



SPOONER MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Library Policies



AMENDED JULY 24, 2018
SPOONER MEMORIAL LIBRARY
421 High Street, Spooner, WI 54801

Spooner Memorial Library

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Spooner Memorial Library Mission Statement

We are a haven, a place that invites and offers opportunity, celebrates community, and promotes literacy.

Adopted 2/28/2017

Spooner Memorial Library Board of Trustee Bylaws

Article I Identification

This organization is the Board of Trustees of the Spooner Memorial Library, located in Spooner, Wisconsin, established by the Wisconsin municipality of Spooner, according to the provisions of Chapter 43 of the Wisconsin Statutes, and exercising the powers and assuming the duties granted to it under said statute.

Article II Membership

Section 1. Appointments and Terms of Office. Appointments and terms of office are as provided by the relevant subsections of Wisconsin Statutes Sections 43.54 [for municipal and joint libraries], 43.57 [for county libraries], and 43.60 [for additional appointments by the county, based on the level of county funding].

Section 2. Meeting Attendance. Members shall be expected to attend all meetings except as they are prevented by a valid reason. Any member who misses three consecutive meetings without notice or valid reason shall relinquish his position on the Board of Trustees.

Article III Officers

[**Note:** Wisconsin Statutes Section 43.54(2), requires the Board only to elect a president “and such other officers as they deem necessary.”]

[**Note:** Wisconsin Statutes Section 43.58(7), allows a library board to elect annually a “financial secretary” who may be given the authority to invest library gift, bequest, devise or endowment funds as permitted under Wisconsin Statutes Section 112.10. The library board must require a bond from the financial secretary to the library board of a dollar amount at least equal to the value of property held by the financial secretary. The bond must be in substantially the same form as the bond required from the treasurer of the municipality or county. By statute, the financial secretary must make an annual report to the Board showing in detail the amount, investment, income, and disbursements from the funds in his or her charge. The Board may wish to require, in the Bylaws, monthly or quarterly reports in addition to the annual report.]

Section 1. The officers shall be a president, a vice president, and a secretary, elected from among the appointed trustees at the annual meeting of the Board. No member shall hold more than one office at a time. Vacancies in office shall be filled by vote at the next regular meeting of the Board after the vacancy occurs.

Section 2. Officers shall serve a term of one year from the annual meeting at which they are elected and until their successors are duly elected.

Section 3. The president shall preside at meetings of the Board, authorize calls for special meetings, appoint all committees, execute all documents authorized by the Board, serve as an ex-officio voting member of all committees except the nominating committee, co-sign all checks drawn on funds held in custody of the library (independently of the municipality), and generally perform all duties associated with the office of president.

Section 4. The vice president, in the event of the absence or disability of the president, or of a vacancy in that office, shall assume and perform the duties and functions of the president.

Section 5. The secretary shall keep true and accurate minutes of all meetings of the Board, shall issue notice of all regular and special meetings, and shall perform such other duties as are generally associated with the office of secretary.

Article IV Meetings

Section 1. Regular Meetings. The regular meetings shall be held each month, on the fourth Tuesday at 5 p.m. at the Spooner Memorial Library. No board meeting in December.

Section 2. Annual Meeting. The annual meeting, which shall be for the purpose of the election of officers, shall be held at the time of the regular meeting in March of each year.

Section 3. Agendas and Notices. Meeting agendas and notices shall indicate the time, date, and place of the meeting and indicate all subject matters intended for consideration at the meeting.

Section 4. Minutes. Minutes of all meetings shall, at a minimum, indicate board members present, all items of business, all motions (except those that were withdrawn), and the result of all votes taken. Current board minutes shall be posted on a bulletin board in the library.

Section 5. Special Meetings. Special meetings may be called at the direction of the president, and shall be called at the written request of five members, for the transaction of business as stated in the call for the meeting. Except in cases of emergency, at least 48 hours' notice shall be given.

Section 6. Quorum. A quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting shall consist of five members of the Board present in person, in accordance with the requirements of **Wis. Stats. Section 43.54(1)(e)**.

