

BALDWINSVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
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MATERIALS SELECTION

The purpose of the Materials Selection Policy is to support the Mission Statement of the Baldwinsville Public Library:

“...to provide community residents with timely, accurate, and useful information in their pursuit of personal, educational, and professional interests, as well as access to a varied collection of popular materials to support cultural, recreational, and leisure activities. Emphasis will be placed on stimulating young children’s interests and appreciation for reading and learning, and supporting students in meeting educational objectives, particularly at the elementary and secondary levels.”

The library serves as a learning and educational center for all residents of the community, regardless of race, age, creed, color, occupation, or financial position.

A. RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELECTION

The authority and responsibility for the selection of library materials are delegated to the library director and, under his or her direction, to the professional staff who are qualified for this activity. Suggestions from readers are welcome and are given consideration within the framework of the selection policy, as approved by the Board of Trustees.

B. GENERAL POLICIES

1. Reviews in professionally recognized periodicals are a primary source for materials selection. Standard bibliographies, booklists by recognized authorities, and the advice of competent people in specific subject areas also will be used.
2. Non-fiction materials will be purchased based on the accuracy of content.
3. Popular demand will be considered when purchasing or replacing materials. However, requests for specific materials will not always result in purchase. The library cannot always include in its permanent collection all specialized materials desired by individuals. Interlibrary loan is used to meet this need.

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4. Consideration of the purchase of multiple copies of library materials will be based on popular demand.
5. Materials will be selected that vary in levels of difficulty.
6. Materials for people with special needs will be purchased when possible. However, requests for specific resources will not always result in purchase. Attempts will be made to meet the patrons' needs through the resources of other libraries.
7. Selection of materials will be based on a review of the strengths and weaknesses of the collection.
8. The great works which are considered classics and books of literary merit will be a permanent part of the collection.
9. Materials will be selected that present multiple points of view. The responsibility of the library is to serve all the community, not to promote—and above all, not to censor—any particular political, moral, philosophical, or religious conviction or opinion.
10. Materials which have outlived their usefulness will be withdrawn from the library's collection. Weeding will be done according to established library practices and procedures. Availability of more recent material will be considered.
11. The library does not promulgate beliefs or views, nor is the selection of any given book equivalent to endorsement of the viewpoint of the author expressed therein.
12. Materials which may be obscene with deliberate intent shall not be admitted to the library. No materials shall be judged for exclusion by taking single passages or sections out of context and basing condemnation of that material on such lifted passages or sections.
13. Materials which tend to foster hatred or intolerant attitudes toward other groups will not be purchased, nor will they be accepted as a gift.
14. No attempt will be made to supply textbooks used in area schools; however, a book will not be excluded because it is a textbook.

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15. The library does not attempt to provide the community with exhaustive professional, legal, or medical material, such as would be found in a special library collection.
16. The format of certain materials is not suitable for a circulating collection (e.g., three-ring binders, pop-ups, etc).
17. Responsibility for the reading of children rests with their parents or legal guardians. Selection will not be inhibited by the possibility that books may inadvertently come into the possession of children.

C. PROCESS FOR HANDLING A COMPLAINT ABOUT LIBRARY MATERIALS

The choice of library materials is an individual matter. While a person may reject materials for oneself, he or she may not restrict access to those materials by others. The library recognizes that certain materials are controversial and that any given item may offend some library user. The following guidelines have been developed to assure that the requests of those who disagree with the inclusion of specific items in the collection are handled in an attentive and consistent manner.

1. The staff member who has the first contact with the complainant will refer him/her to the librarian who is in charge of the collection that contains the questioned material for a discussion of the patron's concerns.
2. The librarian will review the material in question in light of the Materials Selection Policy.
3. If the material meets the selection criteria the librarian will notify the complainant and refer him/her to the library director.
4. If the complainant contacts the director, he/she will meet with him/her to discuss the issue.
5. If the complainant is still unsatisfied, he/she will be given an Individual's Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials Form. Procedures will be described to the complainant at this time.
6. During the review process the library will take appropriate action to insure that the item will continue to be available to patrons.

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7. If the completed Individual's Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials Form is returned to the library director, a committee will be formed comprising two librarians (including the one whose material is being questioned), the library director, and two Library Board members.
8. The committee will analyze the material based on the selection policy and the Individual's Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials Form and write a report of their findings, including copies of professional reviews of the material if available, and usage and holdings statistics.
9. The committee will present their report and all materials related to the complaint to the Board of Trustees at their next monthly meeting. The complainant will be invited to attend if he/she wishes and comment after the report is given. The Board will table the issue until the next Board meeting in order to give serious consideration to the materials presented.
10. The Board will make a decision at their meeting the following month. The director will notify the complainant of this decision.

D. POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES

In the selection of books and other materials the Baldwinsville Public Library subscribes fully to the principles adopted by the American Library Association in its Bill of Rights (June 1948 and amended 1961, 1980, 1996) and endorses its stand that freedom to read and view is essential to our democracy as stated by the American Library Association in its "Freedom to Read" statement (adopted June 1953 and revised 1972, 1991, 2000, 2004) and "Freedom to View" statement (adopted 1979 and revised 1989).

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 reviews of those contributing to their creation.

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

Adopted June 18, 1948.

Amended February 2, 1961, and January 23, 1980,
Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996,
by the ALA Council.

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

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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:

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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.*

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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.*

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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.

Adopted June 25, 1953; revised January 28, 1972, January 16, 1991, July 12, 2000, June 30, 2004, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee.

Freedom to View

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

1. To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.

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3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

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

Adopted 3/22/78

Revised 1/12/05

Board of Trustees, Baldwinsville Public Library