight (28) days and renewed at the discretion of the person-in-charge. Materials borrowed from other libraries through SEAL are subject to SEAL policies.

LIBRARY CHARGES

Materials are loaned by the Library with the understanding that the borrower will return them in the same condition and by the date established by the Library. If materials are returned after the close of business on the date due, overdue fines will be charged. Fines and other library charges will be brought to the patron's attention at the circulation desk. Borrowers will be notified of overdue items by mail or email. Borrowers may check the status of their library accounts online and renew eligible items before their due dates.

Overdue Fines

Overdue fines accrue daily. Fines charged shall be: \$.25 per item per day for new books; \$.20 per item per day for books, book/audio kits, books-on-CD and CDs; \$2.00 per item per day for DVDs, Video Games and Playaway Launchpads; Library of Things items; \$10 per day for Museum Passes.

Lost and Damaged Items

Materials which have an overdue fine of \$10.00 and which are listed on the borrower's record after thirty (30) days overdue are considered by the Library to be lost and the customer will be responsible for paying the cost of the item. The Library does not refund the payment for a lost item if it is found later. Materials that have been damaged to the extent that they must be withdrawn from the collection will be charged to the borrower's record. The Library will consider exact replacement of the item rather than payment. This request must be made to the Director.

Suspension of Privileges

In accordance with the RCLS ILL Policy governing all libraries, the Library will suspend a patron's borrowing privileges when his record exceeds \$10 in fines/fees.

This rule applies to all direct access patrons. Staff may use discretion in applying the rule to Florida patrons, except for claimed return items. When a patron has three claimed returned items on his record, a lost charge for the last item must be paid to restore borrowing privileges.

MATERIALS SELECTION

The authority and responsibility for selection of specific materials rests with the Director, and, under their direction, to the professional staff who are qualified for this activity by reason of education, training and experience. Selection decisions are governed by the following policy.

Procedure:

The Library staff utilizes their professional expertise and judgment, based on understanding of community needs and knowledge of authors and publishers, in the process of selecting materials. Staff are aided by authoritative professional Reviews (including those provided in Library Journal, Booklist, New York Times Book Review, Kirkus and School Library Journal), standard lists of basic works, recommendations of professional journals, and bibliographic essays prepared by subject specialists. Recommendations from the public are welcomed and will be given careful consideration in terms of overall objectives and the existing book collection.

Principles of selection:

The principles regarding the selection and retention or withdrawal of library materials are designed to implement the library objectives. The ultimate goal is the development and maintenance of a well-balanced collection of the best and most useful materials available in terms of the overall needs of the community and within the limits of budgetary restrictions. Intrinsic to this goal are certain fundamental principles which will ensure that the diversified interests and need of all the community are met. The Florida Public Library therefore endorses the "Library Bill of Rights" and "The Freedom to Read" statements of the American Library Association. (Appendices III & V attached).

All materials acquired should meet high standards of quality in content, expression and form. Factors to be considered in evaluating an item: factual accuracy and authoritativeness, effective expression, significance of subject, sincerity and responsibility of opinion, current usefulness, interest or permanent value. When judging the quality of materials, several standards and combinations of standards may be used, as some materials may be judged primarily on artistic merits while others are considered on scholarship, value as human documents, or ability to satisfy the recreational and entertainment needs of the community.

Each work should be considered as a creative unified whole with consideration given to the total purpose of the item. The form in which materials are acquired should be appropriate to the content and anticipated use. Additional criteria included: insight into human and social conditions: present and potential relevance to community needs; suitability of subject and style for intended audience; relation to the existing collection; reputation and significance of the author; attention given by critics, reviewers, and the public.

The same criteria used in selecting materials apply to the systematic removal or replacement of outdated, no longer useful, seldom-used or worn items. Each withdrawal should be judged individually with reference to the standard library tools and the collection as a whole.

Request for Reconsideration of Library Material:

Once an item has been accepted as qualifying under the selection policies and rules it will not be removed at the request of those who object to it unless it can be shown to be in violation of these policies. There is a formal procedure for reconsideration of materials. FPL cardholders with a valid library card must complete and sign a Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials form (Appendix I attached) and submit it to the Library Director.

Please note the following guidelines and requirements:

1. Residents of the Town of Warwick, NY or the Town of Goshen, NY, but whose library taxes support either the Albert Wisner Public Library or the Goshen Public Library and Historical Society, are ineligible to submit this form.
2. The form must be completed in its entirety. Forms missing information or responses, or which are unsigned, will not be reviewed.
3. The form may address a concern about one (1) item/resource only, not the entire body of work of a given author, nor all items of a given genre, theme or topic.