Section 7. Open Meetings Law Compliance. All Board meetings and all committee meetings shall be held in compliance with Wisconsin's open meetings law (Wis. Stats. Sections 19.81 to 19.98).

Section 8. Parliamentary Authority. The rules contained in *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest revised edition [or *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* by Alice F. Sturgis], shall govern the parliamentary procedure of the meetings, in all cases in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any statutes applicable to this Board.

Article V Committees

Section 1. Standing Committees. Committees may be appointed by the president promptly after the annual meeting and shall make recommendations to the Board as pertinent to Board meeting agenda items.

Section 2. Nominating Committee. (See Article III, Section 2.)

Section 3. Ad Hoc Committees. Ad hoc committees for the study of special problems shall be appointed by the president, with the approval of the Board, to serve until the final report of the work for which they were appointed has been filed. These committees may also include staff and public representatives, as well as outside experts.

Section 4. No committee shall have other than advisory powers.

Article VI Duties of the Board of Trustees

Section 1. Legal responsibility for the operation of the Spooner Memorial Library is vested in the Board of Trustees. Subject to state and federal law, the Board has the power and duty to determine rules and regulations governing library operations and services.

Section 2. The Board shall select, appoint and supervise a properly certified and competent library director, and determine the duties and compensation of all library employees.

Section 3. The Board shall approve the budget and make sure that adequate funds are provided to finance the approved budget.

Section 4. The Board shall have exclusive control of the expenditure of all moneys collected, donated or appropriated for the library fund and shall audit and approve all library expenditures.

Section 5. The Board shall supervise and maintain buildings and grounds, as well as regularly review various physical and building needs to see that they meet the requirements of the total library program.

Section 6. The Board shall study and support legislation that will bring about the greatest good to the greatest number of library users.

Section 7. The Board shall cooperate with other public officials and boards and maintain vital public relations.

Section 8. The Board shall approve and submit the required annual report to the Division for Libraries, Technology, and Community Learning.

**Article VII
Library Director**

The library director shall be appointed by the Board of Trustees and shall be responsible to the Board. The library director shall be considered the executive officer of the library under the direction and review of the Board, and subject to the policies established by the Board. The director shall act as technical advisor to the Board. The director shall attend all Board meetings (but may be excused from closed sessions) and shall have no vote.

**Article VIII
Conflict of Interest**

Section 1. Board members may not in their private capacity negotiate, bid for, or enter into a contract with the Spooner Memorial Library in which they have a direct or indirect financial interest.

Section 2. A board member shall withdraw from Board discussion, deliberation, and vote on any matter in which the Board member, an immediate family member, or an organization with which the Board member is associated has a substantial financial interest.

Section 3. A board member may not receive anything of value that could reasonably be expected to influence his or her vote or other official action.

**Article IX
General**

Section 1. An affirmative vote of the majority of all members of the Board present at the time shall be necessary to approve any action before the Board. The president may vote upon and may move or second a proposal before the Board.

Section 2. Any rule or resolution of the Board, whether contained in these bylaws or otherwise, may be suspended temporarily in connection with business at hand, but such suspension, to be valid, may be taken only at a meeting at which five of the members of the Board are present and two-thirds of those present so approve.

Section 3. These bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Board by majority vote of all members of the Board.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Spooner Memorial Library on the twenty-second day of March 2005.

Amended 9-22-2015; 5-23-2017; 4-24-2018

Spooner Memorial Library

Patron Policies

Who Can Use the Library?

The Spooner Memorial Library is open to all who wish to use it. Library services are freely given to all who request them. Library materials may be freely checked out if the patron possesses a valid Spooner Memorial Library or Merlin member library card in good standing.

The use of the library, however may be denied for cause. Such cause may include, but is not limited to, the failure to return library materials or pay fines, destruction of library property, disturbance of other patrons, or any other objectionable conduct on library premises.

Library Card

A library card is available to any area resident age six or older. Children under sixteen require a parent or guardian's signature to obtain a card. New patrons are limited to 5 items in their initial check out. Temporary residents or visitors are welcome to obtain a temporary card with a \$20 deposit.

