



**Brownsville
Community
Library
Advisory
Board Policy
Manual**

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History of the Brownsville Community Library

By Susan Knapp, February 2006

On October 19, 1910, the Self-Improvement Club of Brownsville, later to be known as the Women's Study Club, organized. Deciding the community needed a library, the ladies had a book shower collecting two hundred and fifty volumes. The Library was officially started March 11, 1911. The Club nurtured the Library acting as librarians, raising money for books and housing the library in various buildings around town. In May of 1960, a library measure was passed and the City budget gave the Library \$567.23 per year for the librarian salary and books. In 1976, the Study Club hired an architect to draw plans for a new facility to replace the poorly heated, leaking structure the Library and Police Department shared. Funds were not available for building until later that year when the Federal government announced a limited number of grants were available to communities with qualifying needs. The Women's Study Club plan were submitted and approved for funding.

On February 22, 1977, after sixty-six years of continuous volunteer service, the Women's Study Club relinquished control of the Library to the City to access the Federal grant of \$200,000 for the construction of the Library facility on Spaulding Avenue; translating a dream into reality. The Women's Study Club continues support of the Library to this day.

The first meeting of the Library Advisory Board was on March 21, 1977. The Library Advisory Board oversaw the details of the construction, established policy & procedures regarding the public use of the Library, created a budget, monitored library services, established the trust fund and made recommendations on the Librarian's wages and hours to Council.

Thursday, October 19, 1977, was the first meeting of the Friends of the Library organized to function as a support group to the Brownsville Community Library. Their first task was to raise \$20,000 to provide furnishings for the new Library. The Friends of the Library purpose continues to focus public attention on the Library, stimulate the use of the Library's resources and services, receive and encourage gifts, endowments and bequests to the Library, support and cooperate with the Library in development of services and facilities for the community and to support the freedom to read as expressed in the American Library Association Bill of Rights. An open house on September 18, 1978 celebrated the new facility with the Library Advisory Board coordinating with the Friends of the Library and the Women's Study Club in the festivities.

The new Library was closed May 26th through June 10th, 1979 because of a deficit in the City budget. It opened briefly for Pioneer Picnic and then closed again. It remained locked through three municipal attempts at securing voter approval for a City budget levy for fiscal year 1979-1980. In the final election, the Library operation was presented to the voters as a separate \$9,200 measure and was rejected on July 25th, 1979.

On August 6th, 1979, the Council met with the Library Advisory Board and Friends of the Library to discuss the future of the Library. A plan was devised with the Friends of the Library dipping into their fund for special events at the Library to purchase basic supplies to launch a volunteer operation to open the facility. The City paid for some of the utility costs.

After an eleven week closure, the Library was opened under the guidance of Judy Cates who was the former assistant Librarian with a volunteer force of forty people. The group included sixteen women, each of whom worked a four hour shift once a week to staff the checkout desk with others serving as substitutes and cleaning the building. Funding was eventually restored and the Library supervision returned to the Librarian's care in the autumn of 1980 with volunteer support staff.

The strong community support continues today even among those not visibly present at the site of the Library. A volunteer stated, People that come into check out the Library get drawn into the "family" of the Brownsville Community Library and end up caring passionately about it."

Brownsville Municipal Code

Chapter 2.50 Public Library

Sections:

[2.50.010](#) Board created.

[2.50.020](#) Membership and term.

[2.50.030](#) Organization.

[2.50.040](#) Powers and duties.

[2.50.050](#) Librarian.

[2.50.060](#) City Administrator.

[2.50.070](#) Volunteers.

[2.50.080](#) City Library Trust Fund.

[2.50.090](#) Method of financing.

2.50.010 Board created.

There is hereby created a board for the City, to be known and designated as the "Brownsville Community Library Advisory Board," the creation, organization, powers and duties of which shall be provided for in ORS 357.400 through 357.621, and as further set forth in this chapter. [Ord. 485 § 1, 1979; 1981 Compilation § 1-4.1.]