The Library Director, with appropriate professional staff, will review the form and the material in question, to consider whether the selection follows the criteria stated in this policy. The Director will respond in writing within thirty (30) days of receipt of the completed form providing the reason(s) for the decision. Accompanying the decision, as applicable, will be relevant professional book/media reviews and a copy of this policy. The Director will provide the Library Board of Trustees with copies of the completed Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials form and the Director's written response.

The Director's decision may be appealed in writing, by the person who submitted the evaluation request, to the Library Board of Trustees within thirty (30) days of the date of the Director's response. Please mail a brief letter requesting an appeal, including the reason(s) for the appeal, addressed to the Board of Trustees, Florida Public Library, 4 Cohen Circle, Florida, NY 10921, or fax the letter to (845) 651-7689, Attn: Board of Trustees.

The Board reserves the right to undertake a thorough investigation prior to making a decision. That investigation will include a complete examination of the resource itself and of the relevant Library policies. It may also include consultation with staff, the Library's attorney, the Ramapo Catskill Library System, and professional organizations or other resources as the Board deems necessary in order to make a fully-informed decision. The Board may take up to ninety 90 days from receipt of the appeal for this process.

Until a decision is made by the Board, the item in question will remain available without restriction. Once a decision is made, the person who submitted the request for evaluation will be notified in writing of the Board's decision through U.S. mail. The Board's determination is final. The determination will stand for five (5) years from the date of the decision before a new request for evaluation of the same item will be considered.

APPENDIX I

RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIAL

Request initiated by (Name): _____ Date: _____

Address _____
Note: A PO Box is not an acceptable form of proof of address.

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Library Card #: _____

Complainant represents (check applicable) Self _____ Organization or Group _____

If group, Name: _____

Resource on which you are commenting:

Book (e-book) _____ Movie _____ Magazine _____ Audio Recording _____
Digital Resource _____ Game _____ Newspaper _____ Other _____

Title: _____

Author: _____

Publisher or Producer: _____ Year: _____

1. What do you believe is the theme or the purpose of the material?

2. Is your objection to this material based upon personal exposure to it, upon reports you have heard, or both?

3. Have you read/heard/seen the material in its entirety? If not, what sections did you read/hear/see?

4. To what do you specifically object? _____

5. Does the material have any merit or value for a specific population or age group?

Yes _____ No _____ If yes, specify: _____

6. For what age group do you believe this material is appropriate? _____

7. What action would you recommend be taken regarding the use of this material in the library?

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX II

CONFIDENTIALITY LAW

New York State Law protects the confidentiality of Library records.

CPR § 4509. Library Records

Library records which contain names or other personally identifying details regarding the users of public, free association, school, college and university libraries and library systems of this state, including but not limited to records related to the circulation of queries, requests of photocopies of materials, title reserve requests, or the use of library materials, computer database searches, interlibrary loan transactions, reference queries, requests of photocopies of materials, title reserve requests, or the use of audiovisual materials, films, records shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed except that such records may be disclosed to the extent necessary for the proper operation of such library and shall be disclosed upon request or consent of the user pursuant to subpoena, court order or where otherwise required by statute. (Civil Practice Law and Rules, Lawyers Cooperative Publishing, 1993. New York Consolidated Laws Service, Cumulative Supplement, issued December, 1993)

APPENDIX III

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.
- VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

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 IV

ACCESS TO LIBRARIES RESOURCES AND SERVICES FOR MINORS An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL of RIGHTS

The American Library Association supports equal and equitable access to all library resources and services by users of all ages. Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources and services available to other users is in violation of the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*. The American Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users.

Article V of the *Library Bill of Rights* states, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." The right to use a library includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials, and facilities the library has to offer. Every restriction on access to, and use of, library resources, based solely on the chronological age, apparent maturity, educational level, literacy skills, emancipatory or other legal status of users violates Article V. This includes minors who do not have a parent or guardian available to sign a library card application or permission slip. Unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness should be able to obtain a library card regardless of library policies related to chronological age.

School and public libraries are charged with the mission of providing services and resources to meet the diverse interests and informational needs of the communities they serve. Services, materials, and facilities that fulfill the needs and interests of library users at different stages in their personal development are a necessary part of providing library services and should be determined on an individual basis. Equitable access to all library resources and services should not be abridged based on chronological age, apparent maturity, educational level, literacy skills, legal status, or through restrictive scheduling and use policies.

Libraries should not limit the selection and development of library resources simply because minors will have access to them. A library's failure to acquire materials on the grounds that minors may be able to access those materials diminishes the credibility of the library in the community and restricts access for all library users.