Confidentiality

All records formal and informal, in the Spooner Memorial Library relating to patron registration and their circulation of library materials are considered to be confidential in nature.

The relevant Wisconsin laws concerning the confidentiality of library records are Wisconsin Statutes Section 43.30 and the Wisconsin Personal Information Practices Act (Sections 19.62 to 19.80).

Under Section 43.30, library records that indicate the identity of an individual who borrows or uses the library's documents or other materials, resources or services may *only* be disclosed:

- 1) With the consent of the individual library user, or
- 2) By court order, or
- 3) To custodial parents or guardians of children under the age of 16, or
- 4) To persons acting within the scope of their duties in the administration of the library or library system, or
- 5) To other libraries (under certain circumstances) for interlibrary loan purposes [see ss. 43.30(2) and (3)].

Circulation of Materials

Loan periods are as follows:

- 7 days for DVDs
- 2 weeks for new books

- 2 weeks for TV series DVDs
- 3 weeks for books, audio CDs, & non-current periodicals
- Current periodicals do not circulate
- Most references do not circulate. However, some can be checked out for 7 days.
- Interlibrary loan materials are due on date indicated by lending library.
- Materials may be renewed twice either by phone, online or in person if no waiting list exists.

The director may establish a loan period for special collections or materials, which are temporarily in demand.

Patron may borrow up to 50 items from the library with these exceptions: no more than 20 books on CD, 10 DVDs per household, 3 books or DVDs in a series and 2 books on a subject in great demand. Further, students unaccompanied by a parent or guardian are limited to checking out a number of items equal to their grade in school (i.e. a 2nd grader may check out 2 books).

Reserves may be placed in person, online at <http://merlin.nwls.lib.wi.us/search> or over the phone. There is no charge for the placing the hold.

Censorship

No patron regardless of sex, age, race, or religion will be limited to any part of the library or denied any item they may want to check out. A complaint form can be filled out if the patron wishes to do so.

Fines and Other Charges

All Spooner Memorial Library children's and young adult materials are fine free effective June 1, 2018. All Spooner Memorial Library adult materials are fine free effective June 1, 2019. This applies to Spooner Memorial Library material only. Lost or damaged items will still be billed accordingly.

Items checked out for 21 days are given a 7-day grace period. Items with 2 week checkouts and 3 day check outs receive a 3 day grace. Overdue notices are sent at 7 days and 14 days overdue. On the 21st overdue day a bill for the item is sent, and the patron's borrowing privileges will be suspended until the item is returned.

If a patron has replacement costs of more than \$5.00, borrowing privileges shall be suspended until it is settled.

If materials are lost or damaged and judged by the library staff as unsuitable for the collection, the patron must pay the replacement cost.

In all the above matters, the director and library staff may use their discretion in settling fines and other charges.

Spooner Memorial Library

Internet Policy

A goal of the Spooner Memorial Library is to enhance the quality of life in our community by fulfilling educational, informational and recreational needs. It is within the scope of this goal that the library provides public access to the Internet. The Board of Trustees has established the Internet policy to ensure appropriate and effective use of this resource. The Spooner Memorial Library does not monitor and has no control over the information available through the Internet, and it cannot be held responsible for the content of any site. The Internet is a global entity available to a diverse segment of world society, and patrons use it at their own discretion.

Parents of minor children must assume responsibility for their children's use of the library's Internet service. No child under 12 years of age may use the Internet independently. An adult guardian must supervise him/her at all times. Students ages 12 and 13 may use the Internet independently in the children's wing only. Students 14 and older may use the Internet in the adult wing.

RULES/ RESTRICTIONS/ WARNINGS

- A valid library card is required to use any of the library's public computers. The person using the computer must be the person named on the library card. Area guests may request a temporary pass.
- Patrons are limited to 1 hour's use per day. Extensions of time may be granted if conditions are warranted. For example: extra time is needed for a test or there is no one else waiting to use the computers.
- Library computers are not to be used for any unlawful purposes or viewing of pornography.
- Tampering with or altering the Library's software or hardware is not permitted.
- No downloading of any executable files is permitted on any Library computer.
- No violating copyright laws or software license restrictions.

