

THE LATHAM MEMORIAL LIBRARY

POLICIES

Version 1.1

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Table of Contents

I.	LATHAM LIBRARY SERVICES	1
II.	BUILDING USE.....	1
III.	HOURS	2
IV.	LOAN PERIODS AND FINES	2
V.	RULES OF CONDUCT	3
VI.	CHILD SAFETY	4
VII.	TECHNOLOGY USE.....	5
VIII.	EXHIBITS	7
IX.	COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT	8
X.	RECONSIDERATION OF MATERIALS	9
XI.	GIFTS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS	9
XII.	NONDISCRIMINATION.....	10
XIII.	PRIVACY	10

Latham Memorial Library Policies

Latham Memorial Library Policies

I. LATHAM LIBRARY SERVICES

1. Latham Memorial Library is committed to being a valuable community resource of materials, information services and programs. We offer a warm and comfortable environment in which patrons are invited to browse the collection, use the computers to access the internet, read magazines, enjoy programs, and converse with friends.

The Latham Library collection includes:

- Reference Materials
- Magazines and Newspapers
- Adult Fiction and Non-fiction
- Thetford Authors
- Vermont Books
- Large Print Books
- Young Adult Fiction
- Juvenile Fiction and Non-fiction
- Video and Audio Materials

Additionally, Latham Library provides meeting space an exhibition space for use by members of the community. For a fee, the Library also provides access to a photo copier, facsimile machine, and computer printer.

2. Library users who wish to borrow materials will be given a library card with an identifying number. Borrowing privileges are provided free of charge to the residents of Thetford or towns sending students to Thetford Elementary School or Thetford Academy.
3. The privilege of using the library may be denied at any time by the Library Director, with the approval of the Board, for abuses such as repeated negligence in returning books when due, refusing to reimburse the library for damages to or loss of library materials or failure to comply with the library's behavior rules and policies.

II. BUILDING USE

1. The library is open to all local-area based non-profit organizations for group meetings, free of charge, on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to the following conditions.
 - a. A reservation shall be made and filled in on the Front Desk calendar no later than 24 hours prior to the meeting time.
 - b. No admission shall be charged.
 - c. Facilities must be cleaned up and left in the same condition they were before use. If applicable, the doors shall be locked, the lights turned out and the key returned promptly to the Library Director or the Circulation Desk attendant.

Latham Memorial Library Policies

- d. With permission, groups using the Library may serve refreshments in designated areas, but no alcoholic beverages may be consumed on library property.
 - e. There will be no smoking on Library property at any time.
2. Businesses in the local area may use the Library's space if they meet the conditions outlined in this section and are presenting an educational program which has been approved by the Director and they will not directly profit from the event.
3. The fact that an organization is granted permission to meet in the Latham Memorial Library in no way constitutes endorsement by the Library or the Town of Thetford of the policies or beliefs of that organization.
4. These policies may be waived at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

III. HOURS

1. The Library will be open 32 hours a week on a regular schedule, changes to the hours and schedule being determined by the Board of Trustees based on the desires of the community and financial considerations.
2. The Library will be closed on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Eve Day.
3. The Library Director will review the holiday schedule with the Trustees and make adjustments, as needed.
4. The Library may close, with permission of the Board and notification to the Community, for such reasons as maintenance, staff training, etc.
5. The Library may close or remain closed in the case of unforeseen circumstances, extreme weather, or if a power outage is predicted to continue more than 20 minutes after sunset.
6. Access to the Library during non-business hours will be limited to persons participating in previously approved meetings, as well as staff and volunteers doing Library work.

IV. LOAN PERIODS AND FINES

1. In addition to reference materials and current magazine issues, which do not circulate, holdings of the Library may be borrowed as follows:
 - Books, State Books, Audio Books, and LUV Audio Books: 4 Weeks
 - Recent Acquisition, Magazines, and Inter Library Loans: 2 Weeks
 - DVDs, LUV DVDs: 3 Days
2. Books and materials may be renewed, provided there are no reserves on them. Renewals may be made in person or by telephone.
3. No more than two active Inter Library Loans are allowed per patron at a time.

