



Farmington
Public
Library

Policies and Procedures Manual

The Farmington Public Library Policy Manual provides the rules, standards, and principles that guide the operation and use of the library. All library staff is to be familiar with the contents of this manual and the City Employment Policies Manual.

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Mission

The mission of the Farmington Public Library is to enrich the lives of Washington County residents by offering access to words, images, and information through respectful, professional service. The library strives to meet educational, cultural, and recreational needs while promoting literacy and lifelong learning.

The library serves all residents of Farmington, Arkansas and surrounding areas. The Farmington Public Library provides free, open, and equal access and service to all individuals and groups in the community. The library is committed to the principles of intellectual freedom by providing open and equal access to all library resources while protecting patron privacy and safety.

Organization

The Farmington Public Library was established in 2005 and is governed by a board of trustees. The board meets quarterly in March, June, September, and November on the second Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. The library is a department of the city of Farmington and a member of the Washington County Library System.

Public hours are Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Service to the public begins at the advertised hour the library opens and service is available until the library closes. Holidays are set forth in the City Personnel Policies handbook. In addition, the library closes for lunch on the first Thursday in November for a mandatory city employee meeting.

The Farmington Public Library is guided by Arkansas Public Library Laws and American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read Statement and Freedom to View Statement. Library staff are committed to providing excellent public service.

Policy

The Library Board establishes the mission and policy. Recommendations for policy may come from the library staff. Policies are approved by the Farmington Public Library Board of Trustees and are reviewed and revised as necessary. The Library Director is responsible for the administration of policy and procedures with assistance of all library staff.

Expectations and Complaint Procedure

Library users may expect a high quality of service that includes:

- Politeness
- Consideration of suggestions and complaints
- Confidentiality

The library values patron concerns, complaints, and suggestions. In order to enable the library to address concerns, complaints or suggestions, the patron is encouraged to submit written comments for review by the Library Director and Board of Trustees. Every effort will be made to address patron concerns in a timely manner.

Library Behavior Policy

Library staff will attempt to handle problems as they occur. When problems occur, library staff will request the patron to stop. If the behavior continues, staff will ask the patron to leave the building. If the patron refuses to leave, staff should immediately call the non-emergency police number. If an immediate threat is present, staff should call 911.

Patron Conduct

The library offers the community a convenient and comfortable place to visit, read, look, listen, share, and learn. Disruptive or abusive language and behavior will not be tolerated. Video recording cameras are used to enhance the safety and security of library users and staff by discouraging violations of the Library Behavior Policy and when necessary to provide law enforcement assistance in prosecuting criminal activity. The following activities are not allowed in the Farmington Public Library:

- Damaging or destroying library materials or any library equipment
- Vandalism or theft of library property
- Unsanitary behaviors which create unclean conditions
- Refusal to leave the library at designated closing times or when requested by library staff
- Verbal, physical, or sexual harassment of library staff and patrons

- Participating in disruptive or offensive behavior such as swearing throwing things, fighting, or other behavior that interferes with other patrons' use and enjoyment of the library
- Running in the building
- Consumption of alcohol or illegal substances in the library
- Smoking on library property
- Patrons without shoes or shirts
- Patrons wearing roller blades, cleats, or other footwear that could damage library property
- Carrying a weapon or weapons into the library unless authorized by law
- Bringing animals into the library; service dogs will be permitted
- Unauthorized use of networked computers and other library equipment
- Engaging in any activities prohibited by Federal, State, or Local law

The above violations are not intended to be a complete list, but are used for guidance. Any person who violates library policies will be required to leave the library premises and may be denied access to the library by the Farmington Public Library Board of Trustees. Library employees may contact the Farmington Police if necessary.

Beverages with lids and food items may be consumed in the library except when using library computers or devices.

Patrons are responsible for their own personal property. Personal items should not be left unattended. The library is not responsible for personal belongings brought into the library, left in library materials, or left on library property. Any items left by patrons will be placed in the lost and found. An attempt will be made to identify and contact the owner of an item placed in the lost and found. The item will be held in the lost and found for one month. After a month, it will be placed on the free shelf at the entrance. Perishable items will be thrown away.