Violations of these rules may result in suspension of Internet access privileges, library borrowing privileges and appropriate legal action.

Wireless Access:

A wireless connection is available for those who bring their laptop or hand-held device equipped with a wireless card. Wireless users are expected to adhere to the Library's Internet Use Policy. Violations of our policy will result in the loss of library and computer privileges. Wireless networks are not secure and use is at the individual's own risk. Virus, security and privacy protection are the responsibility of the patron and are not provided by the library.

Amended 5/26/2015; 6/28/2018

Spooner Memorial Library Collection Development Policy

Objectives

Spooner Memorial Library strives to provide recreational and popular use materials as well as literacy support for all library patrons. Because of the volume of publishing, as well as the limitations of budget and space, the library must have a selection policy in order to develop a collection that meets the people's interests and needs.

Responsibility of Selection

Ultimate responsibility for the selection of materials for the Spooner Memorial Library rests with the library director. Acquisition librarians, with input from other staff members according to their areas of expertise, conduct the purchasing and processing of materials. The director oversees the selection process and has the authority to reject or select any item. The accountability for collection development lies with the director, who operates under the framework of policies set forth by the board.

Criteria for Selection

The main points considered in the selection of materials are

- Individual merit of each item
- Popular appeal
- Suitability for clientele
- Availability of funding
- Existing library holdings
- Availability of shelf space
- Diversity

Sources used in seeking information about new material include but are not limited to

- NY Times Best Seller Lists
- Summaries by Baker & Taylor
- Amazon.com
- Book Page
- Staff & Patron Suggestions
- Annual awards summaries
- Goodreads.com

The lack of a review or an unfavorable review shall not be the sole reason for rejecting a title that is in demand.

Gifts & Donations

The library accepts gifts of books and other materials with the understanding that they will be added to the collection only if appropriate and needed. If they are not usable, for whatever reason, the director will sell or donate materials as appropriate. Anything deemed unsalvageable will be disposed of properly.

Memorial gifts of books or money are also accepted with suitable bookplates placed in the book. A patron may request specific memorial books as long as the requested material meets the criteria on page 11 established by the library board of trustees. Book selection should have prior approval from either the director or an acquisition librarian. If no selection is suggested, an acquisition librarian will make one.

The library does not appraise the value of donated materials, though it can provide a receipt for the donated items, if requested by the donor.

Merlin Consortium

Because of limited budget and space, the library cannot house all the materials that are requested. Therefore, Merlin is used to obtain from other libraries those materials that are not in this library's collection.

In return for utilizing Merlin to satisfy the needs of our patrons, the Spooner Memorial Library agrees to lend its materials to other libraries in the same consortium, and to make an effort to have its current holdings listed in a database that is accessible by these libraries.

In order to participate in Merlin, the patron must comply with the following conditions:

- Have a valid Spooner Memorial Library or Merlin card, with current information
- Have less than \$5.00 in fines
- Adhere to the conditions and due dates set forth by the lending library

Interlibrary Loan

Because of limited budget and space within the Merlin Consortium, patrons may use Interlibrary Loan to obtain items from Wisconsin libraries outside of our system. Patrons must fill out an Interlibrary Loan Request form and turn it into the interlibrary loan librarian.

In order to participate in the interlibrary loan services, the patron must comply with the following conditions:

- Have a valid Spooner Memorial Library or Merlin card, with current information
- Have less than \$5.00 in fines
- Adhere to the conditions and due dates set forth by the lending library
- Understand that renewals are on a case by case basis and must be requested by the ILL librarian

Weeding

Replacement of outdated, worn, or damaged materials is an ongoing process that is dependent upon the current demand, usefulness, more recent acquisitions, and the availability of newer materials. Weeding is the responsibility of the library director and the acquisition librarians. Other staff may be asked to participate according to their areas of expertise. Withdrawn materials will be handled in a similar manner and under the same authority as donated material.

Potential Controversy

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

Parents and/or guardians are responsible for the content of materials checked out by children. Selection of library materials will not be inhibited by the possibility that materials may come into the possession of children.

Library materials will not be marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of their contents, and no library material will be sequestered except to protect it from damage or theft.

