

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

August 2025
Subject to Staff Revision



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Library Mission Statement and Collection Development Goals

Mission Statement

Bringing people and ideas together.

Collection Goal

Providing access to information that meets the myriad needs of a diverse community.

Collection Objectives

Library Collections are developed and maintained in a manner that supports the informational, educational, recreational, and cultural curiosity of the community. They represent diverse points of view and may include materials that some members of the public consider to be controversial in nature. The Library ensures that resources are accessible and available in a timely manner by providing multiple formats, languages, and ways to access information.

Purpose of the Collection Development Plan

The purpose of the Collection Development Plan is to provide Library staff and the communities they serve with a document that informs and supports the development of library collections. The plan is a flexible guide to collection development activities, balancing local community library decisions with those of the system as a whole. The plan reinforces the complementary nature of the diverse community library collections in order to best support library users throughout the county. The plan defines the nature and scope of library collections, establishes collection priorities that will correct weaknesses and maintain strengths, and sets standards for the inclusion and exclusion of resources.

The Collection Development Plan is a direct result of the Collection Development Policy approved by the Board of Supervisors of Contra Costa County on November 16, 1999.

See Appendix A: Board of Supervisors Resolution 99/595—Collection Development Policy for a full copy of the policy.

Chapter 1: Library and Collection Overview

The Contra Costa County Library—Past and Present

The Contra Costa County Library has a rich tradition of library service. It was founded in 1913, the first year of a new commitment to countywide library service. By the 1920s, there were over forty community libraries and service to sixty-four public schools as well.

During the years following World War II, the library began to change to reflect the newly developing suburban nature of the county it served. The very first branch librarian started working in the El Cerrito Library in 1949. Service to school libraries stopped in 1953.

The suburban profile of the county led to an ambitious building program that began in the 1950s, which resulted in the construction of most of the library buildings in use today. The passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 put an end to this rapid expansion.

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors serves as the governing board for the Contra Costa County Library. In 1997, the Library was divided into five regions based on geographical location (Central, East, Lamorinda, South, and West). As stated in the Appendix A: Board of Supervisors Resolution 99/595—Collection Development Policy, the legal responsibility for the selection of library resources rests with the County Librarian.

The Collection

Individual community library collections contribute to the total scope of the county library's holdings. Their primary role is to feature current, high-demand, and high-interest materials in a variety of formats for all ages, in addition to some retrospective titles, periodicals, and reference support.

The scope of the collection changes over time as the needs and makeup of its users change. Financial limitations must be acknowledged with as little deprivation to community needs as possible. A materials budget must respond to the addition of new formats and the evolving needs of underserved populations.

General Collections

The Contra Costa County Library collection is composed predominantly of circulating fiction and non-fiction materials which meet the recreational, educational, and instructional needs of the community. For purposes of selecting library resources for its patrons, the library recognizes three distinct age-levels:

- The Children's Collection is defined as resources that serve a population from birth through middle school and their adult caregivers
- The Young Adult Collection is defined as resources that serve a population from middle school through high school.
- The Adult Collection is defined as resources that appeal to any reader beyond the Children's and Young Adult collections.

Every community library has adult, young adult, and children's materials that comprise a core collection. The core collection consists of those materials and subjects that meet the fundamental information needs of the community. Core collections include circulating and non-circulating materials in all formats, including access to electronic resources. Core collections are designed to appeal to browsers as well as to patrons that enter the library looking for specific material.

This core collection can also be described as demand-based and actively used. Core collections are maintained and reinforced as part of the ongoing collection development process. Statistical analyses of circulation patterns, such as turnover rate, are considered during the annual review of what constitutes a core collection.

Centralized selection ensures that each community library meets its minimum core collection level. It is recognized that maintaining the balance of these collections is an on-going process.

Floating Collection (“iFloats”)

In a floating collection, materials are not owned by a particular community library but are shared by all the libraries. There are several reasons for maintaining this type of collection:

- To build on countywide collection development planning
- To refresh and revitalize the materials at each location
- To increase the availability of items by reducing the time spent “in-transit”
- To provide faster service for patrons to receive materials
- To reduce the library’s carbon footprint by limiting deliveries

In a floating collection, items do not have a permanent home. When a patron returns an item, it is shelved at the location where it was returned. Similarly, un-retrieved holds on floating items are re-shelved at the requesting location. In both these cases, the catalog automatically updates the item’s record to reflect its new library location. Every community library thereby plays host to a variety of items in the floating collection at any given time.

At the Contra Costa County Library, items in this collection are designated with the term “iFloat”. The collection includes all audio-visual material and additional popular material purchased centrally.

Reference Resources

Reference materials are part of the Library’s circulating collection. They can be checked out like other library materials. Reference materials that circulate allow the broadest range of use for these often-expensive items.

Electronic Resources Collection

The importance and availability of electronic resources affects all aspects of collection development. Electronic resources transcend the physical boundaries of the community libraries and fulfill the goals of lifelong learning, connectivity, and access articulated in Contra Costa County Library’s Strategic Plan.

Electronic resources appeal to a large segment of the community and satisfy user demand for information. Electronic resources offer unlimited and remote access to simultaneous users, support equal access for all to a countywide reference collection, and provide cost effective means of providing quality information at the point of service.

eMaterials

Electronic or digital versions of various library formats are useful for meeting reference and entertainment needs and offer several advantages over conventional physical formats. The advantages include a self-service collections with 24/7 availability that customers can browse, select, check out, stream, download, and/or listen to, on a personal device. The library's collections include versions of popular and established titles covering a multitude of subjects and target audiences.

Purchases of electronic or digital versions may serve Library users better than the purchase of a single hard copy title. eMaterials expand a collection without needing physical space. eMaterials allow the Library to enhance the collection by providing additional access to titles in high demand and by providing countywide access to titles not represented in all libraries.

Federal Government Publications Collection

The Costa County Library has been designated a Federal Depository Library for the Tenth Congressional District since 1964. As a designated selective federal depository, the Library's mission is to make government publications freely available for the use of the general public, and to meet the government information needs of the people who live and work in greater Contra Costa County.