It is the intent of the Farmington Public Library to comply with Title 17 of the U.S. Code and other federal legislation related to the duplication, retention, and use of copyrighted materials. A notice of copyright will be placed on photocopier(s) and other library equipment that is capable or duplicating or reproducing copyrighted materials. Library

staff will refuse to duplicate any materials if doing so would violate copyright and inform patrons of copyright restrictions.

The library's telephone may be used by library patrons for emergency situations. Patrons may use a cell phone as long as its use is non-disruptive to other patrons. For patrons needing to call for a ride home, the library phone may be used for local calls, with a two-minute limit.

Tobacco Free and Non-Smoking Campus Policy

The Farmington Public Library is tobacco free. "Tobacco free means that the use of any and all tobacco products, including but not limited to cigarettes and chewing tobacco, is prohibited within all municipal buildings" (City of Farmington Ordinance No. 2014-15). Use of tobacco products including simulated products within the building is prohibited. Smoking, using tobacco products, nicotine products and simulated tobacco products on library property is also prohibited. Policy assists in promoting a wholesome environment for children, teens and adults, and encourages cleanliness of library grounds.

Unattended Child Policy

The library encourages young children to visit the library and use library services. It is the goal of library to make children's visits memorable, safe, and enjoyable. Children and young people are expected to follow the same standards of patron conduct expected of adults.

Parent, guardians, and caregivers are responsible for the behavior of their children while on library property. Library staff is not expected to assume the responsibility for the care of unsupervised children in the library. Children under the age of ten must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, caregiver, or other designated responsible person while in the library or on library property. If a parent or caregiver of a child under the age of ten cannot be located, staff will contact the Farmington Police Department.

Disruptive children may be given a warning and asked to leave the library. Disruptive children are allowed to call a parent in order to safely leave the library. If parent/guardian cannot be reached, library staff may contact the Farmington Police Department.

It is the responsibility of the parent to pick up the child before closing time at the library. Closing time is posted on the front door. Fifteen minutes before closing time, staff will remind young people to contact a parent or legal guardian for a ride home. For the safety of the child, staff will not leave a child under the age of ten to wait outside on a ride after library closing time. If a parent or legal guardian cannot be reached or does not arrive within 15 minutes past closing time, the police may be called to keep the child until parent can be reached or arrive to retrieve the child.

Library staff do not transport children in a vehicle or accompany them home.

Library Services

Library Cards and Circulation of Materials

Library cards are free of charge for those who live, work, or attend school in Washington County. A library card application form must be completed and the required documentation presented. A parent or legal guardian must verify the account of a juvenile applicant, 17 years or younger. Both parent or legal guardian and juvenile applicant must be present for the library to issue a new card for the juvenile applicant.

To get a library card:

- Complete and submit a library card application form.
- Account verification requires proof of current mailing address, if not correct on government-issued identification.
- For non-residents, appropriate verification requires that you also present proof that you work or attend school in Washington County or be charged a \$25 non-resident registration fee.

Library card or Arkansas State issued identification is required for all transactions on an account. Each library cardholder assumes full responsibility for all materials borrowed or services used. A \$1 fee is charged for each replacement card. Library cards expire one year after they are issued. Patrons are responsible for informing the library of address, phone, and email changes.

Circulation procedures are intended only for Farmington materials. Other libraries in the Washington County Library System have different procedures. Patrons may be instructed to contact the library that owns the materials that are on loan to them.

Cardholders may have 30 items on a card at any one time. A maximum of ten DVD items allowed per card. All items except for electronic devices check out for 14 days. After 14 days, items are overdue. Fines are charged at a rate of \$0.10 per day. After 20 days overdue, items will reach max fine of \$2.00. Borrowing privileges will be blocked if fines or fees exceed \$5. The library will accept the following forms of payment for fines and fees accrued:

- Cash.
- Personal check made out to the “Farmington Public Library”.
- Credit cards and debit cards are not yet accepted.