2.50.020 Membership and term.

The Board will consist of five members appointed by the Mayor pursuant to the rules of the Council. No more than two shall be nonresidents. One member shall initially hold office for one year, one member shall hold office for two years, one member shall hold office for three years, and two members shall hold office for four years from July 1st in the year of their appointment. Succeeding appointees shall hold office for a term of four years from July 1st in the year of their appointment. At the expiration of the term of any member of such Board, the Mayor shall appoint a new member or may reappoint a member for a term of four years. If a vacancy occurs, the Mayor shall appoint a new member for the unexpired term. No person shall hold appointment as a member for more than two consecutive terms, but any person may be reappointed again to the Board after an interval of one year. Members of the Brownsville Community Library Advisory Board holding office at the time of enactment of this chapter shall hold office for the terms for which they were appointed. [Ord. 485 § 2, 1979; 1981 Compilation § 1-4.2.]

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2.50.030 Organization.

The Brownsville Community Library Advisory Board shall meet and organize by the election of a chairman from among its members and shall hold regularly scheduled monthly meetings. The Librarian shall serve as Secretary to the Board and keep a record of its actions. All minutes shall be forwarded to the City Administrator for inclusion in the public record. [Ord. 485 § 3, 1979; 1981 Compilation § 1-4.3.]

2.50.040 Powers and duties.

The powers, duties and responsibilities of the Advisory Board are as follows:

- A. Advise the Council on appointment of librarians and staff, and compensation for librarians and staff.
- B. Advise the Council on formulating rules and policies for the governance of the library.
- C. Prepare and submit an annual operating budget to the Budget Committee.
- D. Advise the Council on any future site for public library buildings, future location of library facilities, and entering into contracts.
- E. Select suitable materials to be available in the library.
- F. Advise the Council on library fees and charges to be collected.
- G. Monitor the library's fiscal activities to make certain the budget is not exceeded.
- H. Coordinate the efforts of groups or individuals to enhance the City library trust fund and advise the Council on disbursement of the monies deposited therein.
- I. Keep the Council updated on all activities.
- J. Other such duties as directed by the Council. [Ord. 485 § 4, 1979; 1981 Compilation § 1-4.4.]

2.50.050 Librarian.

- A. The Librarian shall notify the City in advance and receive approval of all expenditures, except where specific exceptions have been granted. Such exceptions shall be in writing and approved by the Council.
- B. The Librarian shall maintain a record of all collections of dues, charges, fines and other receipts of funds, showing the source and amount thereof. All such funds shall be turned in to the City no later than at the end of each week and a receipt obtained from the City for inclusion in the Librarian's records. These records shall be subject to audit at any time.
- C. The Librarian shall be under the administrative control of the City Administrator and shall be governed by the policies recommended by the Library Advisory Board and approved by the Council.
- D. The Librarian shall make and keep current at all times a complete inventory of library-owned nonexpendable equipment and supplies.

E. The Librarian shall maintain a separate inventory of all items on loan or display, showing their ownership and disposition. [Ord. 485 § 5, 1979; 1981 Compilation § 1-4.5.]

2.50.060 City Administrator.

A. The City Administrator shall receive all income generated by the library facility and credit it to the appropriate receipts line item.

B. The City Administrator, when advised by the Library Advisory Board of the value of material gifts received and accepted by the library, shall prepare receipts to granted donors; and the receipt and expenditure (if the donation is of an expendable nature) shall be recorded in the ledgers of the library trust fund. [Ord. 485 § 6, 1979; 1981 Compilation § 1-4.6.]

2.50.070 Volunteers.

Volunteers may be utilized in the library at the discretion of the Library Advisory Board and the approval of the Council. Such volunteers are to be under the direct supervision of the Librarian. [Ord. 485 § 7, 1979; 1981 Compilation § 1-4.7.]

2.50.080 City library trust fund.

There is hereby established as a separate fund of the City a fund to be designated as the "library trust fund."

A. Donations to Fund. The City may accept gifts, devises or bequests of money or property (herein called donations) to the library trust fund. Donations to the City for the City library or for library purposes shall be deemed given to the library trust fund unless a contrary intent of the donor is evidenced. All donations shall be subject to approval by the Council. Donations may be accepted on such conditions as may be approved by the Council. Without limitation upon the generality of lawful conditions which may be approved by the Council, donations may be accepted on the condition that the principal amount thereof be retained and invested and only the income expended for the benefit of the Brownsville Community Library.

B. Use of Fund. The library trust fund and the income therefrom shall be used exclusively for the benefit of the Brownsville Community Library for books, library materials, special projects, other property used by the library or capital improvements, unless otherwise specified by the donor. Subject to any other requirements of law, all expenditures and disbursements from the library trust fund shall be as approved by the Council after consideration and recommendation of the Library Advisory Board.

