

## **Collection Policy, East Lyme Public Library**

September 2020

Approved by East Lyme Public Library Board of Trustees November 2020

The East Lyme Public library is a free, non-sectarian, public library organized to provide and disseminate significant books and other printed or recorded materials, and to give guidance in their use; to help people in their search for greater understanding, in their quest for reliable information, and in the enrichment of their leisure time. It is the primary objective of the library to provide and organize materials for all ages from preschool through retirement making available significant and reliable books and other materials that will meet the needs and interests of the residents of the Town of East Lyme.

### Balanced collection

The library strives to balance the collection in the following manner: to acquire by purchase and gift the widest possible spread over the Dewey Decimal non-fiction fields and to purchase in depth (meaning in a larger quantity) titles reflecting those special interests of the residents of town; to acquire a similar proportion of non-fiction to fiction as represented by the publishing output; to purchase books that receive reliable recommended reviews by third party reviewers; to build up those areas in the collection which are weak; to seek out reviews of unusual material of interest to the users and which will help in answering questions; and to use those sources for third party reviews which offer the largest number of reviews in a year and which recommend highly some titles for public libraries.

Various sides of issues, including sometimes contradictory items, will be bought. Controversial subjects will be included. A large proportion of the book budget will be spent on subject non-fiction spread over the widest variety of subject fields and purchased from the current publishing output. That means new titles as they come off the press are reviewed in Library Journal, Booklist, New York Times Book Review section, Publishers Weekly and other current professional sources.

### The Children's Collection

Materials covering a wide range of interests and viewpoints are purchased to meet the recreational and informational needs of children ages 0 to 14 and their families. Titles of high popularity, quality, and informational accuracy are sought to cover a wide range of maturity levels and reading abilities. With the exception of highly popular recreational summer reading titles, the library does not provide textbooks or multiple titles to meet the needs of school curricula.

Responsibility for children's reading and viewing rests with the parents or legal guardians. Parents or legal guardians are the only ones who may restrict their children, and only their children, from access to library materials. Minors have free access to library materials in all departments. The library staff does not serve in loco parentis (in the place of a parent).

### Replacement

Currently useful titles withdrawn by reason of condition, loss or damage, are considered for replacement.

### Duplication

Duplication of titles is determined by popularity, importance of the book and its author or subject, and by book or materials budget.

### Rare books

The rare book collection contains special local history works, material about the East Lyme Public Library and books which, in the judgment of the Director, are of special worth or scarcity. Duplication between rare books and the circulating collection may be done to ensure the preservation of the last copy of a work of local history interest.

### Periodicals

The library subscribes to titles of interest to the community, which help give subject coverage. Titles in demand for reference may be bound or purchased in microform editions.

### Gifts

The East Lyme Public Library encourages various means of supporting the Library besides outright gifts of money and welcomes gifts of books, DVDs, and CDs. The same principles of selection applied to library purchases will be applied to gifts. Factors such as duplication, processing costs, shelf space, etc., must be considered when making a decision as to the acceptance or disposal of a gift, especially when materials are of a questionable value to a balanced collection. Except for specific titles arranged for in advance, gifts will be received with the understanding that they are given unconditionally and outright, and that they may or may not be added to the collection. If not added to the collection, they may be disposed of as the library deems fit, sold as part of the Library's ongoing book sale, or returned to the donor if so requested.

### Local authors

Books by local authors will be added to the collection unless in the judgment of the Administrative Director they do not fit the criteria of book selection.

### Discarding

The library maintains a policy of withdrawal of materials based on elimination of unnecessary titles, books no longer in demand, duplicates, and worn or mutilated copies. Frequency of circulation, community interest, and availability of newer and more valid materials are of prime consideration. Rare books and materials of local interest are exceptions.

## Other considerations

The library recognizes that some books are controversial. Selection will be made on the merits of the work in relation to the total collection. The library has the responsibility to have available a representative selection of material on subjects of interest to its readers, including materials of various sides of controversial questions. Titles will be selected on the basis of the content of the work as a whole, without regard to the personal history of the author. A variety and balance of opinion will be sought whenever available and the library will aim at being inclusive rather than exclusive. Thus the library will be a resource where the individual can examine issues freely and make his/her own decision.

