

# MENDOCINO COUNTY LIBRARY COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

## LIBRARY MISSION

The mission of the Mendocino County Library is to enrich lives through free and equitable access to materials and programs centered on education, culture, and entertainment.

## Intellectual Freedom

Collection development policies should be guided by the principles of intellectual freedom, which stems from the First Amendment of the Constitution that affirms citizens' right to hold beliefs and to express them. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press also apply to its counterpart, the right to unrestricted ACCESS to the expressions and beliefs of others.

## Role of the Public Library

Public libraries play a unique role in the preservation of democracy by providing an open, nonjudgmental institution where individuals can pursue their interests and gain an understanding of diverse opinions. Libraries must continue to play an essential role in safeguarding the intellectual liberty of the public and they must recognize, understand, and support freedom of access.

## Purpose of guidelines

- To guide library staff in the continual process of selection and deselection of materials
- To inform the public about the principles upon which selections are made
- "Materials" refers to books, audiobooks, DVDs, CDs, e-books, and e-audiobooks.
- "Selection" and "Deselection" refer to the decisions that must be made either to add materials to or to retain materials already in the collection, or to deaccession them.

## Objectives

- To maintain a well-balanced and broad collection of materials for information, reference, and research.
- To support the democratic process by providing materials for the education, enlightenment, and entertainment of the community.

## Responsibility for Selection

Although many people contribute to the selection process by recommending resources for the library in an advisory capacity, the responsibility for coordinating and making final decisions rests with the library professional staff. The inclusion of any item in the Library's collection does not constitute an endorsement by the Library of the item's content.

## General Principles

Materials to be added to the collections of the Mendocino County Library are selected on the merits of a particular work in relation to the needs, interests, and demands of this community.

- Responsibility for children's reading rests with their parents or legal guardians. Selection should not be inhibited by the possibility that books may inadvertently come into the possession of children.
- Selections should be made on the basis of whether the book presents life in its true proportions, whether characters and situations are realistically presented (except for Fantasy and Science Fiction genres), and whether the book has literary merit.
- Based on the services the public library is expected to perform, it is our responsibility to provide circulating, reference, and research materials for both the diverse general public of the community as well as students at all levels of formal and informal education.

## Specific Principles

- Contemporary significance or permanent value
- Accuracy
- Authority of Author
- Relation of work to existing collection
- Price, format, and ease of use
- Scarcity of information in subject area
- Availability of material elsewhere in the community
- Popular demand

## SPECIFIC CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

**Adult Non-Fiction:** Chief points considered are readability of material, authenticity of factual matter presented, quality of writing, cost, and format, existing library holdings, and suitability of material to the community. Nonfiction may be excluded for inaccurate information, lack of integrity, sensationalism, intent to incite hatred or intolerance, and text material of too limited or specialized a nature.

Titles are selected on the basis of the content as a whole and without regard to the personal history of the author. Important books of all persuasions are carried. In no case is any book included or excluded merely because of the race or nationality, or the political or religious views of the writer. In the case of controversial questions, variety and balance of opinion are sought whenever available.

**Adult Fiction:** Selection is made with reference to one or more of these criteria:

- It contributes positively to an individual's awareness of self, community, and social heritage.
- It contributes to the value of the library's collection as a whole by representing all types and styles of literature.

- It provides pleasant reading for recreational and creative use of leisure time.
- Serious works which present an honest aspect of life are not necessarily excluded for frankness of experience.

### **Children's Materials:**

The first objective in selecting children's materials is to encourage children's joy of reading and in being read to. Books are selected which offer adventure of mind and spirit to the growing child, cultivating an appreciation of literature both oral and written and encouraging the creative use of leisure time by developing an inquiring mind. Special attention is given to works of use and value to parents, teachers, and other adults working with children.

The public library does not provide basic textbooks or materials needed in quantity for school work; it accepts as its responsibility the provision of supplemental materials of varied kinds to enrich the resources available to the individual student and teacher.

### **Special Collections:**

The library collects and preserves documents primarily of local importance. Books of particular historical value will be collected by the Mendocino County Museum and are not within the purview of the public library.

### **Magazines and Newspapers:**

Basic popular, general information, and scholarly magazines are selected to supplement the book collection bring book information up to date, and fill in those areas where book resources are weak, inferior, or non-existent.

Newspapers are selected to meet reference and research needs of patrons, to provide current information, and to satisfy casual interest in current events. Local and national newspapers are supplied upon sufficient demand and within budget and space limitations.

### **Online Databases and other Digital Resources:**

The library recognizes the importance of non-book materials both as a supplement to its book collection and to its concept of service. Within budget limitations CD's, DVD's, e-books and e-audio books, streaming services, and online databases are purchased in accordance with the criteria previously outlined for adult and children's materials.

### **Gifts:**

Gifts accepted by the Mendocino County Library are judged upon the same basis as purchased materials. They are considered with the explicit understanding that such factors as duplication, lack of community interest, processing costs or inadequate shelf space may prevent their addition to the collection or permanent retention on the shelves. Gifts are accepted with the understanding that the library, if it cannot use them, may at any time dispose of them in any way it sees fit. No conditions may be imposed relating to any gift accepted by the library. Donors must be willing to assign proper and legal title, which can include copyright and literary rights, to all gift books, manuscripts, and other materials which have significant monetary value.