C. Segregation and Investment of Fund. Assets of the library trust fund may be segregated into separate accounts, and such separate accounts may, for convenience or in order to comply with the conditions or requests of the donor, be designated by separate names. Assets of the various accounts may be commingled for investment or accounting purposes. Assets of the fund, including all separate accounts, may from time to time be invested and reinvested by the City in such depositories or securities as may be lawful for investment of other City funds. [Ord. 485 § 8, 1979; 1981 Compilation § 1-4.8.]

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2.50.090 Method of financing.

The City of Brownsville proposes to finance operation of the Brownsville Community Library from the general fund of the City of Brownsville. [Ord. 485 § 9, 1979; 1981 Compilation § 1-4.9.]

Regulations Affecting the Public Oregon Statutes

Prohibited Actions

357.975 Willful detention of library property. It shall be unlawful for any person willfully or maliciously to detain any library materials belonging to a publicly supported library or privately supported school, academic or research library or incorporated library for 30 days after notice in writing from the librarian of such library, given after the expiration of time which by regulations of such library such materials may be kept. The notice shall bear upon its face a copy of this section and of ORS 357.990. [Formerly 357.830; 1975 c.476 §30]

Penalties

357.990 Penalties. Violation of ORS 357.975 is a Class B violation. Such conviction and payment of the fine shall not be construed to constitute payment for library material nor shall a person convicted under this section be thereby relieved of any obligation to return to the library such material. [Amended by 1971 c.743 §360; 1975 c.476 §31; 1983 c.208 §2; 1999 c.1051 §176]

Charges, Fees & Fines

Library Membership Fees

- Residents inside Brownsville City Limits may use the library free of charge. Brownsville citizens' taxes pay for the operation and maintenance of the Library.
- Patrons outside of the City Limits shall pay a \$20 annual membership fee.
- Senior Citizens (60 & Older) outside of the City Limits -receive a fifty percent discount (50%) percent on their annual membership fee.

Fines

- Twenty cents (20¢) per day.
- One dollar (1\$) a week.
- Four dollars (\$4) per month.
- Lost book or item – current retail cost of the book is to be charged.
- Fines accrue per item.

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Usage Period

All materials and items eligible to be checked out of the Library shall be for a period of two weeks. Items maybe renewed twice. The renewal period is also two weeks.

Excess Over Due Items

If an item is overdue forty-five (45) days, the patron is charged for the retail cost of the item, the fine and Library privileges are immediately suspended. The Librarian shall maintain a system for tracking these items. If the item is returned, the patron will be relieved of the associated book charges. Staff shall send a notification letter once the book is thirty (30) days past due indicating the title of the material, the accumulated charges and indicate the suspension of privileges. The patron should be encouraged to return the material. ORS 357.975 Willful Detention of Library Property & 357.990 Penalties.

Replacement Book Costs

Replacement costs will be determined by the Librarian based on the materials being replaced. The Librarian shall charge the current retail price for the item when the notification letter for overdue materials is sent to the patron.

Library Card Requirement

Every patron shall be required to apply for membership and pay the associated fees.

Library Repairs and Capital Improvements

The Library Advisory Board shall prepare a list of possible improvements to be included in the City's Capital Improvements Plan for all facilities and infrastructure.

Reserve Book Request

A patron may request to have a "checked out" book reserved.

If a book is on the "reserve" list, it may not be renewed by the patron currently in possession of the book.

When the "reserved" book arrives at the library, the patron requesting the material will be notified by phone. The date of contact will be recorded on the reserve note.

If there is only the one patron listed on the reserve list that patron will be notified a second time by phone. If the reserved book is not picked up within the following one (1) day, the book or item will be returned to the general collection.

If two or more patrons are on the reserve list, after the one (1) day has passed the second patron will be notified. The patron, previously at the top of the list, will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

New Book Policy

A New Book can only be checked out for a period of two weeks and cannot be renewed. New Books will be on the New Book list for a period of ninety (90) days.

Materials Selection Policy

Purpose

A written materials selection policy aids the library staff in acquiring a well-rounded collection of books and other library materials. A policy statement also helps answer questions by the public regarding the presence or absence of certain materials.

National Statements Concerning Intellectual Freedoms

The Library Advisory Board believes that the right to read is an important part of the intellectual freedom that is basic to democracy and hereby adopts these two basic documents as official library policy: 1) The Library Bill of Rights and 2) Freedom to Read Statement. These documents can be found at the bottom of this Manual.

