

## INTRODUCTION

“A parent just asked me to remove the Harry Potter books and Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark by Alvin Schwartz. What do I do now?”

“I don’t think minors should be allowed to check out issues of GQ. Why don’t you have an adults-only section?”

“Some members of our community are challenging The Advocate. How do we defend the library’s right to keep the magazine in the collection?”

These quotes are based on real complaints received in Arizona libraries. Would you know what to do if faced with one of these questions?

When the free exchange of ideas is confronted by censorship, it is imperative that the challenge be met and verbally rebuffed. Moreover, when this issue involves libraries, librarians then become responsible for defending the principle of intellectual freedom, seldom an easy task. Occasionally we may even find ourselves forced to defend an item we personally find distasteful. Our personal tastes, however, as well as those of the individual or group lodging the complaint, must be subordinated to the library’s mission of remaining a primary source for the numerous modes of human literary/artistic expression.

This handbook has been created for the purpose of providing guidance to the librarians of Arizona in censorship cases. The Intellectual Freedom Committee suggests that you use it as your first source of information if and when the need arises. We have designed the manual to answer as many of your questions as possible and, for those left unanswered, we have provided a list of contacts for further assistance. It is our fervent hope that you will never need to refer to this handbook, but should your library be threatened by censorship, we think you will find it valuable. We also suggest using any existing policy as promulgated by local school boards or library boards parallel to your use of this manual. Let us count on each other for support as we work to keep Arizona libraries the cornerstones of intellectual freedom and exchange.

Arizona Library Association  
Intellectual Freedom Committee  
2000-2001: Leigh Conrad, Chair  
Vince Anderson  
Pat Dilgard  
Barb Forrer  
Heather Goebel  
Don Langlois  
Kay Whitaker  
Mary Wilber

3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2001

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	i
Table of Contents	ii
Preparing For the Censor	1
What To Do When the Censor Comes	2
Confidentiality of Library Records	3
Collection Development Policy: An Outline	4
Sample Request for Reconsideration of Library Resources	5
AzLA Intellectual Freedom Committee	7
Incident Report Form	9
For Assistance With an Intellectual Freedom Issue	10
<b><i>Library Bill of Rights</i></b>	11
Interpretations of the <b><i>Library Bill of Rights</i></b>	
Access for Children and Young People to Videotapes and Other Nonprint Formats	12
Access to Electronic Information, Services, and Networks	14
Access to Library Resources and Services Regardless of Gender Or Sexual Orientation	17
Challenged Materials	19
Diversity in Collection Development	20
Economic Barriers to Information Access	22
Evaluating Library Collections	24
Exhibit Spaces and Bulletin Boards	25
Expurgation of Library Materials	27
Free Access to Libraries for Minors	28
Library Initiated Programs as a Resource	30
Meeting Rooms	32
Restricted Access to Library Materials	34
Statement on Labeling	36
Universal Right to Free Expression	37

## PREPARING FOR THE CENSOR

Intellectual freedom may be challenged at any time. Quick, effective action is crucial in meeting censorship challenges. The best defense against the censor is careful and thorough planning prior to an attack. Steps in planning should include the following:

1. Prepare and maintain a current set of policies and procedures. This should include collection development, meeting room use, an acceptable use policy, and procedures for handling complaints. These policies should be in written form, approved by the appropriate governing authority, and readily available to staff and patrons.
2. Develop a simple form for handling complaints. It should be readily available to any patron who objects to contents of materials in the library. Many libraries will have preprinted the policies and procedures for distribution and will have attached the complaint form to them.
3. Conduct periodic workshops. Collection development policies and procedures for handling complaints should be part of the orientation program for all new employees.
4. Open and maintain lines of communication with civic, religious, educational and political groups in the community, as well as the local press. Know whom to contact for support in the community should a censorship problem occur. Know how to reach organizations that support intellectual freedom objectives.
5. Maintain a vigorous public relations program on behalf of intellectual freedom. Public relations are an ongoing part of the management function. A good public relations program is imperative for the continued growth of library services. It also keeps the community aware of the library's responsibilities for intellectual freedom. Libraries should allocate personnel time and budgetary support to maintain an ongoing public relations effort.
6. Be aware of any municipal or state legislation pertaining to intellectual freedom and First Amendment rights.
7. Every city, town, and school district has an attorney. Do not hesitate to contact them for assistance.

If you need a copy of the *Intellectual Freedom Manual for Arizona Libraries*, contact the Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records at 602-542-5841 or 1-800-255-5841.

## WHAT TO DO WHEN THE CENSOR COMES

When individuals or pressure groups attempt to limit freedom of expression by trying to have materials removed from a library on the basis of obscenity, blasphemy, political content, etc., the AzLA Intellectual Freedom Committee recommends following these procedures:

1. Listen carefully to the patron in a calm and courteous manner. Let them finish talking. Let them know that you are glad to consider their request and make the forms available to them. Do not get into an adversarial situation.
2. Inform the library's governing authority about all the facts regarding the complaint.
3. **REPORT THE INCIDENT TO THE AzLA INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE. THE INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE WILL HELP ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS AND PROVIDE ASSISTANCE AND MORAL SUPPORT.**
4. Depending upon the nature and urgency of the incident, contact the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom or other appropriate organizations (see page 10).
5. Once the materials or issues have been reviewed, communicate the results of the process to the patron in writing, explaining the procedure and the final decision.
6. If the incident becomes a public issue, contact the local media to ensure that both sides of the issue are reported. It is at this point that the AzLA Intellectual Freedom Committee and similar organizations can be the most helpful, suggesting methods of meeting the censor's attack and furnishing knowledgeable public testimony. You may want to consider a public meeting but be aware of the ability of organized groups to pack such meetings.
7. If the case warrants, seek legal advice through the library's governing authority and legal counsel.
8. Challenged materials should remain on the shelf during the reconsideration process.

If you need a copy of the *Intellectual Freedom Manual for Arizona Libraries*, contact the Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records at 602-542-5841 or 1-800-255-5841.

## CONFIDENTIALITY OF LIBRARY RECORDS

If the issue involves confidentiality of library records, cite Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS Sect. 41-1354), which states:

- A. Except as provided in subsection B, a library or library system supported by public monies shall not allow disclosure of any record or other information which identifies a user of library services as requesting or obtaining specific materials or services or as otherwise using the library.
- B. Records may be disclosed:
  - a. If necessary for the reasonable operation of the library
  - b. On written consent of the user
  - c. On receipt of a court order [\*]
  - d. If required by law
- C. Any person who knowingly discloses any records or other information in violation of this section is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor.