Children and young adults unquestionably possess First Amendment rights, including the right to receive information through the library in print, sound, images, data, social media, online applications, games, technologies, programming, and other formats.¹ Constitutionally protected speech cannot be suppressed solely to protect children or young adults from ideas or images a legislative body believes to be unsuitable for them.² Libraries and their library governing bodies should not resort to age restrictions in an effort to avoid actual or anticipated objections, because only a court of law can determine whether or not content is constitutionally protected.

Article VII of the *Library Bill of Rights* states, "All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use." This includes students and minors, who have a right to be free from any unreasonable intrusion into or surveillance of their lawful library use.³

The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries cannot authorize libraries and their governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians. As “Libraries: An American Value” states, “We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children’s use of the library and its resources and services.”⁴ Libraries and their governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child. Libraries and their governing bodies shall ensure that only parents and guardians have the right and the responsibility to determine their children’s—and only their children’s—access to library resources. Parents and guardians who do not want their children to have access to specific library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their own children. Libraries and library governing bodies should not use rating systems to inhibit a minor’s access to materials.⁵

Libraries and their governing bodies have a legal and professional obligation to ensure that all members of the communities they serve have free and equitable access to a diverse range of library resources and services that is inclusive, regardless of content, approach, or format. This principle of library service applies equally to all users, minors as well as adults. Lack of access to information can be harmful to minors. Libraries and their governing bodies must uphold this principle in order to provide adequate and effective service to minors.

¹ *Brown v. Entertainment Merchant’s Association, et al.* 564 U.S. 08-1448 (2011).

² *Erznoznik v. City of Jacksonville*, 422 U.S. 205 (1975): “Speech that is neither obscene as to youths nor subject to some other legitimate proscription cannot be suppressed solely to protect the young from ideas or images that a legislative body thinks unsuitable for them. In most circumstances, the values protected by the First Amendment are no less applicable when government seeks to control the flow of information to minors.” See also *Tinker v. Des Moines School Dist.*, 393 U.S.503 (1969); *West Virginia Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943); *AAMA v. Kendrick*, 244 F.3d 572 (7th Cir. 2001).

³ “[Privacy: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#),” adopted June 19, 2002, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 2014; and June 24, 2019.

⁴ “[Libraries: An American Value](#),” adopted on February 3, 1999, by ALA Council.

⁵ “[Rating Systems: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#),” adopted on June 30, 2015, by ALA Council; amended June 25, 2019.

Adopted June 30, 1972, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991; June 30, 2004; July 2, 2008 *under previous name* "Free Access to Libraries for Minors"; July 1, 2014; and June 25, 2019.

APPENDIX V

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 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 spoke. 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 VI

THE FREEDOM TO VIEW

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 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 AVFA Board of Directors in 1989.

Endorsed by the ALA Council
January 10, 1990

APPENDIX VII

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION CODE OF ETHICS

As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

1. We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
2. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
3. We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.
4. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.
5. We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.
6. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
7. We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.
8. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.
9. We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.

Adopted at the 1939 Midwinter Meeting by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 1981; June 28, 1995; January 22, 2008; and June 29, 2021.

APPENDIX VIII

LIBRARIES: AN AMERICAN VALUE

Libraries in America are cornerstones of the communities they serve. Free access to the books, ideas, resources, and information in America's libraries is imperative for education, employment, enjoyment, and self-government.

Libraries are a legacy to each generation, offering the heritage of the past and the promise of the future. To ensure that libraries flourish and have the freedom to promote and protect the public good in the 21st century, we believe certain principles must be guaranteed.

To that end, we affirm this contract with the people we serve:

- We defend the constitutional rights of all individuals, including children and teenagers, to use the library's resources and services;
- We value our nation's diversity and strive to reflect that diversity by providing a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities we serve;
- We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services;
- We connect people and ideas by helping each person select from and effectively use the library's resources;
- We protect each individual's privacy and confidentiality in the use of library resources and services;
- We protect the rights of individuals to express their opinions about library resources and services;
- We celebrate and preserve our democratic society by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions and ideas, so that all individuals have the opportunity to become lifelong learners - informed, literate, educated, and culturally enriched.

Change is constant, but these principles transcend change and endure in a dynamic technological, social, and political environment.

By embracing these principles, libraries in the United States can contribute to a future that values and protects freedom of speech in a world that celebrates both our similarities and our differences, respects individuals and their beliefs, and holds all persons truly equal and free.

Adopted February 3, 1999, by the
Council of the American Library Association

APPENDIX IX

LABELING SYSTEMS

An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read, view, listen to, or otherwise access. Libraries do not advocate the ideas found in their collections or in resources accessible through the library. The presence of books and other resources in a library does not indicate endorsement of their contents by the library. Likewise, providing access to digital information does not indicate endorsement or approval of that information by the library. Labeling systems present distinct challenges to these intellectual freedom principles.