In 2008, the Library began to emphasize the online electronic format to maximize both accessibility to government publications by County libraries and cost effectiveness in Library collection development. Government documents, including those in electronic format, are cataloged to promote public access.

The Library's government collection may include census publications; tax publications; legislative proceedings, statutes, codes, and regulations; Supreme Court opinions, treaties; budgets and financial reports; labor, education, criminal justice, and health statistics; trade data; military histories; geological and environmental publications; topographic maps, flood zone and other hazard maps, county ordinances, Board of Supervisors agendas, and grand jury reports.

See Appendix B: Federal Government Publications Collection Development Policy

Special Collections

Occasionally, a community library that serves a unique population will maintain a special collection. The determination to build and maintain new special collection areas is carefully considered. Factors include community interest, available and sustainable local funding, physical space available, the existence of accessible specialized resources in other area libraries, and the realities of budget limitations.

Interlibrary Loan through LINK+

LINK+ (Link Plus) is a cooperative project among participating public and academic libraries in California and Nevada. LINK+ provides patrons of Contra Costa County Library with access to books and materials that may be outside of the scope of the Library's collection or otherwise unavailable for acquisition. The service is free and allows patrons to directly search for and request items with their Contra Costa County Library card.

Budget Allocation

County funds for purchase of library resources are allocated to each community library based upon circulation, service area population, and any other appropriate measurements as determined by Library Administration. The expenditure of these funds is the responsibility of the Collection Development Department. Expenditure of non-County funds, including those from Friends, grants, community groups, and library foundations, is the responsibility of the recipient community library.

Chapter 2: Collection Assessment

Library collections need continuous evaluation in order to meet the library mission and collection goals. Collection assessment is an organized process for systematically analyzing and describing a library's collection. Assessments help clarify collection development goals and provide data that can be used to set funding priorities.

Statistical tools such as circulation reports, collection turnover rates, patron surveys and staff suggestions should be used to determine how collections are being utilized and what changes should be made to meet shifting patron needs.

User Surveys

A user survey is another tool to assess library user satisfaction with resources and services. Every 3 to 5 years, user surveys are scheduled and conducted countywide to assess satisfaction and needs against collections and services.

Non-User Surveys

To be effective, collection development must be responsive to the total community's needs, not solely to those of the current or most active users. To better realize the library's mission of bringing people and ideas together, the library assesses the needs of non-users in its community.

Suggestions for Purchase

Patrons and Staff are encouraged to submit a Suggestions for Purchase request to inform Collection Development staff of potential need for specific titles or subject matter.

Chapter 3: Materials Selection

Materials selection is the heart of the collection development process. Skill, knowledge, and the proper tools are necessary to make decisions that will accurately meet community needs.

The library strives to balance current, high-demand materials with those of proven, long-term interest. The library also must balance entertainment materials with informational, educational, and self-improvement materials.

Anticipated demand, media attention, subject need, and patron requests are utilized in making selection decisions. Selection decisions are based upon patron interests and the need to provide a choice of format, level of difficulty, and diverse points of view on a given topic.

Responsibility for Selection

Administrative and operational oversight is provided by the County Librarian, who delegates the selection process to staff: the Collection Development Manager, the Collection Development Staff, the Collection Development Committee, and collection planners. Additional administrative and operational oversight is provided by the Deputy County Librarian of Support Services.

Collection Development Committee

The Collection Development Committee consists of the Collection Development Manager, the Collection Development Specialist, the Deputy County Librarian for Support Services, and a select group of staff.

The Collection Development Committee provides a team approach to collection development work. Committee membership rotates through the community library based collection planner staff, with members serving at least a two-year term. The committee assists with special projects as needed and provides regular evaluation of the Collection Development Plan.

Deputy County Librarian for Support Services

The Deputy County Librarian sets the Collection Development Committee's direction, creates goals and objectives, and ensures that Committee decisions support the Strategic Plan.

Collection Development Manager

The Collection Development Manager coordinates the work of the department and committee in order to achieve a centralized collection development approach. The Collection Development Manager also works with vendors on selection and acquisitions issues and projects.

Collection Development Specialist

The library's Collection Development Specialist serves as the chair of the Collection Development Committee and oversees the work of the Collection Planners.

Collection Development Staff

The Collection Development staff supports the Collection Development Department in a wide array of duties and special projects, which ensures a strong and accessible collection.

Collection Planners

Collection Planners are assigned responsibility for portions of the collection by genre or subject area. Each Collection Planner is directly responsible for the selecting of materials for their assigned section of the collection.

The Collection Development Manager may offer libraries the option to select materials for special collections or replacement orders. Community Library Managers may delegate the selection responsibility to staff at their libraries. These selectors are responsible for discretionary selection of resources for inclusion in their respective collections, including material that may not be available in other community libraries. Community Libraries are responsible for local input on collection areas that are selected centrally.

Selection Criteria

Librarians apply their professional judgment and experience in selecting resources according to the general criteria listed below. All criteria do not apply to each selection. No single criterion is applicable, although total content and cost are highly considered in all selection decisions. Works that reflect life are not necessarily excluded because of frank language or controversial opinions. The Library has a responsibility to protect intellectual freedom by providing access to materials with diverse points of view. Resources are judged as a whole, rather than on isolated sections. While librarians consult reviews and other evaluative sources, demand takes precedent.

AI Generated Material

The library's preference is to not collect AI generated or narrated works, where AI is defined as computers performing tasks which are ordinarily undertaken using human intelligence and creativity.

Potential dangers of AI generated material include:

- Threatening of the livelihood of writers and artists
- Violation of copyright by using data without permission
- Inaccuracy of data/information
- Failing to acknowledge sources

The Library recognizes that AI, like all technology, is a tool, one that may be utilized by original authors to assist in creating, editing, and narrating their works. Because of this reality, the library will review AI generated or influenced titles on an individual basis to determine if they meet collection development plan criteria. These titles may be added to the collection in the service of public interest.