Latham Memorial Library Policies

4. Parents and Guardians are responsible for materials signed out for children under the age of 16.
5. Latham Library operates on the Honor System rather than charging fines for overdue materials. There is a Conscience Box on the Circulation Desk for patrons to contribute to if they wish.
6. Patrons will be asked to pay for the replacement cost of unreturned, damaged or lost materials. If efforts to collect materials or replacement costs fail, library privileges will be revoked and the police may be asked to assist, per 22 V.S.A § 111.
7. If materials are returned, or payment made, library privileges may be reinstated at the discretion of the Board or Library Director.
8. Circulation records are kept for the current use only to protect privacy.

V. RULES OF CONDUCT

To provide a safe and welcoming environment for all Latham Memorial Library users, patrons are asked to observe the following rules of behavior:

1. Show mutual respect for everyone in the library.
2. Allow others to use the library in peace.
3. Unacceptable behavior includes behavior within the Library or on Library premises that interferes with the use of the library by other patrons; creates a risk or injury to other patrons or library personnel; interferes with the work of Library personnel; or creates a risk of damage to Library property.
4. Profanity, abusive or threatening language, threatening gestures or unwanted physical contact is not acceptable.
5. Loud, boisterous behavior is not acceptable.
6. Treat library materials and other library property with care.
7. In order to allow safe and open access to the Library, it is not permissible to loiter near the Library's entrances.
8. Eating and drinking is only allowed in designated areas.
9. Smoking, alcohol consumption and the use of illegal drugs is prohibited on Library premises.
10. Appropriate attire, including shirts and shoes, must be worn at all times.
11. Cell phone use is limited to the foyer or outdoor areas.
12. Sporting equipment, scooters, skateboards, roller blades, roller skates and bicycles may not be used on library property.
13. Only service animals are allowed in the Library
14. Patrons having backpacks or oversized bags may be asked to check these bags in a staff allocated space upon entering the Library. The Library reserves the right to inspect personal belongings for concealed materials.

Latham Memorial Library Policies

15. Any purposeful damage done to the material, equipment, furniture, building, or property of the Library will not be tolerated.
16. Inappropriate public displays of affection are prohibited.
17. Harassment or any form of bullying will not be tolerated.
18. Possession and/or threat of use of any dangerous weapon or facsimile of any dangerous weapon are prohibited in the Library building and on Library grounds. This includes, but is not limited to any gun, projectile firing weapon or device, knife, dagger, switchblade or folding knife with a blade in excess of four inches.
19. Neither the Library nor its staff is responsible for patron's personal belongings.
20. Due to liability concerns, activities that could lead to injury or damage to Library property, such as throwing balls, stones, snow, etc., or climbing on walls, benches, tables or trees located on Library property is not permitted.
21. Violations of rules for Library behavior could result in the patron(s) being asked to leave, police being called, and/or the patron(s) being banned from Library property.

VI. CHILD SAFETY

1. Latham Memorial Library welcomes children of all ages to use the library. We are committed to making the library an inviting place for children. Special programs, story times, book groups, and a teen space are offered to help children develop a love of books and learning. The following policies are in place to protect children who use the library and the use of the library by other patrons.
2. Responsibility for the behavior and wellbeing of children using the library rests with the parent, guardian or designated caregiver.
3. It is the responsibility of parents and/or legal guardians to determine what materials their minor children, and only their children, may use, borrow or access.
4. The Library does not act *in loco parentis*. Library staff, volunteers or Trustees do not take place of a parent, act as a caregiver or babysitter, nor assume responsibility for the children on Library premises.
5. The Library suggests that children carry phone numbers for use in case of an emergency.
6. The Library encourages parents to have a contingency plan for their children if they are asked to leave or if the library closes.
7. Children aged eight or younger shall, at all times, be attended and adequately attended by a responsible person, preferably a parent, guardian or caregiver, while in the Library.
8. Children aged nine and older may use the library unattended, subject to other rules and regulations in effect at the Library.
9. The library staff is particularly concerned about children who may be unattended when the library closes. In order to ensure the child's safety after the library closes, a staff member will determine if the child is aware of a pick-up schedule. If not, the

Latham Memorial Library Policies

child will be invited to make a phone call to make immediate arrangements to get safely home.