Cardholders will be billed for items not returned. Audio/visual items can only be checked out to an age appropriate audience. The library utilizes Motion Picture Association of America and Recording Industry Association of America ratings for age appropriateness. Customers may return materials to any Washington County Library location. Customers may renew items in person, by phone, email, or using their library on-line account. Materials will be renewed unless the item is on hold for another customer or the renewal limit has been reached.

Most items may be requested from all Washington County Library System locations and picked-up at the location of the cardholders choosing. Cardholders in good standing may place a hold on an item by utilizing the Online Public Access Catalog or library staff. Washington County Library System provides a daily courier service for material delivery to library locations. When an item is ready for pick-up the library will notify the patron via telephone, email, or text. A requested item will be held for seven days. If the material is not picked-up within that time, the item will be reserved for the next patron in the hold queue or returned to the shelf.

The library reserves the right to evaluate the condition of returned materials. Damage fees may vary, depending on the extent of the damage, up to the full replacement cost of the item. Examples of damage to materials include highlighting, pen, and crayon marks, animal damage, and liquid stains.

If a customer feels certain they have returned an item or never checked an item out, library staff will immediately initiate a search. If the item is not found, the library will continue to perform a search several more times. The matter will be reviewed by the Director and the customer will be contacted.

The library also circulates Chromebooks and iPads. The electronic devices are available for in-library checkout to patrons in good standing for three hours at a time. These devices must remain in the building at all times. Patron using device check-out are responsible for paying for any damages to the device.

Reference, Educational Services, and Programming

The library provides reference and other instructional services and recognizes and respects that every question is important. Library staff will use the appropriate sources to respond to all patron questions. In some cases, staff may refer a patron to other agencies that can provide better research assistance. Staff will attempt to provide quality service to all patrons, although during busy periods preference may be given to the patrons in the library over patrons on the phone or to patrons with requests that are brief compared to those requiring greater amounts of time. Library staff should offer patrons with time-consuming requests the option to make a reference appointment at a later time. Photocopies or printouts of materials used by library staff to answer a reference question are offered free of charge when appropriate.

The library provides assistance and instruction on the use of computers and photocopiers. The amount of time library staff is available to provide instruction is limited. Library staff should offer patrons needing extensive instruction the opportunity to make a technology instruction appointment.

The Farmington Public Library offers programming to support the library's mission to meet the community's educational, cultural, and recreational needs. The Library Director and the Children's Services Librarian are responsible for planning and implementing the programs offered. Requests from individuals to present programs are considered if they meet the library's mission, community's interest, and budget and staffing considerations.

All programs are free and open to the public. The library does not offer commercial programming. In some cases, the library may permit the sale of books written by speakers or program participants. The sale of such items must be approved by the staff member responsible for planning and implementing the program. In some cases, a program may require a limit on participants or a minimum number of participants registered.

Outreach services are designed to reach patrons who cannot visit the library or as a means for library staff to share professional expertise with a group or groups of residents within the community. Patrons who have health or physical limitations may inquire with the Library Director concerning homebound delivery services. The Library Director may enlist the Friends of the Farmington Library volunteers to assist in outreach services. The library publicizes the services of the Arkansas State Library and the Library for Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Library staff work with early childhood education agencies, child care centers, schools, and other organizations to expand the community's familiarity with library programs and services. Library staff may also arrange for the loan of materials to certain institutions such as child care centers, schools, and senior residence facilities.

Document Services

The library provides access to photocopying and printing equipment. As an additional service, the library offers faxing and document scanning. Circulation services take precedence over assistance with printing, copying, scanning, and faxing. The following is a list of document services and the associated fees:

- Prints and Copies - \$.10 per page
- Color Prints and Copies - \$.50 per page
- Scanning - No charge
- Faxing - \$1.00 per page for incoming and outgoing faxes. (See Fax Policy for details)

The Farmington Public Library has a notary on staff who will notarize documents at no charge. Customers should call ahead to verify when the notary is available.