The library will continue to support and prioritize original works by human authors within the larger goal of protecting creativity and the arts as an essential part of a healthy society.

General Selection Criteria

The general criteria listed below apply to all age-levels and formats. The sequence of these criteria is not an indication of their relative importance. All criteria do not apply to each selection.

- Relevance to diverse populations
- Current and historical significance/document of the times
- Critical praise/notice/literary merit
- Usefulness
- Appropriateness of format
- Availability of resource in other libraries
- Space and budgetary considerations
- Reputation/importance of the author/artist
- Objectivity
- Collection balance/minority point of view
- Value of resource in relation to cost
- Local interest (subject, author, publisher)
- Relationship to the existing collection
- Currency of information
- Permanent value as standard work
- Readability/appropriateness for audience
- Reviews from reputable resources

Multiple Copies

The library seeks to offer access to as many copies of desirable titles as possible to meet demand. The recommended ratio of patron reserves to number of copies of an item is 5:1. However, this ratio cannot always be met due to budget limitations.

Self-published or Self-submitted materials

Self-published or self-submitted materials are subject to the same guidelines as the general selection criteria outlined in this document. For an item to be considered the following criteria must also be met:

- Handled by a professional publishing and editing firm AND
- Reviewed in a library journal, national publication, OR local media (Bay Area newspaper, television or radio station, etc.)

Crowdsourced reviews, such as those found on Amazon or Goodreads will not be considered because there is no objective standard for reviews from these sources. Because self-published materials often require original cataloging, there are additional costs associated with integrating such materials into the collection and these may affect the outcome of staff assessment of self-published materials.

Public Service staff are not responsible for assessing the materials. Items accepted for consideration are not guaranteed placement in the collection. All decisions are handled by the Collection Development Department.

See Appendix C: Local Author Submission Information

Electronic Resources Selection Criteria

Electronic resources must comply with the selection guidelines and meet the goals of the Library's overall strategic plan. Due to the special nature of electronic resources in comparison to traditional print and audiovisual materials, additional selection criteria are necessary. In some instances, the cost benefits of online versus print access or a combination purchase of the two formats will be evaluated.

The Electronic Resources Specialist maintains and develops the Electronic Resources collection under the guidance of the Collection Development Manager.

The Electronic Resources selection criteria are separated into the following subsections. The Library may conduct a staff and/or public trial to better evaluate the resource.

General

- Augment, fill a gap, and/or maintain the currency of the collection
- Superior to current subscribing database
- Community demand
- Supplant a print equivalent
- Offer added value and advantages over the print equivalent
- Target a new service population
- Reviewed by professional journals
- Contain limited commercial content or requests for additional cost-based access

User Interface

- Site is logically laid out and intuitive for searching
- Compliant with current accessibility standards
- Both the novice and expert user can search the resource
- Provide the appropriate search tools to locate desired information
- Provide clear prompts and messages
- Offer emailing, printing, and downloading capability
- Level of training required for the staff and public to use the resource

Technology

- Remote access and simultaneous users
- User authentication compatible with Library practices in safeguarding patron privacy
- Compatible with the Library's existing and/or future hardware and software
- Support Library branding
- Reliable and stable, especially during peak usage hours
- Vendor maintenance should minimally impact database usage
- Monthly statistics of remote and in-house usage are available and easy to access

Vendor Considerations

- Reputable and known within the library/information community
- Reliable in customer support
- Offer staff and/or public training
- Provide marketing materials that can be branded and distributed

Continual Evaluation of Existing Electronic Resources

Because of the relatively high cost of these resources as well as the desire for the Library to provide the best, most focused electronic collection possible, evaluation of existing subscriptions needs to be ongoing. The Library will monitor the usage of electronic resources through monthly statistical gathering. Existing electronic resources are continuously evaluated and reports of negative changes or lack of use impact the decision regarding retention.

Gifts and Donations

The Contra Costa County Library welcomes monetary gifts to support its collections. Unless designated to a specific location, all gifts become part of the county's general collection budget and are used to purchase resources that will be made available to users countywide, at the discretion of the Collection Development Department. The library provides a written acknowledgment of all monetary gifts.

The library does not accept gifts or donations of physical materials. Such donations may be given to a Friends of the Library organization for their book sales or other use as the organization chooses.

See Appendix D: Gifts and Donations for more information.

Chapter 4: Collection Formats

Library staff continually evaluate new technology and new formats. Formats are chosen based on: ease of use, demand, cost, space requirements, ease of processing, and durability.

New formats are considered for the collection when it is evident from patron surveys, local requests, or industry reports, there is real or anticipated demand for the new format and that the community has the necessary technology to make use of that format. Formats currently collected by the library include:

- Book
- Compact Disc (CD)
- Digital Video Disc (DVD)
- Electronic Resources
- Large Type
- Periodicals

The library may stop collecting formats due to factors such as declining use, obsolescence, or licensing issues.

Books

Books are generally purchased in hardcover editions because of their durability. However, paperback editions are also purchased, and are preferred in cases where the hardcover edition is extremely expensive or no longer available.

Compact Discs (CDs – Music and Spoken Word)

Compact discs are purchased because of their durability and their continued position as a popular format for music and audio books. Music compact discs must be album-length; no compact disc singles or abridged fiction audio books will be added to the collection.

Digital Video Discs (DVDs)

Digital videodiscs are purchased for both the adult and children's collections. Preference is given to wide screen editions, although full screen editions are also added. The library does not purchase Blu-Ray editions of DVDs.

Electronic Resources

Includes digital resources and materials such as databases, newspapers and magazines, eBooks and eAudiobooks, and government documents.

Large Type

Materials in this format are published with larger fonts to meet the varied needs of all readers. Large Type materials are purchased in hardcover and paperback.