\*Any subpoena or court order should be examined by the library's legal counsel. Do not be intimidated into complying with a court order or subpoena until legal counsel has been consulted.

If you need a copy of the *Intellectual Freedom Manual for Arizona Libraries*, contact the Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records at 602-542-5841 or 1-800-255-5841.

## COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY: AN OUTLINE

The Arizona Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Committee believes that every library, in order to strengthen its collection development process and to provide an objective basis for evaluation of that process, should develop a written official Collection Development Policy based on the needs of the library's users and in conformity with the *Library Bill of Rights* and that the policy be approved by the library's governing authority. A written collection development policy is a working document; it should be reviewed and, if necessary, revised annually.

A Collection Development Policy should cover these points:

1. Library philosophy and objectives, including a statement of the role of the library in its community.
2. General selection principles and procedures, including designation of those responsible for collection development, the procedures used to select the materials, and the criteria used in the selection process.
3. Policies and procedures to deal with distinctive types of material, materials for particular groups (e.g. children, visually impaired, etc.) and special collections (e.g., local history).
4. Policies and procedures for gift materials, including requests for appraisals and disposal of unwanted donations.
5. Library policies and procedures concerning weeding and inventories.
6. The text of the *Library Bill of Rights*. Many collection development policies also include the **Freedom to Read** statement, a document issued jointly by the American Library Association and the Association of American Publishers. The statement is included in the ALA *Intellectual Freedom Manual* (5<sup>th</sup> ed., 2001).
7. Procedures for the reconsideration of library materials.

Librarians who would like further assistance in developing an effective Collection Development Policy may contact the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records (602-542-5841 or 1-800-255-5841) regarding samples of policies used by a variety of Arizona libraries.

If you need a copy of the *Intellectual Freedom Manual for Arizona Libraries*, contact the Arizona State Library, Archives, and Public Records at 602-542-5841 or 1-800-255-5841.

**SAMPLE**  
**REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES**

*Attach a separate sheet if needed for additional information*

The library values your opinion and takes your request seriously. If you would like us to reconsider the presence of any library item in our collection, please complete this form, indicating clearly and specifically the nature of your concern. A librarian will respond to your concern in the near future.

Library materials concerned:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book            | <input type="checkbox"/> Audiovisual Materials          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine        | <input type="checkbox"/> Library Exhibit                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper       | <input type="checkbox"/> Library Selected Internet Site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library Program | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                          |

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author/Editor/Artist/Composer/Speaker/Site: \_\_\_\_\_

What brought this title to your attention?

---

---

Please comment on the work as a whole, perhaps stating what you believe to be the theme of the work, being specific about your concerns or objections. Cite specific pages, chapters, frames, lyrics or stanzas, display item(s), meeting room use, etc.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Have you read the Library's collection development policy? \_\_\_\_\_

**SAMPLE  
REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES  
(cont.)**

What would you like the Library to do about this item?

\_\_\_\_\_ To consider my opinion; no other action necessary.

\_\_\_\_\_ Formally review the material.

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_ (home)

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Optional: You represent:

Self \_\_\_\_\_

Group (name) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Signature

---

Date

## **AzLA INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE**

The purpose of the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the Arizona Library Association is to promote and encourage free access to library materials and information to the citizens of Arizona. The IFC assists all librarians in the State in dealing with intellectual freedom challenges.

The Chair of the IFC is appointed by the AzLA President for a two-year term of office beginning in even numbered years. Committee members are appointed by the AzLA Division Presidents in order to provide representation from public, school, university, and special libraries. Committee members serve one two-year staggered term. A member representing the Arizona State Library is appointed by the Director of the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records. A Member-At-Large from the AzLA Executive Board is assigned to the IFC by the AzLA President. Additional members may be appointed as needed by the Chair. To provide continuity, the Chair remains on the Committee an additional year after serving the appointed term. The Chair also serves on the AzLA Legislation Committee.

The duties of the Intellectual Freedom Committee are:

1. To investigate cases of censorship involving libraries in the state and to provide assistance when requested.
2. To inform AzLA members through publications and programs about intellectual freedom issues, legislation, and censorship incidents.
3. To develop and maintain an Intellectual Freedom Manual for Arizona Libraries.
4. To promote the adoption of materials selection policies and procedures for handling censorship challenges in all libraries in the state.
5. To monitor legislation and administrative policies which affect intellectual freedom concerns in libraries and work actively to counter such efforts.
6. To maintain contact with the Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association and network with other organizations, locally and nationally, concerned with intellectual freedom issues.

The IFC procedures for handling censorship incidents are:

1. Arizona librarians are urged to report censorship incidents to the Committee. All information will be kept confidential, if requested. Reports may be made using the Incident Report Form provided in the IF Manual, or by telephone, email, or fax, to the current Committee Chair or to the AzLA office. Librarians are encouraged to report censorship attempts, even if no assistance is requested, in order to assist the IFC in monitoring challenges occurring throughout the state. Generally, cases involve a complaint about materials or a request to have materials restricted or removed from a collection but may involve other concerns such as meeting room use or exhibits.

2. If assistance is requested, the Committee Chair coordinates the resources provided. In addition to advice on how to handle the incident, the IFC can provide book reviews, issue letters of support and position statements from the Committee and AzLA, attend or testify at hearings and open meetings on behalf of individuals and libraries, and publicize the incident or respond to media. Assistance from national and other state organizations concerned with intellectual freedom and civil liberties may be sought.
3. Legal or monetary assistance is not available from AzLA or the IFC. The Freedom to Read Foundation does provide legal assistance occasionally with limited funds at its disposal.

The Intellectual Freedom Committee Chair can be reached by contacting:

Arizona Library Association  
2302 N. 3rd St.  
Suite F  
Phoenix AZ 85004  
(602) 712-9822  
<mailto:azla.admin@gilstrapmottacole.com>

Other organizations are listed on page 10.

If you need a copy of the *Intellectual Freedom Manual for Arizona Libraries*, contact the Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records at 602-542-5841 or 1-800-255-5841.