Fax Policy

As an additional service, the Farmington Public Library is pleased to offer fax services to its customers. Other library services take precedence over fax demands. Farmington Public Library fax number is 479-267-2641.

Procedure:

- A fax transmission cover sheet is available upon request. Cover sheet is provided at no charge unless the cover sheet is the only page sent. It is to be filled out by the patron.
- Charges for incoming and outgoing faxes are \$1 per page. Charges cover use of the machine including toner and paper. Cover sheets are faxed at no charge only on outgoing transmissions.
- All transmitted and received faxes must be on standard 8½ x 11 paper and should be free of folds and tears.
- Received fax transmissions must be picked up within one week or they will be discarded. Patron may be required to provide identification upon receipt of received faxes.
- Materials not in the appropriate form may be photocopied at the patron's expense.
- Operation of the fax machine is limited to staff only.
- The library is not responsible for transmission errors or any content transmitted or received during the use of this service.

Test Proctor Policy

The Farmington Public Library values life-long learning and the needs of the community by providing test proctoring. Test proctoring is scheduled based on the availability of staff and the operations of the library. It is the responsibility of the student to make the necessary arrangements with the Library Director at least seven days in advance. The library does not charge a fee for proctoring. Students requesting test proctoring are responsible for arranging the delivery of the

proctoring requirements from the institution they attend. The library may decline test proctoring based on staff limitations or the extent of the proctoring requirements.

Friends of the Farmington

The mission of the Friends of the Farmington Library is to support the Farmington Public Library as it strives to inspire the community to a love of learning. It is the goal of the Friends of the Farmington Library to assist the library with special projects, programs, and materials through memberships, fundraising, and community involvement. Friends of the Farmington Library is a nonprofit organization established in 2004.

On behalf of the Friends of the Farmington Library, the library accepts gift materials. Books and other gift materials are accepted with the understanding that they may be discarded if the library determines that they are of little or no value to the collection. Gift materials may be sold or recycled by the Friends of the Farmington Library. Monetary value of gifts will not be determined. The donor may request the library provide a receipt of their donations with a count of materials donated and the Friends of the Farmington Library's tax exempt ID.

Volunteer Policy

The Farmington Public Library encourages the community to serve as volunteers. Volunteers and library staff work together for the benefit of the library and the community. Those seeking these opportunities are required to complete a Volunteer Interest Form and be a library card holder in good standing. The form will be kept on file and a Volunteer Log is located at the service desk. Volunteers must record their hours of service using the Volunteer Log.

Volunteers do not replace staff; they aid in connecting the library to other community groups. The Library Director or an assigned staff member coordinates and oversees volunteer job assignments based on volunteer availability and experience. The library reserves the right to stop volunteer work at any time and for any reason. It is at the discretion of the Library Director to accept volunteers requiring court ordered community service. Library volunteers must be 12 years of age or older.

Volunteer service is recognized by the library as providing a quality service to the public. As an extension of library staff, volunteers must act as a

representative of the library by exhibiting the appropriate attitude and conduct towards the public.

Personnel Policy (see City Personnel Policies)

Organizational Structure

The efficient operation of the library is dependent upon ongoing communication staff, management, and the Library Board. It is the responsibility of the library board to hire and review the performance of the Library Director. The Library Director is responsible for the hiring and supervision of library staff and assumes accountability for the design and execution of services.

The Library Board develops the library's mission while establishing goals for the library. The Library Director plans and implements services and presents results for review and communicates issues or challenges to the Library Board. It is the duty of library staff to communicate issues or challenges with the Library Director. In the event it is not possible to resolve the issue or challenge, it is necessary to approach the Library Board. Likewise, concerns expressed by the Library Board will communicate with the Library Director who will disseminate to staff appropriately.