Periodicals

Print magazine and newspaper subscriptions vary by location. The number of subscriptions at a particular library depend on community needs, space, and budgetary limitations. Total holdings per location are not to exceed 25. Depth of back files is standardized to:

- One year plus current year for monthly and quarterly titles
- Six months plus current month for weekly and bi-weekly titles

Chapter 5: Subject Areas

Library collections are designed to reflect the broad range of community needs in Contra Costa County. Subject Area descriptions provide guidelines for the selection of materials that comprise the various age-level and topical collections that are designed to satisfy those needs.

Subject area refers to a particular section of the collection that contains similar content or format. Subject areas may overlap. These descriptions may be updated as data and information that reflects community needs changes.

The descriptions on the following pages specify the library's practices for individual subject areas, organized by collection. Information on the weeding of these subject areas is discussed separately in Chapter 6: Collection Maintenance.

Adult Collections

The adult collection of the Contra Costa County Library reaches a broad range of users that comprise the County's large and diverse population. Primary emphasis is on popular educational, recreational, and informational resources.

Adult Fiction

The chief purpose of the fiction collection is to provide patrons with a range of popular titles for recreational reading. Multiple copies are purchased as demand and budgetary factors allow. The library subdivides Adult Fiction into separate collections: General Fiction, Mysteries, Romance, Science Fiction, Westerns, Short Stories, and Graphic Novels. For the convenience of browsers, three of these collections—Mysteries, Science Fiction, and Graphic Novels—are shelved separate from the rest of the collection.

General Fiction

The library mainly purchases best-selling novels, popular authors, books that receive favorable reviews in professional media, and books selected by national book clubs. Works of historical and literary significance are also purchased in support of local school curricula and self-education. New editions are added as needed. Focus is on providing multiple copies of popular titles within budgetary limitations.

Mysteries

Mysteries are the library's most frequently circulated fiction genre. Both contemporary and established mystery authors are included.

Romance

The romance genre encompasses fictional stories of love and relationships set in contemporary or historical periods.

Science Fiction/Fantasy

Science fiction covers stories and themes about the imagined future as well as variations on our own culture and society. Fantasy is a mixture of magic, romance, historical fiction, and fairy tales set in another place and time.

Short Stories

In general, selection of short stories is restricted to major authors, award-winning collections, or highly acclaimed titles. General short story collections are given a separate classification for browsing purposes. Genre story collections such as mystery or science fiction are not shelved in the general fiction collection but rather with their respective collections.

Graphic Novels

The graphic novel is defined as a book-length illustrated narrative. Due to the often-mature subject matter of graphic novels, every new series is reviewed by staff to determine appropriate placement within the Adult, Young Adult, or Children's collections. Compilations of comic strips are shelved in the general nonfiction collections.

Adult Non-Fiction

Generalities 000-099

This collection focuses on technological resources for the home and business user. There is also substantial interest in unexplained/extra-terrestrial material. In addition, practical and theoretical works in publishing, journalism, and Library Science are collected here.

Philosophy and Psychology 100-199

This section contains popular works of philosophy and psychology. Areas of high interest include philosophy, witchcraft, parapsychology, astrology, and relationships.

Religion 200-299

General religious and spiritual works and world religions are the core of this section. Scriptures of different religions, works on atheism, popular works of spiritual interest, books on cults, and works of mythology of different cultures are represented. Although some titles which are published by a religious institution itself may be part of the collection, proselytizing works will generally be excluded in favor of works that present an unbiased, informative point of view for the general reader.

Social Sciences - 300-399

The social science collection includes a wide variety of topics: education, crime, armed forces, law, civics, sociology, etiquette, race and ethnicity, economics, personal finance, conservation, gender and sexuality, careers, folklore, and customs. Occupational and educational test preparation material is also found in this area. These resources cover topics of general interest and do not include academic/scholarly works or textbooks.

Language 400-499

This collection consists of dictionaries and instructional material on language and grammar. Materials on English for native English speakers as well as for those learning English as a second language are included. Learning materials for major world languages and American Sign Language are represented at a beginning level.

Pure Sciences 500-599

The science and math collection is designed to meet the needs of both students and lifelong learners. Included are both popular technical subjects and some more detailed or specialized treatments. The collection includes a sizeable number of science fair project books, general math books, and material on animal and plant life.

Applied Sciences 600-699

The applied sciences encompass many subjects of popular and high consumer interest, including cooking, health and medical subjects, parenting, gardening, employment, engineering, and home improvement. These materials tend to be aimed at the general public seeking information on a non-professional level.

Arts and Recreation 700-799

This section encompasses a broad variety of arts: fine, visual, performing, decorative, and recreational. These include sports, crafts, interior design, popular culture and entertainment, graphic arts, comics and cartoons, antiques and collectibles, home landscaping and architectural design. The materials in this section are selected for general popular use.

Literature 800-899

The literature collection includes writing guides and style manuals, literary history and criticism, humor, plays, poetry, speeches, and essays.

Geography, History, and Travel 900 - 999

This collection consists of popular works intended for a general audience, supplemental material to support student learning, and current travel guides for international and national locales. Local history includes resources on Contra Costa County and surrounding communities.

Biography

This collection consists of nonfiction materials about people from all walks of life and spans early history to the present. Autobiographies and biographies are included here. Most works in this collection are popular materials appropriate for a general audience. Memoirs and collected letters are shelved in their corresponding Dewey range.

Large Type

The large type collection is primarily a duplication of titles already in the library in standard type. Popular and genre fiction, biographies, travel memoirs, self-help, medical, humor, and assorted other popular works make up the majority of the collection.

Adult Audiovisual**Film and Television**

The collection for adults contains feature films, television programming, and informational videos in DVD format. The collection emphasizes feature films, including current popular interest titles and classic and contemporary cinema from around the world. Informational titles include such subjects as travel, parenting, documentaries, and the arts. TV programming includes cable and network series, and streaming series when available for purchase.

Audio books

The audio book collection consists of both fiction and nonfiction materials. The fiction area includes contemporary and established fiction with an emphasis on contemporary works. Works of fiction are represented in unabridged versions. The non-fiction collection covers a range of subject areas including best sellers, instructional, and self-improvement topics.

