

Alamance County Public Libraries

# Library Materials Selection Policy

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## **I. Mission**

Alamance County Public Libraries provide learning opportunities for all members of our community to be successful in living a larger life by nurturing the heart and the mind.

## **II. Objectives**

- To provide opportunities for lifelong learning for all library users.
- To offer quality resources, in a variety of formats, that meet the educational, informational, recreational, and cultural needs of library users.
- To create a safe and welcoming environment for individuals, families, and communities.
- To promote public library use through the provision of excellent customer service.
- To foster a love of reading.
- To meet the information technology needs of the community.

## **III. Responsibility For Selection**

The authority and responsibility for the selection of library materials rests ultimately with the Library Director. Under his/her direction, selection is delegated to the professional library staff. All staff members and the general public are encouraged to recommend materials for consideration.

## **IV. Criteria For Selection**

No single standard is used to select and evaluate all the formats included in the ACPL collections. Each selection is evaluated in terms of its own merit, for inclusion in the Library's collections.

- Reputation and/or significance of author, artist, publisher, or producer
- Positive review in one or more professional journals or selection tools
- Popular interest or demand
- Relevance to community needs
- Currency of information
- Accuracy of content

- Relation to the Library's existing collection and other material available on the subject
- Balance and range of information
- Value as a part of a core collection
- Literary and artistic merit
- Availability, quality, and suitability of format for library use
- Quality of organization, readability and style
- Price

## V. Selection Tools

Critical reviews in professional library journals are considered in selecting library materials. The following tools are also used in the selection process: other review sources, annual lists of recommended titles, subject bibliographies, publishers' catalogs, patron requests and recommendations.

## VI. Special Collections

### Local History

The Local History Collection(s) of the Alamance County Public Libraries have the express purpose of collecting, maintaining, arranging, and preserving materials important to the history, development, and current condition of Alamance County and the greater north central North Carolina region.

The Local History Room at May Memorial Library will endeavor to include materials in any format that document the history, geography, architecture, cultural life, and heritage of Alamance County, its immediately adjacent counties, and the states and regions from which there was significant migration to the north central N.C. region.

The history collections of the branch libraries will endeavor to include materials in any format that relate to their municipality and immediately surrounding municipalities.

### **Significant areas of interest to the collection include:**

Materials on the ancestry of Alamance County families and families of adjacent counties

Materials on the agricultural, textile, railroad, and industrial history of the area

Materials on the heritage of ethnic, religious, and cultural groups within the county

Materials of significant literary merit written by or attributed to local authors

### **Special Collections**

Library locations may offer special noncirculating collections of reference materials to the public at the discretion of the library director. These collections may be based on subject matter, geography, format, language, intended audience, or other defining factors. (For example local history, foreign language, teacher resources, business and industry materials, grantseeking materials, etc.) Collection policies and rules of use for these collections may be governed under separate guidelines not specified in the general collection development policy, but stated in separate documentation. Whenever possible, Alamance County Public Libraries will endeavor to prevent duplication of materials in special collections at multiple locations.

## **VII. Gifts, Donations & Memorials**

All gifts are subject to evaluation by the same criteria used in selecting library materials and may be added to Library collections at the discretion of Library staff. Donors are informed that any gifts to the Library may or may not be added to the collection. Any item which is not added may be donated to another institution where it may be used, or be sold in the Friends of the Library Book Sale. Monies from the Friends of Alamance County Public Libraries Book Sale support the programs and services of Alamance County Public Libraries.

The Library frequently receives from an individual or an organization the gift of a book, a group of books, or a sum of money for the purchase of books or other materials in memory or in honor of a family member, friend, or co-worker. Library selection standards apply in these cases. A special gift plate is placed in these books. The Library does not set aside a special section or set of shelves for gift or memorial books. Selection of gift, memorial, or endowment purchases involves the same search for excellence in content as applied in all areas.

## **VIII. Open Access To Ideas**

Alamance County Public Libraries endorses the Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read, and the Freedom to View as adopted by the American Library Association. The Library recognizes that some materials are controversial and that any given item may offend some patrons. Materials are selected on the basis of their content as a whole and as they relate to the Library's objectives. The Library will provide a representative selection of materials, reflecting a variety of viewpoints. The Library seeks to create collections in which individuals can examine issues freely.