Labels may be a library-sanctioned means of organizing resources or providing guidance to users. They may be as simple as a colored dot or strip of tape indicating reference books or fiction or as elaborate as the Dewey Decimal or Library of Congress call number systems.

Labels as viewpoint-neutral directional aids are intended to facilitate access by making it easier for users to locate resources. Users may choose to consult or ignore the directional aids at their own discretion. Viewpoint-neutral directional labels are a convenience designed to save time. These are different in intent from attempts to prejudice, discourage, or encourage users to access particular library resources or to restrict access to library resources. Labeling as an attempt to prejudice attitudes is a censor's tool. The American Library Association opposes labeling as a means of predisposing people's attitudes toward library resources.

Prejudicial labels are designed to restrict access, based on a value judgment that the content, language, or themes of the resource, or the background or views of the creator(s) of the resource, render it inappropriate or offensive for all or certain groups of users. The prejudicial label is used to warn, discourage, or prohibit users or certain groups of users from accessing the resource. Such labels sometimes are used to place materials in restricted locations where access depends on staff intervention.

Directional aids can also have the effect of prejudicial labels when their implementation becomes proscriptive rather than descriptive. When directional aids are used to forbid access or to suggest moral or doctrinal endorsement, the effect is the same as prejudicial labeling. Even well-intentioned labels may have this effect.

Prejudicial labeling systems assume that the libraries have the institutional wisdom to determine what is appropriate or inappropriate for its users to access. They presuppose that individual must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. The American Library Association opposes the use of prejudicial labeling systems and affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read, view, listen to, or otherwise access.

Adopted on June 30, 2015, by ALA Council.

APPENDIX X

RATING SYSTEMS

An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

Libraries, no matter their size, contain an enormous wealth of viewpoints and are responsible for making those viewpoints available to all. However, libraries do not advocate or endorse the content found in their collections or in resources made accessible through the library. Rating systems are tools or labels devised by individuals or organizations to advise people regarding suitability or content of materials. Rating systems appearing in library catalogs or discovery systems present distinct challenges to intellectual freedom principles.

Creators of rating systems assume that individuals or groups exist who can determine what is appropriate or inappropriate for others. They also assume that individuals want or need direction in making decisions about the materials or resources they use. While the creation and publication of such systems is protected by the First Amendment's right to free speech, the American Library Association also affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about the information that they consume.

Libraries' explicit or implicit adoption, enforcement, or endorsement of any of these rating systems violates the *Library Bill of Rights* and may be unconstitutional if used to prevent an individual's access to materials or resources. If enforcement of rating systems is mandated by law, the library should seek legal advice regarding the law's applicability to library operations.

Libraries often acquire resources, such as DVDs and video games, that include ratings as part of their publication materials. Library workers should not endorse the inclusion of such rating systems; however, removing or destroying the rating placed on the original item by the publisher, distributor, or copyright holder could constitute expurgation.¹

Because cataloging standards provide an opportunity for libraries to include ratings in their bibliographic records, many libraries have chosen to do so—some by acceptance of standard records containing such ratings and others by a desire to provide the maximum descriptive information available on a resource. Libraries are not required by cataloging best practices to provide this information. If they choose to do so, for whatever reason, they should cite the source of the rating and indicate that the library does not endorse external rating systems.

The inclusion of ratings in bibliographic records within library catalogs or discovery systems may be interpreted as an endorsement by the library. Therefore, without attribution, inclusion of such ratings is a violation of the *Library Bill of Rights*.

If libraries include information about rating systems on items or records, this information should not be used to restrict access to those materials based on the age of library users. Such a restriction may violate minors' First Amendment rights.²

That libraries do not endorse or advocate for the use of rating systems does not preclude them from answering questions about such systems. It is appropriate to provide access to sources containing information on rating systems in order to meet the specific information-seeking needs of individual users. The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read or view.

¹ "[Expurgation of Library Resources: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#)," adopted February 2, 1973, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; January 10, 1990; July 2, 2008; and July 1, 2014.

²*Engahl v. City of Kenosha*, 317 F. Supp. 1133 (E.D. Wis. 1970); *Motion Picture Association of America v. Specter*, 315 F. Supp. 824 (E.D. Pa. 1970); *Swope v. Lubbers*, 560 F.Supp. 1328 (W.D. Mich. 1983); and *Rosen v. Budco*, 10 Phila. 112 (1983).

Adopted on June 30, 2015, by ALA Council; amended June 25, 2019.