Music

The adult music collection covers all genres of music, including classical, pop, rock, R&B, country, jazz, blues, reggae, world, and soundtracks.

Periodicals

The collection consists of popular titles in a broad range of subject areas.

Young Adult Collections

The Young Adult Collection strives to meet the diverse needs and interests of the County's young adult population. The primary focus is on fiction, with some nonfiction titles on popular topics.

Young Adult Fiction

This collection supports age-appropriate materials for teens and young adults that meets the multifaceted educational, recreational, and developmental needs of this dynamic age group.

Young Adult Nonfiction

This collection generally supports recreational reading needs. Preference is given to shelving nonfiction materials within the adult collection.

Children's Collections

The purpose of the children's collection is to serve the community in its diverse informational and recreational pursuits. The children's collection in the Contra Costa County Library serves a population from birth through middle school and their adult caregivers. The library makes efforts to support local academic curricula.

Children's Fiction

Picture Books

The picture book is a fiction title with the emphasis on the illustrations. Text, vocabulary, and concepts are suitable for preschool age children to early elementary. This is a broad category of books covering many subjects of interest to young children and their families.

Early Reader Fiction

This collection serves the needs of children who are just learning to read. It includes easy to read books with few words on each page and short chapters. These books have controlled vocabulary, large print, and visual cues for the text. They are an introduction to independent reading. Early Readers are shelved separately from the children's picture books and the children's fiction.

General Fiction

The children's fiction collection is comprised of titles meeting the recreational and educational needs of students with elementary through middle school reading levels. Effort is made to include all books that have won children's literary awards to satisfy the demand of recreational readers and to support class assignments.

Children's Nonfiction

General Nonfiction

The children's nonfiction collection includes materials that meet the informational, educational and recreational reading needs of children in elementary through middle school.

The demand for browsing material is continuously balanced against a significant need for homework support materials. Popular topics such as magic, jokes, sports, crafts, comic strips, fairy tales, and folklore comprise a sizeable portion of the collection. The California school curriculum is another important force in shaping the nonfiction collection. Annual assignments such as history, animals, U.S. states, science experiments, and ancient cultures require circulating materials in significant quantities.

Children's Audiovisual

The children's collection includes popular movies, animated feature films, as well as nonfiction and instructional DVDs.

Board Books

Children's board books are made of sturdy material for babies and toddlers. The text is minimal, with few words on a page or none. The purpose of the Board Book collection is to introduce books to babies, toddlers, and their parents, and to encourage families to read together. Board books are shelved separately from the children's picture books and the children's fiction.

Periodicals

The children's periodical collection supports the recreational, informational, and educational needs of children through middle school.

Special Collections

The Contra Costa County Library maintains special collections that reflect the local community, history, and heritage. Special collections supplement the general collections. These collections, except for that of Project Second Chance, are accessible to all library users.

A special collection may be a unique, self-contained, one-of-a-kind, irreplaceable resource with no need for further development, requiring appropriate preservation measures, or it may be a collection unique to one or more community libraries that requires continuing maintenance and collection development. Select items in these collections may not circulate.

Guidelines for Implementing a Special Collection

The implementation process is carried out in consultation with Library Administration and Collection Development staff to ensure project sustainability and congruence with the Library's mission and policy.

The following special collections are currently significant library resources:

- Stories to Go
- Government Documents/Local History
- Genealogy at Walnut Creek Library
- Community Languages
- Jazz at San Ramon Library
- Lite Reads
- Library of Things
- DeLoach and Troy LGBTQ+ at El Cerrito Library
- African American at Hercules Library

Stories To Go

The Stories to Go program provides early literacy kits designed for use with children 2-5 years old. The materials in the Stories to Go program kits are chosen to augment early exposure to literature. Themed kits include stories, activities, and toys, and are designed to encourage interactive storytelling. The focus is on books with multicultural themes, characters, faces, or situations.

Government Documents and Local History

Federal Government Publications Collection

The Costa County Library has been designated a Federal Depository Library for the Tenth Congressional District since 1964. As a designated selective federal depository, the Library's mission is to make government publications freely available for the use of the general public, and to meet the government information needs of the people who live and work in greater Contra Costa County.

In 2008, the Library began to subscribe to Marcive's Documents without Shelves. The service ensures the library maintains Depository status by providing open access to federal documents through the Library catalog. The online electronic format maximizes both accessibility to government publications and cost effectiveness in Library collection development and replaces the need for an expansive physical collection. The Library is now recognized by the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) as an electronic depository with a small collection of historical government information in print format.

Responsibility for collection development and maintenance of the documents collection officially rests with the County Librarian and is delegated to the Collection Development Manager. Selection policy, criteria, and goals and objectives must meet any requirements necessary to maintain depository status, and they must also be consistent with the library's overall mission and collection development policy and plan. The collection emphasizes reference, statistical, and popular materials over those for instructional or research purposes.

Community Library Government Document Collection

Most community libraries have a Government Documents section that houses documents from the local municipal government, other governmental agencies, and local industries. The extent and types of material in each library varies depending on local regulatory guidelines.

Local History

Local History collections can be found in most community libraries and are maintained by branch staff.

Genealogy

The genealogy collection at the Walnut Creek library is a large collection of resources that includes books, pamphlets, newsletters, magazines, and microform. The collection was originally established by members of the Contra Costa County Genealogy Society. The books are of a general genealogical nature and relate directly to the study of or search for lineage or family or individual ancestry. The collection emphasizes American genealogy and includes genealogies for specific geographical regions, family histories, military members, immigration/passenger records, church records, and ethnic genealogies.

Community Languages

Community Language collections offer material for adults and children in various formats and are housed at the community library level depending upon the local demographics and the identified local need for substantial material in a particular non-English language. Distributed throughout the county are distinct collections of Chinese (simplified and traditional), Russian, Spanish, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, Hindi, and Farsi.

Jazz

The Jazz Collection at San Ramon resulted from the community library's successful competition for the Smithsonian Institution's first jazz exhibit. Recording companies and performing artists first contributed over 400 CDs to the library. Funds from the exhibit helped to acquire additional CDs, videos, books, and sheet music to form a special collection of unusual strength and breadth. Collection development and maintenance is the responsibility of the San Ramon Library staff.

