



West Hartford Public Library Collection Development and Maintenance Policy

Purpose

The West Hartford Public Library ("Library") is committed to providing equitable access to a diverse range of materials that meet the educational, recreational, and informational needs of the community, serving the greatest number of Library users and potential users within the diverse West Hartford community. The Library makes every effort to provide library materials ("collection") for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all residents.

In developing and maintaining the collection, the Library upholds the principles of intellectual freedom, as set forth by the American Library Association's [Library Bill of Rights](#), [Freedom to Read](#) and [Freedom to View Statement](#). The Library is committed to protecting these rights by ensuring its collection represents a wide range of varied and diverging viewpoints. The Library recognizes the importance of the public library as a place for voluntary inquiry, the dissemination of information and ideas, and the promotion of free expression and free access to ideas by the community.

The Library's Collection Development and Maintenance Policy guides Library staff and informs the public of the principles for selecting, acquiring, and maintaining resources that best serve the Library's mission. To further serve our community, the selection and types of materials may vary according to the interests and needs of the local community of each branch library. All library materials are evaluated and made accessible in accordance with the protections against discrimination set forth in Connecticut General Statutes §46a-64. The Library neither approves nor disapproves of the views expressed in materials included in the collection.

Responsibility

The Library Board delegates the oversight and management of the collection to the Library Director and librarians who are professionally trained to curate and develop a collection that provides residents with access to the widest array of Library and other educational materials. Responsibility for the selection, maintenance, replacement, and deselection of materials rests with the designated professional staff under the overall direction of the Director and within the guidelines of this policy. Consortium-level collections may be governed by an additional set of criteria for collection.

Digital Collections/Databases

The Library provides access to information in a wide variety of print and non-print formats, and subscribes to services that provide digital collections through their apps and online platforms. In addition, the Library provides access to information through subscription databases, online learning tools, e-reference books, and other online services. The majority of these electronic services are available via computer in all Library locations and to Library cardholders offsite through the Library's website. Licensing agreements with publishers or vendors may dictate how long the Library can offer certain electronic materials in the collection. In the future, the types of materials acquired will change as new technologies become available.

Selection Criteria

Materials selection is an interpretive process based on the professional knowledge and judgment of the staff. This knowledge includes familiarity with types of materials, familiarity with the strengths and weaknesses of the existing collections, and awareness of the needs of the community. To ensure the collection remains responsive to evolving needs, staff members will continually review library materials using professional standards accepted by library industry standards. Staff members consult standard bibliographic works and published reviews in professional and general periodicals for evaluations of available materials. In most cases, the Library will not purchase self-published materials that are not reviewed in these established review journals. Suggestions from residents are welcome and are given serious consideration. General criteria applied in selecting library materials include:

- Responsiveness to public demand, interest, or need
- Accuracy and effectiveness of the material
- Suitability of physical form for library use
- Physical condition
- Suitability of subject and style for the intended audience
- Relevance to community needs
- Relation to existing collection and other materials on the subject
- Availability of similar materials through consortium or interlibrary loan
- Availability of more recent age-appropriate or grade-level-appropriate material
- Reputation of the publisher or producer

- Reputation and/or significance of author
- Attention of critics, reviewers, and the public
- Current or historical significance of the author or subject
- Local interest
- Popularity or ongoing demand
- Availability and affordability

Legal, technical, and medical works as well as textbooks will be acquired only to the extent that they are useful to the general public.

Local History Materials

The Local History Librarian and library staff assemble, organize, and administer the local history collection to provide access to a wide variety of information directly relating to the Town of West Hartford and more broadly to the State of Connecticut. The collection comprises ephemera, print, artifacts, microfilm, and online resources, with a primary focus on documenting the history and events of the town and its people.

Gifts/Donations

The West Hartford Public Library may accept donations of materials with the understanding that items added to the collection must meet the same criteria as purchased materials. The Library reserves the right to refuse gifts and to make all decisions about use, housing, and disposition of materials. The Library does not appraise gifts or provide evaluations for tax purposes.

Donations of funds for the purchase of library materials can be made to the West Hartford Library Foundation. Any purchases made with donated funds must meet the criteria in this policy.

De-Selection Criteria and Disposal of Withdrawn Materials

The West Hartford Public Library discards books regularly to maintain the usefulness of the collection. The Library will routinely discard obsolete materials in poor condition, duplicate copies, or titles no longer in demand.

Materials withdrawn from the collection can be made available for transfer to other organizations. Materials may also be sold through the West Hartford Library Foundation or other third parties, provided the proceeds are used to benefit the Library. Materials that are unsuitable for transfer or sale will be recycled or discarded.

Controversial Materials

The Library recognizes that some materials may offend some patrons. Selections will not be made based on anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the merits of the work in relation to the development of the collections and to serving the interests of library patrons. Responsibility for the reading choices of minors rests with their parents or legal guardians. Selection of adult materials will not be inhibited by the possibility that books may inadvertently come into the possession of children. Library materials will not be marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of the contents, and no materials will be removed from the open shelves except for the express purpose of storage or protecting them from mutilation or theft.

Intellectual Freedom and Censorship

The Library opposes attempts by individuals or groups to censor items in the collection. It is the right of the individual to choose what materials they access. No material will be excluded from the collection due to the origin, background, or viewpoints expressed in such material, or because of the origin, background, or viewpoints of the creator of such material. When evaluating library materials, the Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read, and Freedom to View statements from the American Library Association are used as guiding documents.

Requests for Reconsideration

The selection of any material is not a Library endorsement of the viewpoint expressed. The [Material Review and Reconsideration Policy](#) outlines the process for a resident to request the Library reconsider an item in the Library's collection. The Library limits requests for reconsideration to residents of West Hartford.

This policy is in accordance with Section 322 of Public Act 25-168, as that Public Act may be codified, recodified or amended from time to time.

Revised and adopted by the West Hartford Library Board October 27, 2025. Previously adopted: October 29, 2018 April 26, 2010; September 17, 1996. Includes *Withdrawn Materials Policy*, June 20, 1995, *Young Adult Collection Policy*, December 16, 1996, *Collection Development for Internet Resources*, September 18, 2001.

Appendix A: 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.

Appendix B: 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.

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.

Appendix C: Freedom to View Statement

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 guarantee of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
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.

Endorsed January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council