10. The Police will be notified if a child (11 years and younger) has not been picked up by closing and if their parent or guardian cannot be contacted. Library staff and volunteers are not permitted to remain after hours with an unattended child or provide a ride.
11. The library realizes that special circumstance may arise on occasion. The Library Director and Children's Librarian will address these issues on an individual basis.
12. If the Library must close unexpectedly (e.g. due to extreme weather or power outage after sunset) all children will be asked to notify their parents. Staff will wait with children for 20 minutes after parents have been notified. After 20 minutes, a staff member will call the Police to plan for the care of any remaining children under 12 years of age.

VII. TECHNOLOGY USE

1. Introduction

- a. In accordance with the American Library Association (ALA) Access to Electronic Information, Services, and Networks: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights document, it is the Library's ethical responsibility under the Constitution to provide access to information in all formats to all people. This includes Internet access.
- b. The Library supports and adheres to the principles of intellectual freedom. Electronic resources, including the computer and the Internet, are reference tools that supplement the books, periodicals and reference collections.
- c. The Internet is an ever-changing and unregulated medium. The Library does not monitor or have control over information accessed on the Internet. For this reason, the library requires patrons to abide by the rules and policies approved by the Board of Trustees.

2. Rights of Patrons/Users of the Internet

- a. The Library respects the rights and confidentiality of its members. The Library does not require membership or identification to use the library computers but requires all patrons to agree to observe the policies for Technology Use when logging into Library computers.
- b. Users must comply with U. S. copyright law and all other applicable state and federal laws governing information access. Use of the Internet for activities that violate or encourage others to violate local, state or federal laws is prohibited. This includes activities such as viewing child pornography, committing fraud, spreading libel or slander and cyber-bullying. Other uses that are considered unacceptable and which constitute a violation of this policy are the following:
 - (1) Uses that violate the law or encourage others to violate the law.
 - (2) Uses that cause harm to others or damage to their property.

Latham Memorial Library Policies

- (3) Uses that jeopardize the security of access of the computer network or other networks on the Internet.
 - (4) Uses that compromise the safety and security of minors when using e-mail, chat room and other forms of direct electronic communications.
 - c. Use of the Internet and the World Wide Web cannot be considered secure; therefore patrons should consider their Internet activity as public information and limit their activities accordingly.
3. Children and the Internet
- a. All patrons of the Library, regardless of age, have equal access to the materials, information and technology provided by the Library.
 - b. It is the responsibility of parents and/or legal guardians to determine what their minor children, and only their children, may use, borrow or access.
 - c. Minors are defined in this policy as children under the age of sixteen years.
 - d. The library staff is not in a position to enforce parental restrictions within the library. Parents are encouraged to take an active role in their children's use of the Internet.
4. General Use
- a. Computers and printers will be turned on and off by library staff only.
 - b. Computers are available for use on a first-come first-served basis.
 - c. Users are allowed one half hour use per day; and additional time if no one else is waiting.
 - d. There is a charge of fifteen cents per page for printing.
 - e. Computer or printer problems must be reported immediately to library staff.
 - f. Users must leave the computers and software as they found them.
 - g. Users are responsible for the cost of any damage to any computers or their peripherals through negligent or inappropriate use. Parents or legal guardians are responsible for any damage incurred by their children.
5. Software
- a. Users may utilize only those programs and services installed on each computer.
 - b. Users may not alter any settings, delete or modify any files.
 - c. Users may not illegally copy or download any data.
 - d. The Library cannot be held responsible for any damage or loss of data incurred while using library technology.
 - d. Any application used must be properly exited upon completion.
6. Disclaimers
- a. While the Library endeavors to provide access to information of the highest quality, the Library specifically disclaims any warrant as to the information's

Latham Memorial Library Policies

accuracy, timeliness, authoritativeness, usefulness or fitness for a particular purpose.

- b. The Library will have no liability for direct, indirect or consequential damages related to the use or information access through the Library's Internet service.