Books which contain coarse language or frank treatments of situations which may be objectionable to some may be included, when in the opinion of the library selectors, as designated by the library Administrative Director, based on the standard selection tools, the author is sincere in what he is trying to portray. It is felt, with respect to the dissemination of ideas, that it is highly important for the library to err on the side of freedom rather than on the side of rejection.

Responsibility for the reading of minors rests with their parents and legal guardians. Selection of adult materials will not be limited by the possibility that books may inadvertently come into the possession of minors.

It is library policy not to remove books or materials from its shelves at the demand of individuals or groups. The library also does not label material beyond usual classification schemes.

The East Lyme Public Library subscribes to the Freedom To Read statement issued by the American Library Association and the Association of American Publishers, (adopted June 25, 1953; revised June 30, 2004) and is hereby included en toto as part of this policy.

Persons or organizations objecting to a particular book or passage thereof within the library collections should explain in writing such objections.

If any person or organization seriously objects to any library materials, such objection shall be in writing, using a form provided. Each complaint shall be reviewed by the Executive Director whose decision shall be approved or disapproved by the Board of Trustees.

Any appeal of the Executive Director and Board of Trustees' decision shall be decided in a court of law.

## THE FREEDOM TO READ

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove books from sale, to censor textbooks, to label "controversial" books, 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 avoid the subversion of politics and the

corruption of morals. We, as citizens devoted to the use of books and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating them, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

We are deeply concerned about these attempts at suppression. Most such attempts rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary citizen, by exercising critical judgment, will accept the good and reject the bad. The censors, public and private, assume that they should determine what is good and what is bad for their fellow-citizens.

We trust Americans to recognize propaganda, and to reject it. We do not believe they need the help of censors to assist them in this task. 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.

We are aware, of course, that books are not alone in being subjected to efforts of suppression. We are aware that these efforts are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, films, radio and television. 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.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of uneasy change and pervading fear. Especially when so many of our apprehensions are directed against an ideology, the expression of a dissident idea becomes a thing feared in itself, and we tend to move against it as against a hostile deed, with suppression.

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 stress.

Now as always in our history, books are among our greatest instruments of freedom. They are almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. They are the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions of social growth. They are essential to the extended discussion which 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 towards 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 which are unorthodox or unpopular with 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 which 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 contained in the books 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 books 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 determine the acceptability of a book on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.

A book should be judged as a book. 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 which 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 literature is shocking. But is not such 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 taste differs, and taste cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised which 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 with any book the prejudgment of a label

characterizing the book or author as subversive or dangerous.

The idea of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for the citizen. 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.

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.

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 expended on the trivial; it is frustrated 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 their freedom and integrity, and the enlargement of their service to society, requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all citizens the fullest of their support.

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

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

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

*A Joint Statement by*

American Library Association

Association of American Publishers

*Subsequently endorsed by:*

American Booksellers for Free Expression

The Association of American University Presses

The Children's Book Council

Freedom to Read Foundation

National Association of College Stores

National Coalition Against Censorship

National Council of Teachers of English

The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression

## Request for Reconsideration of East Lyme Public Library Materials and Programs

Instructions: In order for your request to be processed you must be an East Lyme resident or taxpayer. There are two sides to this form: you must complete both sides. You will receive a reply to this request within three weeks after the date you turn it in. Please feel free to attach additional papers if more space is needed.

Would you like us to respond to you in writing or by email?

Letter via U.S. Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town, State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Do you represent yourself or an organization? Myself \_\_\_\_\_ Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Resource on which you are commenting:

Book \_\_\_\_\_ Movie \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Title of item: \_\_\_\_\_

Author(s): \_\_\_\_\_

2. What brought this item to your attention?

(Over →)



3. Have you examined the entire item? If not, which sections did you review?

4. What concerns you about this item?

5. How would you suggest that this situation be resolved?

6. Is there an item or program that fits within the library's collection development policy which you would recommend that the library consider?