**AzLA INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE  
INCIDENT REPORT FORM**

LIBRARY \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/County \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

**LIBRARIAN SUBMITTING FORM**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (work) \_\_\_\_\_ (home) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

CHALLENGE      \_\_\_\_\_ Book                      \_\_\_\_\_ Audiovisual Materials  
                         \_\_\_\_\_ Magazine                      \_\_\_\_\_ Library Exhibit  
                         \_\_\_\_\_ Newspaper                      \_\_\_\_\_ Library Selected Internet Site  
                         \_\_\_\_\_ Library Program                      \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Author/Producer \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**COMPLAINANT**

\_\_\_\_\_

(attach a copy of the request for reconsideration of library resources form, if possible)

Is this an identifiable organization?

\_\_\_\_\_

DO YOU WISH ASSISTANCE FROM THE IFC? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If reported in the media, please attach copies of news articles.

## FOR ASSISTANCE WITH AN INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM ISSUE

Contact:

Intellectual Freedom Committee  
Arizona Library Association  
(Committee Chair's name, telephone number and email address are listed on the last page of the AzLA Newsletter)

Arizona Library Association  
2302 N. 3rd St.  
Suite F  
Phoenix AZ 85004  
(602) 712-9822  
[azla.admin@gilstrapmottacole.com](mailto:azla.admin@gilstrapmottacole.com)

Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records  
State Capitol, Suite 200  
1700 W. Washington  
Phoenix, Arizona 85007  
602-542-5841 or 1-800-255-5841 (Arizona only)

Office for Intellectual Freedom  
American Library Association  
50 E. Huron Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60611  
Phone: 1-800-545-2433 Ext. 4223  
Fax: 1-312-280-4227  
Email: [oif@ala.org](mailto:oif@ala.org)

## 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.

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.

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.

Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 18, 1948; amended February 2, 1961, and January 23, 1980, inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996, by the ALA Council.

Adopted October, 1988; amended September 21, 2001, by AzLA.

The *Library Bill of Rights* and all its *Interpretations* are reprinted here with the permission of the American Library Association.

**ACCESS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO  
VIDEOTAPES AND OTHER NONPRINT FORMATS**  
*An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Library collections of videotapes, motion pictures, and other nonprint formats raise a number of intellectual freedom issues, especially regarding minors.

The interests of young people, like those of adults, are not limited by subject, theme, or level of sophistication. Librarians have a responsibility to ensure young people have access to materials and services that reflect diversity sufficient to meet their needs.

To guide librarians and others in resolving these issues, the American Library Association provides the following guidelines.

Article V of the *Library Bill of Rights* says, “A person’s right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.”

ALA’s *FREE ACCESS TO LIBRARIES FOR MINORS: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights* states:

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, educational level, or legal emancipation of users violates Article V.

...[P]arents – and only parents – have the right and the responsibility to restrict the access of their children – and only their children – to library resources. Parents or legal guardians who do not want their children to have access to certain library services, materials or facilities, should so advise their children. Librarians and governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child. Librarians and governing bodies have a public and professional obligation to provide equal access to all library resources for all library users.

Policies that set minimum age limits for access to videotapes and/or other audiovisual materials and equipment, with or without parental permission, abridge library use for minors. Further, age limits based on the cost of the materials are unacceptable. Unless directly and specifically prohibited by law from circulating certain motion pictures and video productions to minors, librarians should apply the same standards to circulation of these materials as are applied to books and other materials.

Recognizing that libraries cannot act *in loco parentis*, ALA acknowledges and supports the exercise by parents of their responsibility to guide their own children's reading and viewing. Published reviews of films and videotapes and/or reference works which provide information about the content, subject matter, and recommended audiences can be made available in conjunction with nonprint collections to assist parents in guiding their children without implicating the library in censorship. This material may include information provided by video producers and distributors, promotional material on videotape packaging, and Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) ratings if they are included on the tape or in the packaging by the original publisher and/or if they appear in review sources or reference works included in the library's collection. Marking out or removing ratings information from videotape packages constitutes expurgation or censorship.

MPAA and other rating services are private advisory codes and have no legal standing\*. For the library to add such ratings to the materials if they are not already there, to post a list of such ratings with a collection, or to attempt to enforce such ratings through circulation policies or other procedures constitutes labeling, "an attempt to prejudice attitudes" about the material, and is unacceptable. The application of locally generated ratings schemes intended to provide content warnings to library users is also inconsistent with the *Library Bill of Rights*.

\*For information on case law, please contact the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom.

See also: ***STATEMENTS ON LABELING*** and ***EXPURGATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS***, Interpretations of the *Library Bill of Rights*.

Adopted June 28, 1989, by the ALA Council; the quotation from ***FREE ACCESS TO LIBRARIES FOR MINORS*** was changed after Council adopted the July 3, 1991, revision of that Interpretation.

Adopted August 6, 1993, by ASLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this *Interpretation*.

# ACCESS TO ELECTRONIC INFORMATION, SERVICES, AND NETWORKS

## *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

### INTRODUCTION

The world is in the midst of an electronic communications revolution. Based on its constitutional, ethical, and historical heritage, American librarianship is uniquely positioned to address the broad range of information issues being raised in this revolution. In particular, librarians address intellectual freedom from a strong ethical base and an abiding commitment to the preservation of the individual's rights.

Freedom of expression is an inalienable human right and the foundation for self-government. Freedom of expression encompasses the freedom of speech and the corollary right to receive information. These rights extend to minors as well as adults. Libraries and librarians exist to facilitate the exercise of these rights by selecting, producing, providing access to, identifying, retrieving, organizing, providing instruction in the use of, and preserving recorded expression regardless of the format or technology.

The American Library Association expresses these basic principles of librarianship in its *Code of Ethics* and in the *Library Bill of Rights* and its *Interpretations*. These serve to guide librarians and library governing bodies in addressing issues of intellectual freedom that arise when the library provides access to electronic information, services, and networks.

Issues arising from the still-developing technology of computer-mediated information generation, distribution, and retrieval need to be approached and regularly reviewed from a context of constitutional principles and ALA policies so that fundamental and traditional tenets of librarianship are not swept away.

Electronic information flows across boundaries and barriers despite attempts by individuals, governments, and private entities to channel or control it. Even so, many people, for reasons of technology, infrastructure, or socio-economic status do not have access to electronic information.