7. Sanctions

- a. Users, who contravene these rules, or any other rules of the library, may have their library privileges revoked by the Library Director.
- b. Appeals may be made to the Board of Trustees.

VIII. EXHIBITS

1. It is the policy of the Library to provide all members of the community free access to materials which can improve their minds, broaden their lives, and fulfill their educational, intellectual, cultural and recreational needs. One important means of doing so is to provide space for hobby, craft and art exhibits. Organizations and individuals wishing to utilize the library for an exhibit must consult with the Library Director. The Director's decision will be based on the availability of suitable spaces for exhibits and whether the exhibit aligns with the library's mission. The following requirements also apply:
 - a. Library exhibits will be given priority.
 - b. Exhibits are scheduled for one month, or as negotiated.
 - c. Each exhibitor is responsible for hanging his/her own art work, and for providing all necessary materials for organizing an exhibit. The library has a supply of S-hooks which can be used for hanging art work from the moldings.
 - d. Publicity is the responsibility of the exhibitor except when the exhibit is co-sponsored by the library.
 - e. Exhibitors may not schedule special openings or other events without the permission of the Library Director. All arrangements must be approved by the Library Director at least two weeks prior to the planned event. Smoking is not allowed and no alcoholic beverages may be served. Food and drink may only be consumed in designated areas. The event must be open to the public.
 - f. Prices will not be posted on the items in the exhibit, except with the approval of the Library Director. No admission fee may be charged. A price list may be left in the exhibit area. Transactions for the purchase of an item shall be directly between the purchaser and the exhibitor. Exhibit material which is sold during its display may not be removed before the end of the exhibit without the permission of the Library Director.
 - g. An individual or group will not be allowed to exhibit more than once during any twelve (12) month period.
 - h. Granting permission to use the library facilities does not constitute an endorsement by the library staff, Board of Trustees or the Town of Thetford of the content of the exhibit, the materials exhibited or of the exhibitors. The library

Latham Memorial Library Policies

- reserves the right to move items within the exhibit or remove them from the exhibit entirely.
- i. Failure to abide by these requirements could result in denial of further requests to use the library exhibit spaces.
 2. The Library makes a commitment to exhibitors that their shows will not be disrupted, nor exhibits moved, to accommodate alternate activities conducted in the exhibition space.
 3. The Library does not carry insurance to cover the loss of items included in an exhibit. The Library cannot assume financial liability for loss or damage. Since the exhibit may be in an unsupervised area, exhibitors should consider the possibility of providing private insurance if security is a concern. Exhibitors must sign a waiver of liability holding the Library, its staff and volunteers, the Board of Trustees, or the Town of Thetford harmless for any damage to exhibited material.

IX. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

1. The Board of Trustees recognizes the rights of all members to have free access to the widest diversity of views and expressions as are guaranteed under the First Amendment to the Constitution.
 - a. It is understood that neither the library staff nor the Board of Trustees needs to endorse every idea or presentation contained in the materials which the library makes available.
 - b. It is not the Library's responsibility to censor or coerce the taste of its patrons. The collection will attempt to include materials presenting all points of view with no exclusion due to the race, nationality, sexual orientation or the social, political or religious views of the authors.
2. The Library Director is responsible for selecting, acquiring, evaluating and weeding all library materials in keeping with the allocations of the annual budget. The objectives of collection development are as follows:
 - a. Books will be selected using the philosophy expressed in the Library Bill of Rights (Attachment 2) and the Freedom to Read Statement (Attachment 3). Reviewing tools and patron requests will also be considered.
 - b. The Library will not attempt to develop a comprehensive research collection in any one field with the exception of local history.
 - c. An effort is made to acquire authoritative materials representing as many points of view and sides of controversial issues as possible. The Library does not endorse any particular belief or point of view represented in its collection but tries to present quality materials containing varying views for examination by the public.
 - d. The Library will rely on interlibrary-loan for materials beyond the scope of its collection, and in turn will make its materials available to other libraries.
 - e. The Library will attempt to provide materials appropriate for all ages and reading levels.

