

Freedom to Read at Lincoln City Libraries

Lincoln City Libraries (LCL) is pleased to provide a collection of materials and formats that seeks to meet the needs and expectations of the diverse community it serves. The public library today remains one of the strongest and most visible examples of democracy in action, where access to library services, reading and viewing materials, and spaces to gather is available to all who enter, without prejudice; and where access to ideas and viewpoints is recognized as a celebration for freedom, and not as a threat against it.

Lincoln's dedicated, professional staff work diligently to build and maintain a collection that is enjoyed and appreciated by its community, and one that adheres to – among other standards – the principles found in the Library Board-developed Materials Selection Policy, the American Library Association's (ALA) Library Bill of Rights and the ALA Freedom to Read Statement.

For patrons' convenience, the Library has assembled information and documents that assist in providing an understanding of LCL's basis for collection development and access to information. I hope the enclosed materials are practical and useful in aiding discussions, and I encourage patrons with further questions or concerns to contact a Library staff member at your local branch.

- *LCL's Material Selection Policy*
- *LCL's Statement on Material Challenges*
- *The Importance of Intellectual Freedom and the Right to Read at Lincoln City Libraries*
- *The American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights*
- *The Freedom to Read Statement of the American Library Association*

Patrons who wish to request a library material item be removed or reclassified to another collection are encouraged to first discuss their concern with a library manager and review the information within this packet.

If, after discussing with a manager and reviewing the packet, the patron wants to proceed with their request, a signed "Request for Reconsideration" form may be submitted to a library manager. This will begin the formal reconsideration process. Anonymous complaints in writing or by other means are not honored. The request is forwarded to the Library Director who will begin a process of review, and a decision will be made within 30 days.

-Ryan Wieber
Library Director

LCL Materials Selection and Maintenance Policy

Lincoln City Libraries provides ready access to a broad range of information and recreation materials, with the aim of serving our community in their information, recreation, and continuing education pursuits. The Library promotes literacy and encourages the development of reading and comprehension skills.

The Library Director is responsible for the selection of library materials and delegates this authority to various trained professional staff members. The Library recognizes that some items in the collections will be controversial and that some customers may find some titles objectionable. The library serves a diverse community with diverse interests and not all materials will be appropriate to an individual's interests. Parents and guardians are responsible for supervision of their minor's use of library materials. In the event of a formal filing for reconsideration, the ultimate decision on retention of the material rests with the Library Board.

The Library provides library materials in a variety of formats for our customers, depending on their needs and interests. Library collections are adapted to include new media delivery formats, but generally those formats are added as they become popularly available. As new media formats develop, older formats may become obsolete and will gradually be withdrawn from the collections.

The Library adheres to the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>) and Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/minors>) and the principles outlined in the Freedom to Read Statement of the American Library Association and the Association of American Publishers (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement>) when selecting materials. The Library endorses the Freedom to View Statement of the American Library Association (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomviewstatement>).

Library collections are developed and maintained on the basis of community and customer interests, publishing trends and fiscal limitations. The Library selects materials appropriate to the level of a public library collection, recognizing the diversity of our community in age, interests, education, heritage and physical and mental abilities. Library collections are not developed as substitutes for school or college libraries. Library collections don't provide materials at the level or depth of a research library.

Materials are selected on the basis of popularity, diversity, reviews, recommended lists, publisher reputation and durability of the physical format. Customer requests for materials play a vital role in collection development. Self-published titles are evaluated on a case-by case basis.

Donated materials become the property of the City of Lincoln at the time of donation. Gift materials are evaluated on the same principles as are purchased materials. Gifts are added to the collection, sold, or discarded according to staff judgment or its contracted volunteers.

Library collections are regularly reviewed by staff on the basis of currency, use and physical condition. Withdrawn materials may be sold or recycled.

ADOPTED BY LIBRARY BOARD: March 15, 1957
LAST REVISED BY LIBRARY BOARD: November 20, 2018
AFFIRMED BY LIBRARY BOARD: June 15, 2021
REVIEWED BY LAW: June 2021

Lincoln City Libraries

Statement on Challenges to Library Materials

Lincoln City Libraries (LCL) believes that access to information is vital for a community to thrive.