Method of Materials Selection

- A. **Criteria** – each type of material must be considered in terms of its own merit and intended audience. All selections, both purchases and gifts, must meet some of the following criteria:
 - 1. Appeal to the interest and needs of individuals in the library service area;
 - 2. Permanent Value as Source Material;
 - 3. Contemporary Significance;
 - 4. Entertaining Presentation;
 - 5. Artistic Excellence;
 - 6. Accuracy and Objectivity;
 - 7. Relations to other materials and existing areas of coverage in order to maintain a well- balanced collection;
 - 8. Technical Quality in selection of non-book material.

- B. **Requests** – All requests from patrons for specific titles or subject matter will be considered.
Whenever there is enough demand or interest in a title or subject, the item may be purchased unless it is completely without literary or social value or the subject in question is already adequately covered.

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Statement of Specific Policies in Selected Areas

Adult Fiction

The collection provides books in the English language for the wide range of interests of the general public, including classics in the field, titles representing periods of writing and those meeting the popular demand for light reading. Books which are obviously pornographic, which come within Oregon's definition of obscenity as stated in ORS 167.087 should be excluded. However, no book should be eliminated because of coarse language, violence or frank discussion of sexual episodes, any of which may be objectionable to some people. It is the Library's responsibility to protect the rights of mature readers.

Adult Non-Fiction

The Library purchases authoritative, scientific and popular materials in all non-fiction categories. Special emphasis shall be given to books and materials dealing with the Pacific Northwest, local history and genealogy.

Religious Books

The Library attempts to maintain a well-balanced collection representing major world religions and their sacred scriptures. Authoritative material which introduces and explains the basic concepts and practices of various religions and beliefs is also included. The Library does not add materials of a strictly proselytizing nature. The collection encompasses popular studies on new ideas and movements that are taking place in religion today.

Juvenile Materials

Children's materials are selected on subjects of interest within the comprehension of children through pre-school through eighth grade. Graded readers are not purchased nor are other textbooks.

Non-book Materials

In general, the same selection policies apply.

1. *Periodicals & Newspapers*: The Library endeavors to provide a wide range of subject matter of reference value and recreational interest.
2. *Maps*: A circulating collection is maintained.
3. *Vertical File*: The Library tries to provide updated information on a variety of subjects, especially areas not adequately covered by the book collection.

Rare & Valuable Books

The Librarian shall determine criteria for the inventory of any rare or valuable books. These items shall be separated from the general collection and used as reference materials only.

Sale of Books

The Librarian shall provide the Library Advisory Board a list of all books being considered for sale prior to the items leaving inventory. Items removed from inventory will be sold quarterly. Donated materials are not part of this process.

Gift Book Policy

Gifts to the Library are considered outright and unrestricted donations to be used in the best interest of the Brownsville Community Library. Gifts and donations are accepted by the Librarian if they meet the same standards applied to the acquisition of new materials. Materials not meeting the standard whether they are out of date, duplicates or are unsuitable for Library use may be sold, exchanged or discarded at the discretion of the Librarian. Gift items may be marked with an appropriate bookplate at the request of the donor or at the discretion of the Librarian.

A memo for tax purposes may be given to the donor at the time of the donation, if requested. The memo shall acknowledge the receipt of the materials only. The Internal Revenue Service regulations do not permit monetary evaluation of library materials for tax purposes.

Religious gift books will be added to the collection only if they meet the requirements referred to in the Materials Selection Policy in this Manual.

It is the Librarian's responsibility to determine what material will be included into the collection, discarded, given away or sold. The Librarian will determine if the material is suitable for the Library based on criteria mentioned earlier. Again, items not to be included in the collection may be sold, given away or discarded.

Art Gift Policy

No art objects will be accepted to become a permanent part of the collection of the Brownsville Community Library unless:

1. The artist is of recognized stature due to exhibitions in recognized museums or ownership in collections of museums;
2. The proposed piece was commissioned by the City of Brownsville;
3. The work is submitted and approved by the Library Advisory Board;
4. The work is suitable for the décor of the Library and blends with the overall scheme of the Library as deemed by the Library Advisory Board.

Exhibits Policy

Purpose

It is part of the Library's function to provide access to the cultural resources of the community. Exhibits may be planned, therefore, to direct the public's attention to the materials and services of the Library itself or may provide exposure to the work of the artists.