Lite Reads

Lite Reads is a collection of titles curated specifically for new adult readers. It features books with simple vocabulary and short chapters while maintaining high interest and relevant storylines for adults. The Lite Reads collection is easily browsable and featured regionally throughout the County.

Library of Things

This collection is comprised of non-traditional items available for patrons to borrow, including ukeleles, stocked backpacks for hiking, energy efficient tool kits for homes, C-pen readers, STEAM kits for kids, Raspberry Pi coding kits, wi-fi hotspots, and California State Park entrance passes.

DeLoach and Troy LGBTQ+

The DeLoach and Troy collection, established in 2018, is a collection of materials for all ages that includes fiction and nonfiction materials relating to gender identity and sexual orientation. The collection was created from a donation from El Cerrito community members Eugene S. Troy and James S. DeLoach. Collection development and maintenance is the responsibility of the El Cerrito Library staff.

African American

The African American collection was founded at the inception of the Hercules branch in 2006. This collection exists to serve as a resource for the African American community in Hercules and for all residents of Contra Costa County of every background. The purpose is to highlight, reflect, and share the history and culture of the African American community in the United States, and features many of the voices, experiences, and intersections that make up this specific community. Collection development and maintenance is the responsibility of the Hercules Library staff.

Juvenile Hall Outreach

The Contra Costa County Library manages a special collection for incarcerated teens at the John A. Davis Juvenile Hall in Martinez. The Juvenile Hall library has its own collection development plan. However, residents may also request books from the County library system provided they meet Juvenile Hall's collection development criteria.

Betty Frandsen Library at John A. Davis Juvenile Hall

The John A. Davis Juvenile Hall is a maximum-security facility for juvenile offenders up to age 25. In November of 2006, the Betty Frandsen Library was established at Juvenile Hall with the mission of promoting a love of literature and reading, supporting the school curriculum, and encouraging the development of a lifelong habit of self-directed learning. The library is operated jointly by a Librarian, Probation Department staff, and volunteer staff. The librarian is chiefly responsible for the selection of materials which meet the educational, informational, recreational, career/vocational, and personal needs of its users. Certain materials are prohibited from the collection and may include hate literature; materials that promote or glorify gang activity; violence; drug and alcohol abuse/use; irresponsible sexual behavior; materials that are predominantly sexually graphic; telephone books; newspapers; and movies rated higher than PG-13. This library maintains its own site-specific policy document with specific guidelines for the selection of materials, reconsideration of materials, and circulation and visitation procedures.

Project Second Chance

Project Second Chance (PSC) is the Library's adult literacy program. It trains community volunteers to provide one-on-one literacy tutoring to people sixteen years of age or older and out of high school. The program is headquartered from a non-library location in Concord and has offices in the Antioch, Brentwood, Pleasant Hill, and San Pablo Libraries.

PSC resources are purchased specifically for the program's learners and tutors. The PSC collection of instructional materials includes textbooks, workbooks, and teacher's guides; hands-on manipulatives; online learning programs; audiobooks; and collections of poetry, essays, novels, and works of non-fiction written for adult learners. These items are not listed in the Library's catalog and may not be borrowed by the general public.

Chapter 6: Collection Maintenance

Weeding (De-Selection)

Weeding is an essential element of collection development that ensures that Library materials are useful and accessible. Collections evolve over time to meet changes in community needs and to reflect the Library's goals.

Weeding is an evaluation of resources intended to remove items that are no longer useful from the collection. When libraries do not weed regularly or consistently, customers have trouble finding interesting and relevant materials. Removing outdated or worn-out items makes the collection more accessible. Library staff may withdraw and discard materials when they are obsolete, little used, in unusable condition, or replaced by a new edition or more authoritative title on the subject.

Every library's collection is limited by the space available to house it. In order to maintain a current and useful collection, systematic evaluation and regular weeding is necessary. It keeps the collection responsive to patron needs and makes room for the influx of new resources that continuously replenish the collection. The weeding process identifies damaged items, dated resources, and items that are no longer being used. Weeding also aids in the identification of areas where new resources may be needed.

Weeding Schedule and Tools

Librarians are responsible for regular evaluation of collections in their branch following the weeding schedule and guidelines established by Collection Development Staff. The schedule and guidelines incorporate weeding de-selection guidelines and other reports to ensure outdated information and underused or overused materials are removed or replaced. A variety of criteria and assessment procedures are utilized.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Physical condition of materials
- Availability of newer, more comprehensive, or more accessible material
- Relevance to collection and scope of collection
- Ease of borrowing materials from another library
- Reflection of community needs
- Date of last circulation and number of circulations

Social Perspectives

Because social perspectives shift over time, what was once an accepted view years ago may be considered inappropriate today. The goal is to offer balanced coverage while preserving intellectual freedom. Items are not weeded based solely on frank or controversial content.

For further review of de-selection guidelines, please refer to Appendix E: Weeding (De-Selection) Guidelines Chart

Chapter 7: Reconsideration of Materials

The Library has created a formal procedure for review of challenged materials.

The procedure establishes a framework for registering and responding to a complaint while defending the principles of intellectual freedom as set by the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights.

For more details on the procedure, refer to Appendix G: Patron Request for Reconsideration

See also: Appendix F: Library Bill of Rights

See also: Appendix H: Freedom to Read Statement

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Board of Supervisors Resolution 99/595—Collection Development Policy

C.145

TO: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FROM: Anne Cain, Acting County Librarian
DATE: November 3, 1999
SUBJECT: Library Policy for Collection Development and Access

SPECIFIC REQUEST(S) OR RECOMMENDATION(S) & BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt Resolution 99/595 regarding a County Library Policy for Collection Development and Access.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

None.

BACKGROUND:

The Board of Supervisors last adopted a Collection Development policy for the library in 1955. The library has undertaken a comprehensive review of its collection development policies and practices and has developed a revised policy that has been reviewed by County Counsel.