We serve the residents of Lincoln and Lancaster County by providing a broad selection of materials for educational and recreational uses. We respect an individual's right to choose what materials are best for their needs and the needs of their family, and library staff is available to help individuals evaluate whether an item will meet those needs.

As stated in the *Materials Selection and Maintenance Policy*, LCL "recognizes that some items in the collections will be controversial and that some customers may find some titles objectionable. The library serves a diverse community with diverse interests and not all materials will be appropriate to an individual's interests."

As part of LCL's commitment to providing resources for all the people that LCL serves, library professionals select materials using established criteria, including popularity, diversity, and reviews. Materials may also be added based on customer requests. LCL adheres to the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*, and materials are not "excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation." As outlined in the *Library Bill of Rights*, LCL also seeks to provide materials representing a range of viewpoints on current and historical issues. LCL does not make assumptions or judgments about why an individual may decide to use certain materials and maintains that individuals have the right to privacy and confidentiality regarding their use of library resources.

As expressed in the *Freedom to Read Statement* by the American Library Association and Association of American Publishers, librarians, booksellers, and publishers do not endorse the ideas or content in materials as 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." In accordance with this, LCL avoids labeling items based on content other than labels which may assist library users in locating an item.

LCL strives to make library locations welcoming to everyone and offers a variety of library programs, displays, and activities for all ages. If you have questions or comments regarding library resources, please contact LCL at library@lincoln.ne.gov.

The Importance of Intellectual Freedom and the Right to Read at Lincoln City Libraries

- It is the responsibility of public libraries to guarantee and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity, including those which some individuals in our society may consider to be unconventional, unpopular, or unacceptable.
- Public Libraries do not act in loco parentis. They serve the whole community with their collections, displays and programs. At Lincoln City Libraries, we do not limit what children can read, check out, or view in the library. The exception to this is that those 18 and under must use filtered internet computers unless their parent has signed a permission form giving them access to unfiltered content.
- While a specific book may not be the right fit for one person, it may be the perfect fit for another. No individual or group should make sweeping decisions that take away the process of careful consideration from library professionals or the freedom of choice from readers.
- Lincoln City Libraries *Materials Selection Policy*, is used by librarians to guide their selection process for adding materials to collections. It was developed and approved by the library's governing board. Librarians work diligently to develop collections that reflect the diversity of the community and society.
- Public libraries must have policies and procedures for determining what materials their collections should contain. Libraries make decisions by taking into consideration objective criteria such as budget, community demographics, current circulation habits, demands and trends of their patrons, contemporary societal issues, and events, and the literary or entertainment quality of the material. Public libraries must anticipate the information that will be sought by patrons and must reflect broad representation with the information provided.
- While it is true that librarians make choices about materials and a balance of subject matters, the focus of Lincoln City Libraries is to provide a well-rounded collection that represents multiple perspectives and viewpoints regarding a certain topic.
- Lincoln City Libraries creates displays and booklists to feature recently purchased items, to highlight resources relevant to current events, and to make community members aware of materials which they may not otherwise be aware of. By suggesting titles, Lincoln City Libraries is not endorsing a particular viewpoint or position. Library customers can make their own decisions as to what materials they would like to use.
- Library programs are provided to educate, entertain, and engage library users. Individuals have the right to decide if a program is right for themselves or their family.
- To be a librarian, a Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree is required. Librarians receive significant education and ongoing training which qualifies them to develop collections that meet the broad and varied interests and needs of patrons and communities.
- Lincoln City Libraries has a process in place for patrons who seek to request a reconsideration for a book or library material to be removed from the collection or to be reclassified to a different location within the collection. The request is submitted to the Library Director, who reviews the request and then provides a decision. Patrons have the right to appeal a decision to the Library Board.

ALA - Library Bill of Rights

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

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

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.

Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

ALA - 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.