In making decisions about how to offer access to electronic information, each library should consider its mission, goals, objectives, cooperative agreements, and the needs of the entire community it serves.

### **The Rights of Users**

All library system and network policies, procedures or regulations relating to electronic resources and services should be scrutinized for potential violation of user rights.

User policies should be developed according to the policies and guidelines established by the American Library Association, including *Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of Policies, Regulations, and Procedures Affecting Access to Library Materials, Services and Facilities*.

Users should not be restricted or denied access for expressing or receiving constitutionally protected speech. Users' access should not be changed without due process, including, but not limited to, formal notice and a means of appeal.

Although electronic systems may include distinct property rights and security concerns, such elements may not be employed as a subterfuge to deny users' access to information. Users have the right to be free of unreasonable limitations or conditions set by libraries, system administrators, vendors, network service providers, or others. Contracts, agreements, and licenses entered into by libraries on behalf of their users should not violate this right. Users also have a right to information, training and assistance necessary to operate the hardware and software provided by the library.

Users have both the right of confidentiality and the right of privacy. The library should uphold these rights by policy, procedure, and practice. Users should be advised, however, that because security is technically difficult to achieve, electronic transactions and files could become public.

The rights of users who are minors shall in no way be abridged.<sup>1</sup>

### **Equity of Access**

Electronic information, services, and networks provided directly or indirectly by the library should be equally, readily and equitably accessible to all library users. American Library Association policies oppose the charging of user fees for the provision of information services by all libraries and information services that receive their major support from public funds (50.3; 53.1.14; 60.1; 61.1). It should be the goal of all libraries to develop policies concerning access to electronic resources in light of *Economic Barriers to Information Access: an Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights* and *Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of Policies, Regulations and Procedures Affecting Access to Library Materials, Services and Facilities*.

### **Information Resources and Access**

Providing connections to global information, services, and networks is not the same as selecting and purchasing material for a library collection. Determining the accuracy or authenticity of electronic information may present special problems. Some information accessed electronically may not meet a library's selection or collection development policy. It is, therefore, left to each user to determine what is appropriate. Parents and

legal guardians who are concerned about their children's use of electronic resources should provide guidance to their own children.

Libraries and librarians should not deny or limit access to information available via electronic resources because of its allegedly controversial content or because of the librarian's personal beliefs or fear of confrontation. Information retrieved or utilized electronically should be considered constitutionally protected unless determined otherwise by a court with appropriate jurisdiction.

Libraries, acting within their mission and objectives, must support access to information on all subjects that serve the needs or interests of each user, regardless of the user's age or the content of the material. Libraries have an obligation to provide access to government information available in electronic format. Libraries and librarians should not deny access to information solely on the grounds that it is perceived to lack value.

In order to prevent the loss of information, and to preserve the cultural record, libraries may need to expand their selection or collection development policies to ensure preservation, in appropriate formats, of information obtained electronically.

Electronic resources provide unprecedented opportunities to expand the scope of information available to users. Libraries and librarians should provide access to information presenting all points of view. The provision of access does not imply sponsorship or endorsement. These principles pertain to electronic resources no less than they do to the more traditional sources of information in libraries.<sup>2</sup>

Adopted by the ALA Council, January 24, 1996.

Adopted by AzLA, September 21, 2001.

<sup>1</sup>See: *Free Access to Libraries for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*; *Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*; and *Access for Children and Young People to Videotapes and Other Nonprint Formats: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*.

<sup>2</sup>See: *Diversity in Collection Development: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this *Interpretation*.

## ACCESS TO LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES REGARDLESS OF GENDER OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION

### *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

American libraries exist and function within the context of a body of laws derived from the United States Constitution and the First Amendment. The *Library Bill of Rights* embodies the basic policies which guide libraries in the provision of services, materials, and programs.

In the preamble to its *Library Bill of Rights*, the American Library Association affirms that *all* [emphasis added] libraries are forums for information and ideas. This concept of *forum* and its accompanying principle of *inclusiveness* pervade all six Articles of the *Library Bill of Rights*.

The American Library Association stringently and unequivocally maintains that libraries and librarians have an obligation to resist efforts that systematically exclude materials dealing with any subject matter, including gender or sexual orientation:

- Article I of the *Library Bill of Rights* states that “Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.” The Association affirms that books and other materials coming from gay presses, gay, lesbian, or bisexual authors or other creators, and materials regardless of format or services dealing with gay lifestyles are protected by the *Library Bill of Rights*. Librarians are obligated by the *Library Bill of Rights* to endeavor to select materials without regard to the gender or sexual orientation of their creators by using the criteria identified in their written, approved selection policies (ALA policy 53.1.5).
- Article II maintains that “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.” Library services, materials, and programs representing diverse points of view on gender or sexual orientation should be considered for purchase and inclusion in library collections and programs. (ALA policies 53.1.1, 53.1.9, and 53.1.11). The Association affirms that attempts to proscribe or remove materials dealing with gay or lesbian life without regard to the written, approved selection policy violate this tenet and constitute censorship.
- Articles III and IV mandate that libraries “challenge censorship” and cooperate with those “resisting abridgement of free expression and free access to ideas.”

- Article V holds that “A person’s right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background or views.” In the ***Library Bill of Rights*** and all its Interpretations, it is intended that: “origin” encompasses all the characteristics of individuals that are inherent in the circumstances of their birth; “age” encompasses all the characteristics of individuals that are inherent in their levels of development and maturity; “background” encompasses all the characteristics of individuals that are a result of their life experiences; and “views” encompasses all the opinions and beliefs held and expressed by individuals. Therefore, Article V of the ***Library Bill of Rights*** mandates that library services, materials, and programs be available to all members of the community the library serves, without regard to gender or sexual orientation. This includes providing youth with comprehensive sex education literature (ALA Policy 52.5.2).
- Article VI maintains that “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.” This protection extends to all groups and members of the community the library serves, without regard to gender or sexual orientation. The American Library Association holds that any attempt, be it legal or extra-legal, to regulate or suppress library services, materials, or programs must be resisted in order that protected expression is not abridged. Librarians have a professional obligation to ensure that all library users have free and equal access to the entire range of library services, materials, and programs. Therefore, the Association strongly opposes any effort to limit access to information and ideas. The Association also encourages librarians to proactively support the First Amendment rights of all library users, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

Adopted June 30, 1993; amended July 12, 2000, by the ALA Council.