Control

The material of the exhibits must meet what is generally known as “a standard acceptable to the community.” The Library shall decide on the content and arrangement of all exhibits. Every item must meet the Library’s standards of value and quality. The Library reserves the right to reject any part of an exhibit or change the manner of any display.

Conditions of Art For Sale

1. Prices shall be posted;
2. Transactions shall be directly between the purchaser and the exhibitor or agent;
3. The Library shall receive no fees, commissions or other remuneration in connection with the sale of exhibit items;
4. No exhibit material which is sold during its display may be removed prior to the end of the exhibit unless the exhibit item is replaced with an appropriate alternative;
5. Exhibitors must complete a Display Agreement form on which a description and price/value of items is given by the exhibitor and recorded by the Librarian;

Use of Library Storage Areas

Any outside groups or individuals are not allowed to store materials of any kind in the Library without the expressed, written consent of the Library Advisory Board. Any inquiries for storage space will be considered based on its own merits by the Library Advisory Board. Any such request must be in writing demonstrating the needs for the space.

Use of the Kirk Community Room

Any group or individual may use the Kirk Community Room for meetings by contacting City Hall for details. City Hall shall maintain the schedule for all City owned facilities in order to provide consistency of service and availability.

Privacy of Records Policy

All records, formal and informal, in the Brownsville Community Library relating to patron registration and the subsequent circulation of materials provided by the Library are considered to be confidential. In order to prevent an unreasonable invasion of personal privacy, the contents of registration and circulation records shall not be made available to anyone except under the written order of the Librarian or Chairperson of the Library Advisory Board. Any such order shall be the result of the City having been issued a proper legal process, order or subpoena by law.

Any concerns or conditions relating to the privacy of a patron through the records of the Brownsville Community Library which are not provided in the policy statement shall be referred to the Librarian. The Librarian shall then consult with the City Administrator to determine the proper course of action for providing any such requested information based on legal counsel. Any request

for personal information shall be in writing. The City will act on the request in an acceptable time frame.

Internet Use

The Library and Staff have no control over information available on the Internet and are not responsible for its content. Patrons use the Internet at their own risk. Internet resources are accessible to patrons and visitors. Parents or guardians, not the Library Staff, are responsible for the Internet information accessed by their children. Parents are to supervise and monitor their children's Internet sessions.

Staff Assistance

- Library Staff cannot provide in-depth training concerning the Internet or for general computer usage. Patrons are encouraged to use the comprehensive learning tools software available on the computers.

Usage Guidelines:

- Sessions are for one hour on the hour, daily. Patrons who are working on a project may negotiate for more time at the Librarian's discretion. Patrons should sign in for each session. You may reserve time in person or by telephone. Reservations may be made one day in advance. If you are more than fifteen (15) minutes late patrons who are waiting will be allowed to use the computer in your time slot.
- Two patrons are allowed at each computer station at one time.
- Printed pages are ten (10) cents each, including mistakes.
- Sabotage to the computer equipment will result in permanent revocation of Library privileges.
- The library's computers are in a public area. It is against Library Policy to display obscene materials; ORS 167.060 ~ 167.100. Displaying obscene materials will result in loss of computer privileges.
- Using library computers to copy and distribute copyright protected works may be an infringement of the copyright law (Title 17 U.S. Code)
- By signing this document, you indicate that you have read this policy and that you agree to abide by the rules of the Library.

Patron Sign In

- Anyone wishing to use the Internet must sign in on the form provided by the Front Desk.

Library Advisory Board Policy

Organization

The Library Advisory Board shall elect officers annually at the May meeting. Officers shall be elected by the Board and shall serve a term of one year. If an officer is unable to attend or fulfill the duties of their position, the Board may by a majority motion elect a replacement.

Vacancies

The Mayor is responsible for filling vacancies on all boards of the City of Brownsville. According to Council policy, the Mayor places an advertisement in the local newspaper asking for volunteers. Candidates are reviewed and selected by the Mayor with the advice of Council. The Library Advisory Board shall contact the City Administrator regarding vacancies and provide an advertisement for the Mayor's attention.

Excessive Absenteeism

Unexcused absences or missing three consecutive meetings may result in forfeiture of membership. Any Board Member may call for a motion based on the absenteeism of any member.

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, by the ALA Council; amended February 2, 1961; amended June 28, 1967; amended January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 24, 1996.

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.

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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A Joint Statement by:

American Library Association
Association of American Publishers