Challenged Materials

Although materials are carefully selected, differences of opinion may still occur regarding the suitability of content. Patrons requesting that material be withdrawn from or restricted within the collection may complete a "Request for Reconsideration of Materials" form that is available in the library. The Request for Reconsideration of Materials will then be placed on the agenda of the next regular board meeting, which the public is welcome to attend.

Amended 6/26/2018

Spooner Memorial Library

Patron Request for Reconsideration of Materials

Title _____ Book ___ Periodical ___ Other ___

Author _____

Your Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State ___ Zip _____

Phone _____

What is the Objection to this work? (Please be specific. Cite pages.)

Any further statements you would like to make? (The back of the sheet may be used for additional comments).

Would you like to speak with the Spooner Memorial Library Board of Trustees about your objection? _____

Board meetings are held in the library on the 4th Tuesday of every month at 5 P.M.

Signature

Date

Amended 6/23/2017

Spooner Memorial Library

Rules of Conduct

Policy

It is the policy of the Board of Trustees that patrons of the Spooner Memorial Library have the right to use library materials and services without being unduly disturbed or impeded by other library users, and the patrons and staff have the right to a secure and congenial environment.

Rules

1. Any behavior that disrupts or hinders public use of the library is prohibited on library property. This includes, but is not limited to, loud or boisterous behavior, verbal or physical harassment, drunkenness, running, and fighting.
2. Seating at library tables, enclosures, and chairs is limited to the number of persons for which the furniture was designed.
3. Smoking or chewing tobacco as well as electronic smoking devices are not permitted in any library public area or entryway.
4. Public eating is permitted only when specifically approved as part of a program inside of the library or by staff on their breaks.
5. Non-alcoholic beverages are permitted as long as they are covered and are not used near the computers. Patrons are responsible for replacing any library materials damaged by spilled beverages.
6. Bicycles are not permitted in any library public area or entryway. Roller-skating and skateboarding are not permitted in the library. Wagons and strollers may not be left obstructing a corridor, hallway, aisle, entry, or exit.
7. Taking surveys, circulating petitions, distributing leaflets, and other similar activities are permitted in the library only when authorized by the library administration.
8. Animals, except those used to aid persons with disabilities, are not permitted in the library, except as part of a library sponsored program. Animals may not be left unattended on library property.
9. The violation of federal and state laws or local ordinances will not be permitted on library property, and the library reserves the right to inform the proper authorities of any violations. Theft, vandalism, and mutilation of library property are criminal offenses and may be prosecuted. The library reserves the right to inspect all bags, briefcases, backpacks, and other such items when the staff have reason to believe that this rule has been violated. The library is not responsible for personal belongings left unattended.
10. Consumption of alcoholic beverages is not permitted on library property, except as part of library sponsored programs authorized by the library administration
11. Entering the library with concealed or openly visible firearms or other dangerous weapons is prohibited with the exception of those carried by authorized law enforcement agencies.
12. Failure to comply with these rules may result in the loss of library use privileges.

Cell Phone Policy

Policy

Talking on a cell phone is restricted to the entryway of the library and library property outside the building. Talking on a cellphone is not permitted inside the building proper, unless given permission by a library employee. Patrons entering the library are asked to shut off any audible rings.

Adopted 6/26/2012. Amended 9/19/2017; 7/24/2018

Safe Child Policy

Policy

The Spooner Memorial Library encourages children and families to use its facilities. However, when children are left unattended, problems may arise. Young children may wander away, be persuaded to leave with a stranger, or become confused or frightened. Older children may become bored or disruptive. In the event of an emergency involving unattended children, library staff cannot take legal responsibility.