The presence of an item in the Library does not indicate endorsement of its content by the Library.

Responsibility for the reading/viewing/listening of minors rests with their parents and legal guardians. Selection of adult materials will not be limited by the possibility that items may come into the possession of minors.

## **IX. Collection Maintenance**

Library materials are continually assessed for condition, currency, and need within the context of the total Library collection. The same criteria are used in withdrawing materials from the collection as in their selection.

## **X. Request For Reconsideration of Library Material**

Borrowers requesting reconsideration of any library material in the Library's collections should complete the form "Request For Reconsideration of Library Material." The form is available at all branch libraries in Alamance County.

Requests for reconsideration of library material will be reviewed by the Materials Selection Committee, composed of the Library Director and all professional library staff. The Committee will read, listen to and/ or view the material questioned; check reliable selection tools; consider the material in relation to the Library's selection policy; discuss the material; and make a decision.

The decision of the Materials Selection Committee will be promptly communicated in writing to the individual requesting reconsideration of the item(s).

If the borrower wishes to appeal the decision, this should be requested in writing and submitted to the Library Director.

Following this, the request for reconsideration will be forwarded to the Alamance County Library Committee (Advisory Library Board). The decision of the Alamance County Library Committee will be final.

A title will go through the reconsideration process only once within a five year period unless the content has undergone major revision.

## **XI. Appendices**

### **a. Library Bill of Rights**

# **Library Bill of Rights**

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

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
- V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

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

## **b. The Freedom to Read Statement**

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

We therefore affirm these propositions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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.

### **c. Freedom to View Statement**

The **FREEDOM TO VIEW**, along with the freedom to speak, to hear, and to read, is protected by the **First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States**. In a free society, there is no place for censorship of any medium of expression. Therefore these principles are affirmed:

1. To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

This statement was originally drafted by the Freedom to View Committee of the American Film and Video Association (formerly the Educational Film Library Association) and was adopted by the AFVA Board of Directors in February 1979. This statement was updated and approved by the AFVA Board of Directors in 1989.

**Endorsed January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council**

## **d. Alamance County Public Libraries Request for Reconsideration of Material**

Borrowers wishing to request reconsideration of any library material should complete the attached form in its entirety and return it to any branch of Alamance County Public Libraries.

Requests for reconsideration of library material will be reviewed by the Materials Selection Committee, composed of the Library Director and all professional library staff. The committee will read, listen to, and/or view the material questioned; check reliable selection tools; consider the material in relation to the Library's selection policy; discuss the material; and make a decision.

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## Alamance County Public Libraries Request for Reconsideration of Material

*Please answer the following questions completely and return this form to any branch of Alamance County Public Libraries.*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Material  
*(Please check one.)*

- |                                      |                                    |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book        | <input type="checkbox"/> AudioBook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine    | <input type="checkbox"/> Movie     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |                                    |

Title of item: \_\_\_\_\_

Author/Artist: \_\_\_\_\_

In which section of the library was the material located? *(Please check one.)*

- |                                |                                      |                                     |                                       |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult | <input type="checkbox"/> Young Adult | <input type="checkbox"/> Children's | <input type="checkbox"/> I Don't Know |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|

Why did you select this material?

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Before borrowing or using this material, did you read the dust jacket summary, reviews of the item, or other introductory material?  Yes  No

Please explain:

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Did you read, view or listen to this material in its entirety?  Yes  No

To what in the material do you object? Why? (*Please be specific, including page numbers, song titles, etc where applicable.*)

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What do you believe is the central theme of the work?

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What do you feel might be the result of reading/viewing/listening to this material?

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In your opinion, would anyone else for any reason find value or merit in this work?

Yes  No Please explain:

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Have you used other materials which depict or express the same subject matter in a manner which is acceptable to you?  Yes  No

If yes, please name them:

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What do you recommend Alamance County Public Libraries do with this item?

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Have you read ACPL's Materials Selection Policy?     Yes     No

Your Name (Please Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

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

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Other Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_