Adopted August 6, 1993; amended September 21, 2001, by AzLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this ***Interpretation***.

## **CHALLENGED MATERIALS**

### *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

The American Library Association declares as a matter of firm principle that it is the responsibility of every library to have a clearly defined materials selection policy in written form which reflects the *Library Bill of Rights*, and which is approved by the appropriate governing authority.

Challenged materials which meet the criteria for selection in the materials selection policy of the library should not be removed under any legal or extra-legal pressure. The *Library Bill of Rights* states in Article I that “Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation,” and in Article II, that “Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.” Freedom of expression is protected by the Constitution of the United States, but constitutionally protected expression is often separated from unprotected expression only by a dim and uncertain line. The Constitution requires a procedure designed to focus searchingly on challenged expression before it can be suppressed. An adversary hearing is a part of this procedure.

Therefore, any attempt, be it legal or extra-legal, to regulate or suppress materials in libraries must be closely scrutinized to the end that protected expression is not abridged.

Adopted June 25, 1971; amended July 1, 1981; amended January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council.

Adopted August 6, 1993, by ASLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this *Interpretation*.

## **DIVERSITY IN COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT** *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Throughout history, the focus of censorship has fluctuated from generation to generation. Books and other materials have not been selected or have been removed from library collections for many reasons, among which are prejudicial language and ideas, political content, economic theory, social philosophies, religious beliefs, sexual forms of expression, and other topics of a potentially controversial nature.

Some examples of censorship may include removing or not selecting materials because they are considered by some as racist or sexist, not purchasing conservative religious materials, not selecting materials about or by minorities because it is thought these groups or interests are not represented in a community, or not providing information on or materials from non-mainstream political entities.

Librarians may seek to increase user awareness of materials on various social concerns by many means, including, but not limited to, issuing bibliographies and presenting exhibits and programs.

Librarians have a professional responsibility to be inclusive, not exclusive, in collection development and in the provision of interlibrary loan. Access to all materials legally obtainable should be assured to the user, and policies should not unjustly exclude materials even if they are offensive to the librarian or the user. Collection development should reflect the philosophy inherent in Article II of the *Library Bill of Rights*: “Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all point of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.” A balanced collection reflects a diversity of materials, not an equality of numbers. Collection development responsibilities include selecting materials in the languages in common use in the community which the library serves. Collection development and the selection of materials should be done according to professional standards and established selection and review procedures.

There are many complex facets to any issue, and variations of context in which issues may be expressed, discussed, or interpreted. Librarians have a professional responsibility to be fair, just, and equitable and to give all library users equal protection in guarding against violation of the library patron’s right to read, view, or listen to materials and resources protected by the First Amendment, no matter what the viewpoint of the author, creator, or selector. Librarians have an obligation to protect library collections from removal of materials based on personal bias or prejudice, and to select and support the access to materials on all subjects that meet, as closely as possible, the needs and interests of all persons in the community which the library serves. This includes materials that reflect political, economic, social, minority, and sexual issues.

Intellectual freedom, the essence of equitable library services, provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause, or movement may be explored. Toleration is meaningless without tolerance for what some may consider detestable. Librarians cannot justly permit their own preferences to limit their degree of tolerance in collection development, because freedom is indivisible.

Adopted July 14, 1982; amended January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council.

Adopted August 6, 1993, by ASLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this *Interpretation*.

## **ECONOMIC BARRIERS TO INFORMATION ACCESS**

### *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

A democracy presupposes an informed citizenry. The First Amendment mandates the right of all persons to free expression, and the corollary right to receive the constitutionally protected expression of others. The publicly supported library provides free and equal access to information for all people of the community the library serves. While the roles, goals and objectives of publicly supported libraries may differ, they share this common mission.

The library's essential mission must remain the first consideration for librarians and governing bodies faced with economic pressures and competition for funding. In support of this mission, the American Library Association has enumerated certain principles of library services in the *Library Bill of Rights*.

#### **PRINCIPLES GOVERNING FINES, FEES AND USER CHARGES**

Article I of the *Library Bill of Rights* states: "Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves."

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 American Library Association opposes the charging of user fees for the provision of information by all libraries and information services that receive their major support from public funds. All information resources that are provided directly or indirectly by the library, regardless of technology, format, or methods of delivery, should be readily, equally and equitably accessible to all library users.

Libraries that adhere to these principles systematically monitor their programs of service for potential barriers to access and strive to eliminate such barriers when they occur. All library policies and procedures, particularly those involving fines, fees, or other user charges, should be scrutinized for potential barriers to access. All services should be designed and implemented with care, so as not to infringe on or interfere with the provision or delivery of information and resources for all users. Services should be re-evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that the library's basic mission remains uncompromised.

Librarians and governing bodies should look for alternative models and methods of library administration that minimize distinctions among users based on their economic status or financial condition. They should resist the temptation to impose user fees to alleviate financial pressures, at long term cost to institutional integrity and public confidence in libraries.

Library services that involve the provision of information, regardless of format, technology, or method of delivery, should be made available to all library users on an equal and equitable basis. Charging fees for the use of library collections, services, programs, or facilities that were purchased with public funds raises barriers to access.

Such fees effectively abridge or deny access for some members of the community because they reinforce distinctions among users based on their ability and willingness to pay.

### **PRINCIPLES GOVERNING CONDITIONS OF FUNDING**

Article II of the *Library Bill of Rights* states: “Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.”

Article III of the *Library Bill of Rights* states: “Libraries should challenge censorship on the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.”

Article IV of the *Library Bill of Rights* states: “Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.”

The American Library Association opposes any legislative or regulatory attempt to impose content restrictions on library resources, or to limit user access to information, as a condition of funding for publicly supported libraries and information services.

The First Amendment guarantee of freedom of expression is violated when the right to receive that expression is subject to arbitrary restrictions based on content.

Librarians and governing bodies should examine carefully any terms or conditions attached to library funding and should oppose attempts to limit through such conditions full and equal access to information because of content. This principle applies equally to private gifts or bequests and to public funds. In particular, librarians and governing bodies have an obligation to reject such restrictions when the effect of the restriction is to limit equal and equitable access to information.