Emergency/Inclement Weather Closing Policy

The Farmington Public Library seeks to provide the best services possible to its patrons by maintaining operating hours. Certain situations may require the closure of the library. The library will close whenever the City Business Manager and/or Mayor declare city offices officially closed. See City Personnel Policies for detailed information.

The decision to close or postpone the opening of the library due to inclement weather is at the discretion of the Library Director. If closed for inclement weather, the Library Director will post the information using local news station KNWA and the library's Facebook page.

On rare occasions, it may be necessary to close the library due to mechanical failures that last for an extended period, generally more than two hours. These included, but are not limited to, loss of electricity, loss of heating/air conditioning, or loss of water/sewer facilities. Materials due on days when the library is not open due to emergency or inclement

weather situations will not be charged an overdue fee. Materials must be returned to the library within one day of the library reopening to avoid fees.

Materials Selection/Collection Development Policy

The Farmington Public Library provides the community with carefully selected books and other materials to aid the individual in the pursuit of education, information, research, pleasure, and the creative use of leisure time. Because of the volume of publishing, as well as the limitations of budget and space, the library must have a selection policy with which to meet the community interests and needs. The materials selection/collection development policy is used by the library staff in the selection of materials and also serves to inform the general public with the principles of selection. The Library Bill of Rights and The Freedom to Read Statement have been endorsed by the Farmington Public Library Board of Trustees and are integral parts of the policy.

The ultimate responsibility for selection of materials rests with the director who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Library Board. This responsibility may be shared with other members of the library staff. Library staff use their training, subject knowledge, and selection criteria to identify collection goals and priorities. Criteria such as accuracy of information, current and anticipated appeal, material reviews, and local interest are used to evaluate and select items for the collection. The library strives to provide a balanced and broad collection of materials and develop community interest in reading and learning by providing an outstanding collection of materials and promoting use through programs and services.

The Farmington Public Library collects materials in a variety of popular formats. Customer use through circulation and purchase requests influence the library's collection. Because of limited budget and space, the library cannot provide all materials that are requested. Therefore, interlibrary loan is used to obtain materials that are beyond the scope of the library's collection.

An up-to-date, attractive and useful collection is maintained through a continual withdrawal and replacement process. Replacement of worn materials is dependent upon current demand, usefulness, more recent acquisitions, and availability of newer editions. This ongoing process of weeding is the responsibility of the Library Director and is authorized by the Library Board.

The library accepts gifts of books and other materials with the understanding that they will be added to the collection only if appropriate and needed. Library staff and/or Friends of the Farmington Library make all decisions as to the use

of donations. Friends of the Farmington Library serves the library by reselling and redistributing materials that are withdrawn from the collection or donated to the Library. The library does not evaluate or appraise gift materials for tax purposes.

The Farmington Public Library recognizes that some materials are controversial and that any given item may offend some patrons. All patrons are free to reject materials of which they do not approve for their use. No one has the right to exercise censorship to restrict the freedom of use and/or access of others. Responsibility for the reading of children rests with their parents or legal guardians. Selection of library materials will not be inhibited by the possibility that materials may come into the possession of children. Library materials will not be marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of their contents, and no library material will be sequestered except to protect it from damage or theft.

Although materials are carefully selected, there can arise differences of opinion regarding suitable materials. Patrons requesting that material be withdrawn from or restricted within the collection may complete a "Reconsideration of Material Request Form" located in the appendices. The director will review and respond to the patron. If the patron is not satisfied with the response, the inquiry will be placed on the agenda of the next regular meeting of the Farmington Public Library Board of Trustees.

Computer and Internet Access Policy

Library patrons use the Internet at their own discretion. However, displaying, sending or receiving material inappropriate for viewing in a public place is prohibited by Arkansas Code § 5-68-205. Inappropriate material is defined as pictures or text which could reasonably be construed as obscene or pornographic, as defined by Arkansas Code § 5-68-302.

The library provides Internet access as part of its collection and resources.

Internet resources at the library are available to all patrons; however, the library requires all users to be a library card holder in good standing, to sign in to use a workstation, and signify their agreement with this policy before accessing the Internet. This policy applies to library networks as well.