CONTINUED ON ATTACHMENT: ☐ YES

SIGNATURE: Anne Cain

☒ RECOMMENDATION OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

☐ RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD COMMITTEE

☒ APPROVE ☐ OTHER

SIGNATURE(S): Claudio R. Van Snader

ACTION OF BOARD ON November 16, 1999

APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED ☒ OTHER ☐

VOTE OF SUPERVISORS:

XX UNANIMOUS (ABSENT 0/11)

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS IS A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF AN ACTION TAKEN AND ENTERED ON THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON THE DATE SHOWN.

AYES: _____ NOES: _____

ABSENT: _____ ABSTAIN: _____

Contact:

ATTESTED November 16, 1999

cc: County Library
County Administrator
County Auditor

PHIL BATCHELOR, CLERK OF THE BOARD OF
SUPERVISORS AND COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
By Barbara Grant, Deputy

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Adopted this Resolution on November 16, 1999, by the following vote:

Ayes: SUPERVISORS GIOIA, UILKEMA, DeSAULNIER and CANCIAMILLA
 Noes: NONE
 Absent: SUPERVISOR GERBER
 Abstain: NONE

RESOLUTION NO. 99/595

SUBJECT: IN THE MATTER OF ADOPTING A POLICY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AND ACCESS TO THE LIBRARY'S COLLECTION.

Upon recommendation of the Acting County Librarian, this Board adopts the following policy and rescinds all previously adopted policies and rules and regulations (including Resolution No. 1208) for the Library's Collection Development and Access. ~~and rescinding Resolution from March 8, 1955, entitled Matter of Declaration of County Library Book Selection Policy~~

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, Contra Costa County Library

POLICY FOR COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESS

It is the policy of the Contra Costa County Library to meet the informational, educational, recreational, and cultural needs of the community by providing a variety of library resources. Professional judgment and ongoing community analysis guide the selection process.

Selection Responsibility

Legal responsibility for the selection of library resources rests with the County Librarian. (Education Code, Title 1, Part 11, Chapter 6, Section 19146)

Selection Guidelines

The Library provides resources that appeal to all ages and encompass a variety of formats and subject matter. The Library identifies and responds to changing demographics in order to meet community needs. The Library selects resources based upon principles of open access for all its users to many forms of information that provide diverse points of view and meet the ongoing needs of the people in the community. An item will not be excluded simply because it is frank or controversial.

Selection Criteria

The Library selects resources according to a general set of criteria that applies to all age levels and formats. These criteria include community interest and input, use of the collection, critical merit, relevance to diverse populations, usefulness, currency of information, and appropriateness for intended audience.

Access

Resources are purchased for the library in the most appropriate format for use. The library collects titles in the following formats: books, magazines/newspapers, pamphlets, microfilm, audiocassettes, compact discs, videocassettes and CD-ROMs. As new formats become available, they will be evaluated for the collection. All library users have equal access to all library resources, regardless of format.

Gifts

The Library may accept gifts of either resources or money for the collection within the guidelines set forward in *County Administration Bulletin 117.5*. The Library accepts gifts in accordance with selection criteria and guidelines.

Reconsideration of Library Resources

The Library welcomes expression of opinions about its collection from members of the public. The Library will evaluate and make an effort to respond in writing to any patron request to remove a particular item from the collection or restrict access to a resource. The Library's evaluation will be based upon the tenets and guidelines contained within this Policy.

The County Librarian shall develop a collection development plan and procedures for the implementation of this Policy.

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of an action taken and entered on the minutes of the Board of Supervisors on the date shown.

ATTESTED: November 16, 1999
 PHIL BATCHELOR, Clerk of the Board
 of Supervisors and County Administrator

By Barbara Bryant, Deputy

Resolution 99/595

c:\bestcoldev.doc

PURPOSE OF COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

1. Collection development is the process of ensuring that the information needs of the community are met in a timely and economic manner using professional judgment and appropriate resources.
2. The purpose of this Collection Development Policy is to provide the community and the library staff with a document that provides justification for the development of library collections.
3. The Policy is based upon firm principles of professional librarianship and intellectual freedom.
4. The Policy is a document that informs its users of the nature and scope of library collections and sets standards for the inclusion or exclusion of resources.
5. The Policy serves as a guide for day-to-day collection development activities and its flexibility allows staff to exercise its professional judgment as it acts in the best interests of the community.

Appendix B:

Federal Government Publications Collection Development Policy

The Contra Costa County Library was designated as the Federal Depository Library for the Tenth Congressional District in October, 1964. As a designated selective federal depository, the Library's mission is to make government publications freely available for the use of the general public and to meet the government information needs of the people who live and work in greater Contra Costa County.

Access to Government Publications

The Contra Costa County Library is a selective repository for federal, state and local documents. The Contra Costa County Library was designated as the Federal Depository Library for the Tenth Congressional District in October, 1964. As a designated selective federal repository, the Contra Costa County Library makes government publications freely available for the use of the general public.

Government documents in Electronic Format are obtained from the library's subscription to Marcive Documents Without Shelves and can be accessed directly from the Library's online public catalog.

A limited number of State and local government publications in tangible format are cataloged and integrated into the Library's regular reference and circulating collections. In addition, The Catalog of U. S. Government Publications makes all depository library selections and online publications available to the public.

Appendix C: Local Author or Self-published Submissions

Welcome Local Authors,

If you are interested in submitting your work, the Library will consider adding materials which are:

- within the general selection criteria guidelines of our Collection Development Plan, **AND**
- handled by a professional publishing and editing firm, **AND**
- reviewed in a library journal, national publication, **AND/OR** professional media, including local news or magazine

If your authored work meets the above criteria, please send the review and press release information with Attn: Collection Development Manager to your local library and/or email **colldev@library.cccounty.us**

Appendix D: Gifts and Donations

Physical Materials

The Library does not accept gifts of materials or subscriptions. Patrons are able to suggest titles for purchase.