Librarians and governing bodies should cooperate with all efforts to create a community consensus that publicly supported libraries require funding unfettered by restrictions. Such a consensus supports the library mission to provide the free and unrestricted exchange of information and ideas necessary to a functioning democracy.

The Association’s historic position in this regard is stated clearly in a number of Association policies: 50.4 *Free Access to Information*, 50.9 *Financing of Libraries*, 51.2 *Equal Access to Library Service*, 51.3 *Intellectual Freedom*, 53 *Intellectual Freedom Policies*, 59.1 *Policy Objectives*, and 60 *Library Services for the Poor*.

Adopted June 30, 1993, by the ALA Council. Adopted August 6, 1993, by ASLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this *Interpretation*.

## EVALUATING LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

### *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

The continuous review of library materials is necessary as a means of maintaining an active library collection of current interest to users. In the process, materials may be added and physically deteriorated or obsolete materials may be replaced or removed in accordance with the collection maintenance policy of a given library and the needs of the community it serves. Continued evaluation is closely related to the goals and responsibilities of libraries and is a valuable tool of collection development. This procedure is not to be used as a convenient means to remove materials presumed to be controversial or disapproved of by segments of the community. Such abuse of the evaluation function violates the principles of intellectual freedom and is in opposition to the Preamble and Articles 1 and 2 of the *Library Bill of Rights*, which state:

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

1. 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.
2. 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.

The American Library Association opposes such “silent censorship” and strongly urges that libraries adopt guidelines setting forth the positive purposes and principles of evaluation of materials in library collections.

Adopted February 2, 1973; amended July 1, 1981, by the ALA Council.

Adopted August 6, 1993, by ASLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this *Interpretation*.

## **EXHIBIT SPACES AND BULLETIN BOARDS**

### *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Libraries often provide exhibit spaces and bulletin boards. The uses made of these spaces should conform to the *Library Bill of Rights*: Article I states, “Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.” Article II states, “Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.” Article VI maintains that exhibit space should be made available “on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.”

In developing library exhibits, staff members should endeavor to present a broad spectrum of opinion and a variety of viewpoints. Libraries should not shrink from developing exhibits because of controversial content or because of the beliefs or affiliations of those whose work is represented. Just as libraries do not endorse the viewpoints of those whose works are represented in their collections, libraries also do not endorse the beliefs or viewpoints of topics which may be the subject of library exhibits.

Exhibit areas often are made available for use by community groups. Libraries should formulate a written policy for the use of these exhibit areas to assure that space is provided on an equitable basis to all groups which request it.

Written policies for exhibit space use should be stated in inclusive rather than exclusive terms. For example, a policy that the library’s exhibit space is open “to organizations engaged in educational, cultural, intellectual, or charitable activities” is an inclusive statement of the limited uses of the exhibit space. This defined limitation would permit religious groups to use the exhibit space because they engage in intellectual activities, but would exclude most commercial uses of the exhibit space.

A publicly supported library may limit use of its exhibit space to strictly “library-related” activities, provided that the limitation is clearly circumscribed and is viewpoint neutral.

Libraries may include in this policy rules regarding the time, place, and manner of use of the exhibit space, so long as the rules are content-neutral and are applied in the same manner to all groups wishing to use the space. A library may wish to limit access to exhibit space to groups within the community served by the library. This practice is acceptable provided that the same rules and regulations apply to everyone, and that exclusion is not made on the basis of the doctrinal, religious, or political beliefs of the potential users.

The library should not censor or remove an exhibit because some members of the community may disagree with its content. Those who object to the content of any exhibit held at the library should be able to submit their complaint and/or their own exhibit proposal to the judged according to the policies established by the library.

Libraries may wish to post a permanent notice near the exhibit area stating that the library does not advocate or endorse the viewpoints of exhibits or exhibitors.

Libraries which make bulletin boards available to public groups for posting notices of public interest should develop criteria for the use of these spaces based on the same considerations as those outlined above. Libraries may wish to develop criteria regarding the size of material to be displayed, the length of time materials may remain on the bulletin board, the frequency with which material may be posted for the same group, and the geographic area from which notices will be accepted.

Adopted July 2, 1991, by the ALA Council.

Adopted August 6, 1993, by ASLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this *Interpretation*.

## **EXPURGATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS** *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Expurgating library materials is a violation of the *Library Bill of Rights*. Expurgation as defined by this interpretation includes any deletion, excision, alteration, editing, or obliteration of any part(s) of books or other library resources by the library, its agent, or its parent institution (if any). By such expurgation, the library is in effect denying access to the complete work and the entire spectrum of ideas that the work intended to express. Such action stands in violation of Articles 1, 2, and 3 of the *Library Bill of Rights*, which state that “Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation,” that “Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval,” and that “Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.”

The act of expurgation has serious implications. It involves a determination that it is necessary to restrict access to the complete work. This is censorship. When a work is expurgated, under the assumption that certain portions of that work would be harmful to minors, the situation is no less serious.

Expurgation of any books or other library resources imposes a restriction, without regard to the rights and desires of all library users, by limiting access to ideas and information.

Further, expurgation without written permission from the holder of the copyright on the material may violate the copyright provisions of the United States Code.

Adopted February 2, 1973; amended July 1, 1981; amended January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council.

Adopted August 6, 1993, by ASLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this *Interpretation*.

## **FREE ACCESS TO LIBRARIES FOR MINORS**

### ***An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS***

Library policies and procedures which effectively deny minors equal access to all library resources available to other users violate the *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, education level, or legal emancipation of users violates Article V.

Libraries are charged with the mission of developing resources to meet the diverse information needs and interests of the communities they serve. Services, materials, and facilities which fulfill the needs and interests of library users at different stages in their personal development are a necessary part of library resources. The needs and interests of each library user, and resources appropriate to meet those needs and interests, must be determined on an individual basis. Librarians cannot predict what resources will best fulfill the needs and interests of any individual user based on a single criterion such as chronological age, level of education, or legal emancipation.

The selection and development of library resources should not be diluted because of minors having the same access to library resources as adult users. Institutional self-censorship diminishes the credibility of the library in the community, and restricts access for all library users.