The Farmington Public Library has no control over the information accessed through the Internet so it is important to remember that some material may be outdated, wrong, or biased. Please critically evaluate all information you find. Also, any responsibility for consequences related to copyright infringement as stated in U.S. copyright law (Title 17, U.S. Code) lie with the patron. The library staff will offer searching suggestions and are available to answer questions, but may not be available to provide individual training. Users interested in

computer or Internet training should inquire at the service desk for library programs on computer use.

As with other library materials, monitoring a child's access to the Internet is ultimately the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian. Although library staff continually work to create a positive public environment, they are not a substitute for parental involvement. The library is compliant with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and a content filter is installed on all computers with Internet access. The librarian may grant unfiltered access on a per-search basis. The library cannot and will not monitor the information accessed through the Internet and suggests parents or legal guardians discuss acceptable use guidelines with their children.

Technical requirements or incompatibility with library computers may result in sites and services not being accessible. Patrons shall not install, delete, or modify library hardware or software. Patrons are responsible for damages to library property. The number of patrons using a workstation may be limited to a single user. The library reserves the right to implement other specific policies as needed. The library may deny computer, Internet, or library access to library users who misuse or abuse the Library's electronic resources, or who are found in violation of this policy. The library recommends users log off Internet sites to insure privacy.

Meeting and Event Policy

The Farmington Public Library facilities are available on an equal basis to all individuals and groups regardless of opinion or affiliation. The Library Director must approve use of meeting spaces prior to event. Groups using library facilities are not sponsored or endorsed by the library with the exception of library-related programming. The needs of the Library and the Friends of the Farmington Library take precedence.

Rules for use:

- Meetings must be open to the public.
- Meeting spaces are to be used for the exchange of information in the community.
- Library staff reserves the right to enter the meeting space at any time.
- Use of library premises may be terminated if conduct is disruptive or destructive.

Displays and Exhibits Policy

As an educational and cultural institution, the Farmington Public Library welcomes displays of interest, information and enlightenment to the community. Displays of handiwork, historical material, nature study, or any other material deemed of general interest may be exhibited. The director shall accept or reject material offered for display based on its suitability and availability. The library assumes no responsibility for the preservation or protection, and no liability for possible damage or theft of any item displayed or exhibited.

Areas like the community bulletin board are available to the public for posting or distributing announcements of civic events or informational material. The display areas are not intended for the advertisement of items or services for sale. Materials must not exceed 11" x 17". All items shall be posted for a period of one week if space is available. Items may be posted for longer than one week if there is room. The library reserves the right to refuse or remove any notice or handout that does not comply with these policies and guidelines. By providing a community bulletin board, the Farmington Public Library does not imply endorsement of events or services posted.

Safety and Security

The staff member in charge first protects library staff and patrons and then protects the collections and equipment. Staff are to be familiar with and refer to the Disaster Plan located at the circulation desk to assist with an emergency.

Appendix A

Reconsideration of Material Request Form

Request initiated by:

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zipcode: _____

Material:

Title: _____ Author: _____

Publisher: _____ Format: _____

Please answer the following questions about the material:

1. Did you read/view/listen to the material? All or part? What parts?

2. What do you believe is the theme or intent of the material? What do you object to and why?

3. What do you find harmful or feel might be the effect of reading, viewing, or listening to this material?

4. Is this request representative of an individual or organization? If it is representative of an organization, please provide information.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Turn in to library staff or mail to Farmington Public Library, 175 W. Cimarron Place, Farmington, AR 72730. The director will review and respond to the patron. If the patron is not satisfied with the response, the inquiry will be placed on the agenda of the next regular meeting of the Farmington Public Library Board of Trustees.

Appendix B

The Farmington Public Library supports the American Library Association Library Bill of Rights in affirming all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

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 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Appendix C

The Farmington Public Library supports the American Library Association's Freedom to Read Statement.

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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