Rules

1. Parents or guardians are responsible for the behavior and supervision of their children at the library.
2. Children age 5 and under must be accompanied by an adult or responsible adolescent (12 or over) at all times and in all areas of the building. Parents or another adult responsible for the children attending story time must remain in the building.
3. Children, ages 6 and 7 may be left unattended in the children's area for up to 30 minutes if the adult or responsible adolescent is in the building. Given the staggered finish times for area schools, we understand that children may sometimes have to wait at the library for a parent or sibling. Under these circumstances, school age children under 8 may wait up to 30 minutes to be picked up.
4. Children age 8 and over may use the library without parents or guardians, provided they behave appropriately and follow the rules that apply to all patrons, including respect for others and for library property and materials.
5. Any child requiring continual staff intervention or with special needs shall not be left unattended on library premises.
6. The library reserves the right to contact parents/guardians/proper authorities if minors are left unattended and require supervision.
7. The Spooner Memorial Library Trustees and Staff ask that parents/guardians abide by this policy to keep our children safe and to ensure an enjoyable experience at our library for all patrons.

Adopted 5/27/2003. Amended 9/25/2007; 4/28/2015; 9/19/2017

Spooner Memorial Library

Disaster Policy

Policy

The Spooner Memorial Library strives to be a safe place for our patrons and staff should an unforeseen disaster occur.

Health Emergencies

Staff members should exercise caution when administering first aid of even a minor nature. Without specialized training it is not advisable for staff to undertake more than keeping the sick or injured patron comfortable and protected from needless disturbance until medical help can be obtained. Since each case is unique, staff should use their own judgment to do what is prudent.

Staff should **Call 911 immediately** in case of serious injury. This can include loss of consciousness, severe pain, and or blood loss.

No medication, including aspirin, should ever be dispensed to the public.

Fire

The fire extinguisher is located between the drinking fountain and the doorway to the quiet room. All staff should be familiar with its location and how to use it. There is also a fire extinguisher in the furnace room above the sink.

At the first indication of smoke or flame investigate the situation to determine location and extent of the fire. Do not panic but do not underestimate the potential danger to patrons or staff represented by a fire. If the fire can obviously be contained and extinguished quickly and safely by a staff member proceed to do so. However, if there is any doubt about whether the fire can be controlled, immediately clear the building using the closest exits and call 911. Do not underestimate the potential danger to patrons and staff.

If practical and safe, library staff should check all areas of the building to help ensure that all patrons are evacuated. At no point should staff put themselves at risk trying to search the building or extinguish the fire.

Bomb Threats via Phone

Clear the building and call 911 as soon as possible. Keep the caller on the line as long as you can. Ask the caller to repeat the message; try to write down every word spoken by the person.

If the caller does not indicate the location of the bomb or the time of possible detonation, **ASK FOR THE INFORMATION.**

Pay attention to peculiar background noises such as motors running, background music and any other sounds, which may indicate the location from which the call is originating. Listen closely to the voice (male, female), voice quality (calm, excited), accents and speech impediments.

Severe Storms, Dangerous Weather Conditions

Blizzards, snow or ice storms, severe thunderstorms, extreme winds, tornadoes and any other weather conditions may prove dangerous to library patrons and staff.

Library staff should monitor local radio stations to keep abreast of inclement weather conditions. The staff should not rely on comments received from patrons, friends, or relatives. Although well intended they do not constitute justification for closing the library.

After the decision to close the library is made, the following things should be done to notify the public:

1. Inform city hall (if opened).
2. Post a sign on the door.
3. Contact the following radio stations within 30 minutes before closing: WJMC (635-6050) and WCSW (468-2811).

Cancellation of programs, such as story hour, should be at the discretion of the Program Director with consultation from the Library Director. Generally, the library will follow the school district's lead. If school is canceled, the library will cancel programs as well. Again, public notification must be made.

In case of tornado alarm, staff should inform all patrons present to take shelter in one of the bathrooms. Elderly persons, persons with handicaps, and those with small children may need assistance. Staff should also take shelter in one of the bathrooms. Should additional space be needed the supply closet next to the men's bathroom may be used. If these areas are also full take shelter under a desk or strong table away from exterior walls and glass.

Adopted 3/23/2004. Amended 7/26/2012; 6/23/2015; 9/19/2017; 7/24/2018

Library Bill of Rights

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

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

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

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

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

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

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Although the Articles of the Library Bill of Rights are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices. See the documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as [Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights](#).

The Freedom to Read

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We therefore affirm these propositions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can

machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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