Librarians and governing bodies should not resort to age restrictions on access to library resources in an effort to avoid actual or anticipated objections from parents or anyone else. The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries do not authorize librarians or governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents or legal guardians. Librarians and governing bodies should maintain that parents – and only parents – have the right and the responsibility to restrict the access of their children – and only their children – to library resources. Parents or legal guardians who do not want their children to have access to certain library services, materials or facilities, should so advise their children. Librarians and governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child. Librarians and governing bodies have a public and professional obligation to provide equal access to all library resources for all library users.

Librarians have a professional commitment to ensure that all members of the community they serve have free and equal access to the entire range of library resources regardless of content, approach, format, or amount of detail. This principle of library service applies equally to all users, minors as well as adults. Librarians and governing bodies must uphold this principle in order to provide adequate and effective service to minors.

Adopted June 30, 1972; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991, by the ALA Council.

Adopted August 3, 1993, by ASLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this *Interpretation*.

## LIBRARY-INITIATED PROGRAMS AS A RESOURCE

### *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Library-initiated programs support the mission of the library by providing users with additional opportunities for information, education, and recreation. Article I of the *Library Bill of Rights* states: “Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves.”

Library-initiated programs take advantage of library staff expertise, collections, services and facilities to increase access to information and information resources. Library-initiated programs introduce users and potential users to the resources of the library and to the library’s primary function as a facilitator of information access. The library may participate in cooperative or joint programs with other agencies, organizations, institutions, or individuals as part of its own effort to address information needs and to facilitate information access in the community the library serves.

Library-initiated programs on site and in other locations include, but are not limited to, speeches, community forums, discussion groups, demonstrations, displays, and live or media presentations.

Libraries serving multilingual or multicultural communities should make efforts to accommodate the information needs of those for whom English is a second language. Library-initiated programs that cross language and cultural barriers introduce otherwise unserved populations to the resources of the library and provide access to information.

Library-initiated programs “should not be proscribed or removed (or canceled) because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval” of the contents of the program or the views expressed by the participants, as stated in Article II of the *Library Bill of Rights*. Library sponsorship of a program does not constitute an endorsement of the content of the program or the views expressed by the participants, any more than the purchase of material for the library collection constitutes an endorsement of the contents of the material or the views of its creator.

Library-initiated programs are a library resource, and, as such, are developed in accordance with written guidelines, as approved and adopted by the library’s policy-making body. These guidelines should include an endorsement of the *Library Bill of Rights* and set forth the library’s commitment to free and open access to information and ideas for all users.

Library staff select topics, speakers and resource materials for library-initiated programs based on the interests and information needs of the community. Topics, speakers and resource materials are not excluded from library-initiated programs because of possible

controversy. Concerns, questions or complaints about library-initiated programs are handled according to the same written policy and procedures which govern reconsiderations of other library resources.

Library-initiated programs are offered free of charge and are open to all. 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” encompasses all of the resources the library offers, including the right to attend library-initiated programs. Libraries do not deny or abridge access to library resources, including library-initiated programs, based on an individual’s economic background and ability to pay.

Adopted January 27, 1982; amended June 26, 1990; July 12, 2000, by the ALA Council.

Adopted August 6, 1993; amended September 21, 2001, by AzLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this ***Interpretation***.

## **MEETING ROOMS**

### *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Many libraries provide meeting rooms for individual and groups as part of a program of service. Article VI of the *Library Bill of Rights* states that such facilities should be made available to the public served by the given library “on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.”

Libraries maintaining meeting room facilities should develop and publish policy statements governing use. These statements can properly define time, place, or manner of use; such qualifications should not pertain to the content of a meeting or to the beliefs or affiliations of the sponsors. These statements should be made available in any commonly used language within the community served.

If meeting rooms in libraries supported by public funds are made available to the general public for non-library sponsored events, the library may not exclude any group based on the subject matter to be discussed or based on the ideas that the group advocates. For example, if a library allows charities and sports clubs to discuss their activities in library meeting rooms, then the library should not exclude partisan political or religious groups from discussing their activities in the same facilities. If a library opens its meeting rooms to a wide variety of civic organizations, then the library may not deny access to a religious organization. Libraries may wish to post a permanent notice near the meeting room stating that the library does not advocate or endorse the viewpoints of meetings or meeting room users.

Written policies for meeting room use should be stated in inclusive rather than exclusive terms. For example, a policy that the library’s facilities are open “to organizations engaged in educational, cultural, intellectual, or charitable activities” is an inclusive statement of the limited uses to which the facilities may be put. This defined limitation would permit religious groups to use the facilities because they engage in intellectual activities, but would exclude most commercial uses of the facility.

A publicly supported library may limit use of its meeting rooms to strictly “library-related” activities, provided that the limitation is clearly circumscribed and is viewpoint neutral.

Written policies may include limitations on frequency of use, and whether or not meetings held in library meeting rooms must be open to the public. If state and local laws permit private as well as public sessions of meetings in libraries, libraries may choose to offer both options. The same standard should be applicable to all.

If meetings are open to the public, libraries should include in their meeting room policy statement a section which addresses admission fees. If admission fees are permitted, libraries shall seek to make it possible that these fees do not limit access to individuals who may be unable to pay, but who wish to attend a meeting. Article V of the ***Library Bill of Rights*** states that “a person’s right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.” It is inconsistent with Article V to restrict indirectly access to library meeting rooms based on an individual’s or group’s ability to pay for that access.

Adopted July 2, 1991, by the ALA Council.

Adopted August 6, 1993, by ASLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this ***Interpretation***.

## **RESTRICTED ACCESS TO LIBRARY MATERIALS** *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Libraries are a traditional forum for the open exchange of information. Attempts to restrict access to library materials violate the basic tenets of the *Library Bill of Rights*.

Historically, attempts have been made to limit access by relegating materials into segregated collections. These attempts are in violation of established policy. Such collections are often referred to by a variety of names, including “closed shelf,” “locked case,” “adults only,” “restricted shelf,” or “high demand.” Access to some materials also may require a monetary fee or financial deposit. More recently, some libraries have applied filtering software to their Internet stations that prevent users from finding targeted categories of information, much of which is constitutionally protected. In any situation which restricts access to certain materials, a barrier is placed between the patron and those materials. That barrier may be age related, linguistic, economic, or psychological in nature.