Monetary Gifts

1. Gifts from Friends or Foundations

Annual commitments by Friends of the Library or Foundation groups should be made in writing.

Before the beginning of each fiscal year, each Friends of the Library or Foundation group should, to the best of their ability, provide the library with an estimate of the amount of money that will be donated during the upcoming fiscal year. Any additional commitments can be made in similar fashion any time throughout the year.

2. Gifts from Other than Friends or Foundation

Monetary gifts can be made to the library system as a whole or to a specific community library to be spent on resources, equipment, or library programs.

Appendix E: De-selection (Weeding) Guidelines Chart

De-selection guidelines are used to evaluate library materials based on age and circulation. They help identify materials that need to be withdrawn, whether out of date or underutilized. The fact that an item is circulating may indicate demand for information on that subject, not that the specific item is still accurate/useful.

Key to the De-Selection Guidelines Chart

- The guidelines appear in a two-digit format.
- The first digit is the maximum years since publication date (X=any).
- The second digit is the maximum years allowed without circulating (X=any).
- Most items in the chart may be weeded regardless of publication date if they haven't circulated in two years: X/2
- An entry with a specific number of years since publication should not be kept longer: 3/X indicates an item should be withdrawn after 3 years due to time-sensitivity.

Adult/YA Collection

000		X/2
004-006	Computers	3/X
025.04	Internet	3/X
100		X/2
200		X/2
300		X/2
330	Real Estate	3/X
340	Legal Self-help	3/X; current edition only
350	Test Prep	3/X; current edition only
400		X/2
500		X/2
600		X/2
610	Medicine	3/X
636	Veterinary Medicine	3/X
700		X/2
800		X/2
900		
	Travel Guides	3/X
Biography		X/2
Fiction		X/2
Young Adult Fiction		X/2
Local Government/Industrial Documents		5/X (or as indicated above)

Draft versions may be discarded when final versions are received (refer to the introduction to determine if the draft should also be kept). Documents with historical value to the community should be retained. These may include general plans setting out a long-term vision, or reports for projects with a lasting effect on the development of the area (for example, the plans for the former Naval Weapons Station in Concord). Base decisions on what to retain on knowledge of the community.

State/Federal Repository documents

5/X (or as indicated above)

(Please consult with Collection Development before deselecting)

Adult/YA Collection

J000		X/2
J004-006	Computers	3/X
025.04	Internet	3/X

J100		X/2
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J200		X/2
-------------	--	-----

J300		X/2
-------------	--	-----

J400		X/2
-------------	--	-----

J500		X/2
-------------	--	-----

J600		X/2
J610	Medicine	3/X

J700		X/2
-------------	--	-----

J800		X/2
-------------	--	-----

J900		X/2
J940-J990	Countries, States	5/X

JBibliography		X/2
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Fiction		X/2
----------------	--	-----

JPB, JE, Board		X/2
-----------------------	--	-----

JFiction		X/2
-----------------	--	-----

Appendix F: Library Bill of Rights

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.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
6. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 18, 1948. Amended February 2, 1961; June 28, 1967; and January 23, 1980, inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996, by the ALA Council.

Appendix G: Patron Request for Reconsideration Procedure

A patron who has a complaint about library materials should be referred to the Community Library Manager, the appropriate age-level librarian, or the staff member in charge at the time. Community library staff should make every attempt to calmly and courteously resolve the complaint at the local level. It is most important that the patron be listened to and taken seriously. Most of the time, simply hearing the patron out will satisfactorily conclude the matter.

If not satisfied, the patron must be given the opportunity to fill out the Request for Reconsideration of Library Material Form (Form 4.17).

Note: If a patron is simply asking whether the library intends to purchase a particular controversial title, the Community Library Manager should consult with the Collection Development Manager, who may speak directly with the patron.

Once Form 4.17, Request for Reconsideration of Library Material, has been filled out, the following steps will be taken:

1. The staff member who receives the completed Request for Reconsideration of Library Material (Form 4.17) signs and dates it.
2. The Request for Reconsideration of Library Material (Form 4.17) is scanned and emailed to Library Leadership and the Collection Development Manager on the same day it is received. The original form should be sent to the Collection Development Manager in the next shipment. The community library should retain a copy of the submitted form for its files.
3. The County Librarian sends a letter of acknowledgement to the patron within 2 business days of receiving the Request for Reconsideration of Library Material (Form 4.17). The letter of acknowledgment will specify the timeframe for the Library's response.
4. A staff committee will objectively evaluate the specific item under reconsideration to determine if it should remain in the collection. This committee will consist of the Collection Development Manager and two librarians involved in the selection of materials. Within the review period, the review committee will reach a consensus and draft a response to the patron. The response will address each specific point raised in the request.
5. The draft response will be submitted to the County Librarian, who will make a formal response to the patron within the stated timeframe. The community library where the request originated will receive a copy of the response, as will the members of the review committee.

**Contra Costa County Library
Request for Reconsideration of Library Material**

Contra Costa County Library selects materials with great care, using established professional standards and giving full consideration to the varying educational, recreational, and informational needs of all our patrons, including age of the intended audience. Our selection criteria are described in full in the Collection Development Policy which is available on the Library's website.

- Patrons seeking reconsideration must be Contra Costa County Library cardholders.
- A title will not be removed from the collection while it is being reviewed.
- A title will only be reviewed once within a five-year period, unless the content has undergone major revisions.
- Please return this form directly to a staff member at any service desk, and we will acknowledge receipt within 2 business days.
- The contents of this form once submitted become part of public record, with personally identifying information redacted.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Library Card Number: _____

I represent (circle one):

Myself An Organization (Include Name): _____

Type of Material (Circle One):

Book DVD Magazine Newspaper Database/Electronic Other

Author/Producer: _____

Title: _____

(Continued on other side)

Did you read, listen to, or view the entire work? Yes No

Please describe your concerns regarding this material:

What specific pages/sections illustrate your concern?

What would you like the library to do about this item?

Appendix H: 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:

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.

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. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.