The library does not assess the value of materials and therefore does not provide that information for tax exemption purposes. However, upon a donor's request, the library supplies a receipt listing the number and general type of materials accepted.

Original works, crafts, artifacts, furniture, and items large enough or of a nature to be considered permanent and non-circulating must be referred to Library Administration before final acceptance is given. Labels may be affixed to gift items indicating the donor and related information helpful to the patron or person whom the gift honors.

### **Memorials:**

The Library welcomes funds to be used for the purchase of memorials. A thank-you note is sent to the donor, and the family of the person honored is notified. If requested, memorial materials may carry a gift plate showing the name of the person honored.

### **LABELING OF MATERIALS:**

In order to permit free and convenient access to library materials, the library endorses an open shelf policy. Therefore, no materials shall be either removed from open shelves or kept in a restricted area because of their controversial nature or because they are more suitable for one age group than another because of their subject matter, viewpoint, or the possibility that they might be opposed to by certain individuals or groups.

Library materials are not marked or identified in such a way as to indicate approval or disapproval, and materials are not sequestered, except for the purpose of protecting such materials from damage or theft.

Responsibility for children's reading and viewing materials rests with their parents and legal guardians. Selection of materials for the adult collection is therefore not influenced by the possibility that children may obtain materials which some parents might consider inappropriate.

### **COLLECTION MAINTENANCE AND WEEDING**

Materials are withdrawn regularly in accordance with the criteria for selection and by using guidelines such as the CREW method (Continuous Review, Evaluation, and Weeding). Replacements are based on the same principles.

Stolen or mutilated materials will be replaced when deemed necessary to the maintenance of a well-rounded collection. Materials of marginal importance may not be replaced.

### **Responsibility**

Responsibility for the selection of library materials falls under the jurisdiction of the County Librarian. Since no one person is fully qualified to determine the reading needs of all persons in all sections of the community, responsibility for materials selection may be delegated to staff members by the County Librarian, who has the authority to implement the policy. Suggestions from patrons and staff members are always welcome and given serious consideration.

Problems in material selection are referred first to the Branch Librarian and then to the County Librarian.

The Library attempts to follow the guidelines of The American Library Association, which recommends that annual withdrawals average about 5% of the total collection so that a library can maintain an up-to-date and inviting collection. Lack of demand, obsolete or erroneous information, and poor condition of material are the main reasons for discarding. Standard titles of lasting value (unless they are replaced by newer copies) and materials of special local interest will not be discarded.

- Gift materials will be subject to the same standards for inclusion and weeding as purchased materials.
- Archival material in great demand (e.g., County Annual Report) will be kept for two years. Historical documents are available at the Mendocino County Historical Society and by contacting the County of Mendocino Executive Office.
- Valuable old books and other materials which do not fit within the guidelines of the collection may be withdrawn and suitably disposed of by the County Librarian.

### **Reconsideration Procedure**

An important obligation of a public library is to reflect within its collection differing points of view on controversial topics. The Mendocino County Library does not advocate particular beliefs, nor does the selection of an item imply an endorsement of the author's viewpoint.

Comments from members of the reading public about the collection or individual items in the collection provide librarians with useful information about the interests and needs that may not be adequately met by the collection. The Library welcomes expression of opinion by customers, but will be governed by the Collection Development Policy in making additions to or deletions from the collection.

Customers who request the reconsideration of library materials will be asked to put their request in writing by completing and signing the form entitled "Request for Reconsideration of Library Material." (Attached).

Upon receipt of a formal written request, the County Librarian will appoint an ad hoc committee from the professional staff including, but not limited to, the selector for the subject area of the item in question and one Branch Manager. The committee will make a written recommendation to the County Librarian, who will then make a decision regarding the disposition of the material. The County Librarian will communicate this decision and the reasoning behind it, in writing, to the person who initiated the request for reconsideration within one month of the initial request.

### **REVISION OF COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES**

The Collection Development Policy is subject to review and needed revision every five years. Individual portions of the policy may be reviewed or added as needed.

## **APPENDICES**

### **AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT**

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

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

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

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

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

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that

publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

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

We therefore affirm these propositions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

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

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

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

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

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

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought



and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

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

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

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

*A Joint Statement by:*

[American Library Association](#)

[Association of American Publishers](#)

*Subsequently endorsed by:*

[American Booksellers for Free Expression](#)

[The Association of American University Presses](#)

[The Children's Book Council](#)

[Freedom to Read Foundation](#)

[National Association of College Stores](#)

[National Coalition Against Censorship](#)

[National Council of Teachers of English](#)

[The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression](#)

**Mendocino County Library  
Request for Reconsideration of Material**

Request initiated by (your name): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you represent:

\_\_\_\_\_ Yourself

\_\_\_\_\_ An Organization (name): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Another Group (name): \_\_\_\_\_

Title of material for reconsideration: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

1. To what in the work do you object? Please be specific; site page number(s).

2. Did you read/ view/ listen to the entire work? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No  
If not, what parts have you read/ listened to?

3. What do you feel might be the result of someone reading/ viewing/ listening to this work?

4. In your opinion, is there anything good about this work?

5. Are you aware of judgments of this work by literary critics? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

6. What would you like the library to do about this material?

7. In its place, what work would you recommend that would convey the same picture and perspective on the subject?

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_