Latham Memorial Library Policies

- f. The Library will enter into consortium agreements when it is to the benefit of the Library and provides enhanced and expanded services for our members. It is understood that the Library does not have direct control of the acquisition of the materials available through these agreements.
3. The Library's goal is to provide a collection of instructional, educational, and literature-based videos that will enhance the Library's existing nonfiction and fiction collections.
 - a. Feature film selections will be limited to those videos that are culturally, historically or aesthetically significant.
 - b. Preference will be given to feature films listed on the Library of Congress National Film Registry, by American Film Institute and various award lists.
 - c. It is not the Library's intention to duplicate the spectrum of feature films available in the private sector, but rather to provide those selections that are not readily available in commercial outlets.
 - d. The library video collection is not intended to supplement curriculum requirements of educational organizations within the community.
 - e. The following selection criteria will be considered for videos: favorable reviews in standard library reviewing sources; appropriateness of the subject to the collection; appropriateness to the interests and skills of the intended users; technical quality, i.e. clarity of picture and sound quality; authority and competency of the producer; artistic merit and reputation of the performers; availability of public performance rights; the need for non-fiction and documentaries to present accurate and current information; and cost.

X. RECONSIDERATION OF MATERIALS

1. Occasional objections regarding materials may occur despite the care taken to select materials. The Board of Trustees supports the principles of intellectual freedom.
2. Any person wishing to have any materials reconsidered or withdrawn will submit a formal, written Request for Reconsideration to the Library Director, who will refer the request to the Board of Trustees with a recommendation for appropriate action. The Board reserves the right to make a final decision. The item in question will not be removed from the shelves before a final decision is made.

XI. GIFTS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

1. The library is pleased to receive donations of money, books and other materials. Books and other materials will be received with the understanding that the gifts will be added to the library collection only if they fit the collection needs. The Library reserves the right to make whatever disposition seems advisable. The wishes of the donor will be respected whenever feasible.
2. All offers of major gifts will be referred to the Board of Trustees for consideration and action. The Library Director will handle offers of gifts of books and materials.

Latham Memorial Library Policies

3. If the prospective donor would like to donate an item instead of money but has no specific item in mind, the Board will consult with the Library Director and suggest an item.
4. All gifts are to be received unrestrictedly and once accepted become the sole property of the library to be used and disposed of at the Board's discretion in consultation with the Library Director.
5. In accepting or considering gifts, the Board will consider any related costs such as maintenance, replacement, insurance, etc.

XII. NONDISCRIMINATION

1. The Library will serve all persons regardless of age, race, color, religion, gender, place of birth, political affiliation, national origin, ancestry or sexual orientation.
2. The Library complies fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and does not discriminate against qualified individuals with a disability in any aspect of the employment relationship: recruitment; application process; salary; leave; promotions; benefit provisions, hiring, termination or training etc. The Library will make reasonable accommodations to the known physical or mental limitations of an otherwise qualified applicant or employee with a disability.
3. Any questions or complaints about potential or perceived discrimination in violation of the ADA should be directed in writing, to the Board of Trustees, c/o Latham Memorial Library, P.O. Box 240, Thetford, VT 05074. Complaints can also be made to the U. S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Coordination and Compliance Section, www.justice.gov/crt/cor/ or 950 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W. Washington, DC 20530 or 1-888-TITLE-06 (1-888-848-5306) (Voice / TTY)
4. The Library will serve everyone without discrimination in accordance with the Vermont Public Accommodations Law (21 VSA, Sec. 271) and will make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities unless such accommodation would cause an undue hardship.

XIII. PRIVACY

A. Background, Philosophy, Rationale

The Latham Memorial Library fully subscribes to the professional standard stated in the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association (see Attachment 1). The Latham Memorial Library takes most seriously the responsibility to ensure intellectual freedom, and recognizes the critical need to protect the privacy and confidentiality of its users. This means that the Library will not reveal, except upon receipt of a valid and enforceable court order, subpoena or other binding legal demand (hereafter "binding legal demand") information about users – what they read from our collections, what their areas of research might be, or what resources or services they consult, use or access (hereafter "user information"). We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.