Because restricted materials often deal with controversial, unusual, or “sensitive” subjects, having to ask a librarian or circulation clerk for access to them may be embarrassing or inhibiting for patrons desiring the materials. Needing to ask for materials may pose a language barrier or a staff service barrier. Because restricted materials often feature information that some library patrons consider “objectionable,” the potential user may be predisposed to think of the materials as “objectionable” and, therefore, are reluctant to ask for access to them.

Barriers between the materials and the patron which are psychological, or are affected by language skills, are nonetheless limitations on access to information. Even when a title is listed in the catalog with a reference to its restricted status, a barrier is placed between the patron and the publication (See also *Statement on Labeling*.)

There may be, however, countervailing factors to establish policies to protect library materials – specifically, for reasons of physical preservation including protection from theft or mutilation. Any such policies must be carefully formulated and administered with extreme attention to the principles of intellectual freedom. This caution is also in keeping with ALA policies, such as *Evaluating Library Collections*, *Free Access to Libraries for Minors*, and the *Preservation Policy*.

Finally, in keeping with the *Joint Statement on Access* of the American Library Association and Society of American Archivists, restrictions that result from donor agreements or contracts for special collections materials must be similarly circumscribed. Permanent exclusions are not acceptable. The overriding impetus must be to work for free and unfettered access to all documentary heritage.

Adopted February 2, 1973; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991; July 12, 2000, by the ALA Council.

Adopted August 6, 1993, by ASLA; amended September 21, 2001, by AzLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this *Interpretation*.

## STATEMENT ON LABELING

### *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Labeling is the practice of describing or designating materials by affixing a prejudicial label and/or segregating them by a prejudicial system. The American Library Association opposes these means of predisposing people's attitudes toward library materials for the following reasons:

1. Labeling is an attempt to prejudice attitudes and as such, it is a censor's tool.
2. Some find it easy and even proper, according to their ethics, to establish criteria for judging publications as objectionable. However, injustice and ignorance rather than justice and enlightenment result from such practices, and the American Library Association opposes the establishment of such criteria.
3. Libraries do not advocate the ideas found in their collections. The presence of books and other resources in a library does not indicate endorsement of their contents by the library.

A variety of private organizations promulgate rating systems and/or review materials as a means of advising either their members or the general public concerning their opinions of the contents and suitability or appropriate age for use of certain books, films, recordings, or other materials. For the library to adopt or enforce any of these private systems, to attach such ratings to library materials, to include them in bibliographic records, library catalogs, or other finding aids, or otherwise to endorse them would violate the ***Library Bill of Rights***.

While some attempts have been made to adopt these systems into law, the constitutionality of such measures is extremely questionable. If such legislation is passed which applies within a library's jurisdiction, the library should seek competent legal advice concerning its applicability to library operations.

Publishers, industry groups, and distributors sometimes add ratings to material or include them as part of their packaging. Librarians should not endorse such practices. However, removing or obliterating such ratings – if placed there by or with permission of the copyright holder – could constitute expurgation, which is also unacceptable.

The American Library Association opposed efforts which aim at closing any path to knowledge. This statement, however, does not exclude the adoption of organizational schemes designed as directional aids or to facilitate access to materials.

Adopted July 13, 1951; amended June 25, 1971; July 1, 1981; June 26, 1990, by the ALA Council.

Adopted August 6, 1993, by ASLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this ***Interpretation***.

## **THE UNIVERSAL RIGHT TO FREE EXPRESSION** *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Freedom of expression is an inalienable human right and the foundation for self government. Freedom of expression encompasses the freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly, and association, and the corollary right to receive information.

The American Library Association endorses this principle, which is also set forth in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The Preamble of this document states that "...recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world..." and "...the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people..."

- Article 18 of this document states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

- Article 19 states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.

- Article 20 states:

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

We affirm our belief that these are inalienable rights of every person, regardless of origin, age, background, or views. We embody our professional commitment to these principles in the *Library Bill of Rights* and *Code of Professional Ethics*, as adopted by the American Library Association.

We maintain that these are universal principles and should be applied by libraries and librarians throughout the world. The American Library Association's policy on International Relations reflects these objectives: "...to encourage the exchange, dissemination, and access to information and the unrestricted flow of library materials in all formats throughout the world."

We know that censorship, ignorance, and limitations on the free flow of information are the tools of tyranny and oppression. We believe that ideas and information topple the walls of hate and fear and build bridges of cooperation and understanding far more effectively than weapons and armies.

The American Library Association is unswerving in its commitment to human rights and

intellectual freedom; the two are inseparably linked and inextricably entwined. Freedom of opinion and expression is not derived from or dependent on any form of government or political power. This right is inherent in every individual. It cannot be surrendered, nor can it be denied. True justice comes from the exercise of this right.

We recognize the power of information and ideas to inspire justice, to restore freedom and dignity to the oppressed, and to change the hearts and minds of the oppressors.

Courageous men and women, in difficult and dangerous circumstances throughout human history, have demonstrated that freedom lives in the human heart and cries out for justice even in the face of threats, enslavement, imprisonment, torture, exile, and death. We draw inspiration from their example. They challenge us to remain steadfast in our most basic professional responsibility to promote and defend the right of free expression.

There is no good censorship. Any effort to restrict free expression and the free flow of information aids the oppressor. Fighting oppression with censorship is self-defeating.

Threats to the freedom of expression of any person anywhere are threats to the freedom of all people everywhere. Violations of human rights and right of free expression have been recorded in virtually every country and society across the globe.

In response to these violations, we affirm these principles:

The American Library Association opposes any use of governmental prerogative that leads to the intimidation of individuals which prevents them from exercising their rights to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas. We urge libraries and librarians everywhere to resist such abuse of governmental power, and to support those against whom such governmental power has been employed. The American Library Association condemns any governmental effort to involve libraries and librarians in restrictions on the right of any individual to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas. Such restrictions pervert the function of the library and violate the professional responsibilities of librarians.

The American Library Association rejects censorship in any form. Any action which denies the inalienable human rights of individuals only damages the will to resist oppression, strengthens the hand of the oppressor, and undermines the cause of justice. The American Library Association will not abrogate these principles. We believe that censorship corrupts the cause of justice, and contributes to the demise of freedom.

Adopted January 16, 1991, by the ALA Council.

Adopted August 6, 1993, by ASLA.

Check the ALA website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for current updates to this *Interpretation*.