Latham Memorial Library Policies

Support for the protection of library records is found in the Vermont Public Records Act [1 V.S.A. § 317 (19)], which provides that “records relating to the identity of library patrons or the identity of library patrons in regard to the circulation of library materials” are “exempt from public inspection and copying.” The State of Vermont further enforced this in An Act Relating to the Confidentiality of Library Patron Records [22 V.S.A. § 220 (129)] “A library’s patron registration records and patron transaction records shall remain confidential.” “Unless authorized by other provisions of law, the library’s officers, employees, and volunteers shall not disclose the records.” “Any person, whose confidential patron registration records or patron transaction records have been disclosed, except as provided in this chapter, is authorized to bring a civil action against the library that disclosed the records.”

Confidential library records have long been accessible to law enforcement officials through orderly legal channels. However, passage by Congress of the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001 (USA PATRIOT Act, Public Law 107-56) gives law enforcement officials freer access to library user records, and increased ability to install devices on computer workstations to monitor activity. Furthermore, it prohibits patron notification when certain types of surveillance are underway. This legislation has caused libraries, including the Latham Memorial Library, to review their written policies and practices regarding privacy of patron records, to rethink and codify record-keeping practices, and to ensure that Library staff has coherent procedures to follow should official requests for information identifying individuals come to the library.

B. Records Creation and Retention

1. The library does not collect or retain user information beyond what is needed for essential library operations or to protect the library collections (e.g., information necessary for contacting someone about materials he or she currently has signed out or for which a bill might be outstanding). Only staff has access to personally identifiable information stored in the library’s computer systems.
2. The library does not retain online records of Internet transactions (Web site or chat room visits, or e-mail messages). Computer workstations in the libraries are designed to protect user privacy – regularly erasing search histories on a cyclical basis as well as with each system restart.
3. Library administrators regularly review record-keeping practices, and staff is trained to understand library practices regarding privacy and confidentiality.

C. Disclosing Information about Library Users

1. Without binding legal demand, and/or without extraordinary and emergent health or safety threats that merit disclosure in the judgment of the Thetford Town Counsel, Latham Memorial Library will not provide user information requested by a third party, except as noted below. “User Information” includes: name, mailing address, telephone, e-mail address and Latham Memorial Library barcode, and records of resources and services used by an individual including, but not limited to: library materials borrowed or consulted, reference requests or other requests for information,

Latham Memorial Library Policies

database search records, interlibrary loan records, computer workstations used, and the content of computer activity.

2. Latham Memorial Library will comply with requests for information on children under 16 years of age in accordance with Vermont S. 220 (No. 129) “An Act Relating to the Confidentiality of Library Patron Records” if the person requesting the information shows proof of guardianship of the youth in question.
3. The Library Director is the only person authorized to handle requests for library records or information about library users.

Latham Memorial Library Policies

Janet Shepler, Chair

Adele Bassett, Secretary

Arden French, Treasurer

Polly Cole, Trustee

Beth Fernandez, Trustee

Joanne Kirsten, Trustee

Matthias Senger, Trustee

Peter Blodgett, Library Director

Attachment 1

Code of Ethics of the American Library Association

As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

- I. We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
- II. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
- III. We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.
- IV. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.
- V. We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.
- VI. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
- VII. We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.
- VIII. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.

Adopted at the 1939 Midwinter Meeting by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 1981; June 28, 1995; and January 22, 2008.

Attachment 2

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries that make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

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

A history of the Library Bill of Rights is found in the latest edition of the [Intellectual Freedom Manual](#).

Attachment 3

The Freedom to Read Statement

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

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

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

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

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

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the

Latham Memorial Library Policies

freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

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

We therefore affirm these propositions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Latham Memorial Library Policies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint,

Latham Memorial Library Policies

but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

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

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

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A Joint Statement by:

[American Library Association](#)
[Association of American Publishers](#)

Subsequently endorsed by:

[American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression](#)
[The Association of American University Presses, Inc.](#)
[The Children's Book Council](#)
[Freedom to Read Foundation](#)
[National Association of College Stores](#)
[National Coalition Against Censorship](#)
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