

**Latham Memorial Library
George Peabody Library
Thetford, VT**

**POLICIES:
OPERATIONS
PERSONNEL**

2021

Version 3.0

Background for the Library Policies:

The Latham Memorial Library (referred to as the Library) Board of Trustees (referred to as the Board) developed these operating and personnel policies for the public libraries in Thetford, VT, which are the Latham Memorial Library and the George Peabody Library.

The Library Director or Executive Director (referred to as the Librarian) for the Latham Memorial Library also serves as Library Director or Executive Director for the George Peabody Library, and is responsible for implementing these policies, in conjunction with the Board.

Where a policy only impacts Latham or Peabody, that is noted.

Version History for Library Policies

3.0_2021.7.23-2021.7.27: added new sections on Conflict of Interest, Social Media Use, and Background Checks; updated benefits section to match current benefits; updated language; corrected “fiscal year” to “calendar year”; revised Building Use to better match Exhibits; edited Building Use and Exhibits sections; changed “should” to “shall” as appropriate; Adopted by the Latham Board in a Special Meeting of July 27th, 2021; minor revision to holidays 8/23/21

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OPERATING POLICIES

I. LIBRARY SERVICES

The Thetford Libraries, Latham Memorial Library (Library) and the George Peabody Library (Library), are committed to being a valuable community resource of materials, information services, and programs. The Library offers 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
 - Digital e-book and audio downloads
1. The Library provides internet access, meeting, and exhibition space for use by community members. For a fee, the Latham Library also provides access to a printer/copier and FAX machine.
 2. Library users who wish to borrow materials are given a patron number for use when borrowing materials. 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 Librarian, with the approval of the Board, may deny library privileges 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. HOURS

1. The Library is open approximately 35 hours a week on a regular schedule; changes to the hours and schedule are determined by the Board based on the desires of the community, time of year, and financial considerations.
2. The Library is closed on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Indigenous People's Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Eve Day.
3. The Librarian will review the library schedule with the Board and make adjustments, as needed.
4. The Library may close in the case of unforeseen circumstances, extreme weather, or if a power outage is predicted to continue for more than 20 minutes after sunset.
5. The Library may close, with permission of the Board and notification to the community, for such reasons as maintenance, staff training, construction, and public safety.
6. Access to the Library during non-business hours will be limited to persons participating in previously approved meetings, and to staff, Trustees, and volunteers doing official library business.

III. LOAN PERIODS AND FINES

1. With the exception of reference materials and current magazine issues, which do not circulate, Library holdings may be borrowed as follows:
 - Books and Audio Books: 4 Weeks
 - New Books, Magazines, and Inter Library Loans: 2 Weeks
 - 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.
4. Parents and guardians are responsible for materials signed out for children under the age of 16.
5. The Library operates on the honor system, rather than charging fines for overdue materials. There is a Conscience Box on the Latham Library Circulation Desk for patrons to contribute to if they wish.
6. As necessary, 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. Once materials are returned, or payment made, library privileges may be reinstated at the discretion of the Board or Librarian.
7. To protect user privacy, circulation records are kept only of current use (see also below, (Section VI. PATRON PRIVACY)).

IV. TECHNOLOGY USE

The Library respects the confidentiality of computer users and does not require identification to use the Library computers or the Internet, which is available outside the Library as well as inside. However, the Library does require users to agree to these technology use policies when using library equipment:

1. Computers are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Individuals are allowed one half hour use per day, and additional time if no one is waiting.
2. All Library patrons, regardless of age, have equal access to Library materials, information, and technology.
3. Parents are encouraged to take an active role in their children's use of the Internet. It is the responsibility of parents and/or legal guardians to determine what their minor children may access. Minors are defined in this policy as children under the age of sixteen years.
4. 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 these laws is prohibited, including viewing child pornography, committing fraud, cyber-bullying, and uses that compromise the safety and security of minors. Additionally, users are prohibited from displaying obscene or objectionable material on computers within the library. If a user refuses to stop looking at such material when asked by a Library staff member or volunteers, the session will be terminated and police may be notified.
5. Users printing materials from the computers will be charged at the standard rate for use of the Library's copier.
6. The Library is not responsible for any damage or loss of data incurred while using library technology.
7. Use of the Internet cannot be considered secure; therefore, patrons should consider their Internet activity to be public information and limit activities accordingly.
8. The Library does not monitor or have control over the information accessed on the Internet.
9. Only Library staff may turn computers and printers on or off.
10. Users may use only those programs installed on each computer. Users may not alter any settings or delete or modify any files.
11. All applications shall be properly exited upon completion.
12. Users must leave the computers and software as they found them.
13. Computer or printer problems should be reported immediately to library staff.
14. Users are responsible for the cost of any damage to any Library equipment through negligent use. Parents or guardians are responsible for any damage their children incur.

V. 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 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.
3. Any questions or complaints about potential or perceived discrimination in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) shall 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).

VI. PATRON PRIVACY

The Library fully subscribes to the professional standards stated in the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association (see Attachment 1). The Library takes 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”). The Library protects each user’s right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired, or transmitted.

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 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 increases 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 the Library to review written policies and practices regarding privacy of patron records, to rethink and codify record-keeping practices, and to ensure that library staff have coherent procedures to follow should official requests for information identifying individuals come to the library, as explained in the following paragraphs.

1. Library User Record Creation and Retention

- a. 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 currently signed out or for which a bill might be outstanding). Only Library staff, Trustees, and volunteers have access to personally identifiable information stored in the library’s computer systems.
- b. 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.

- c. The staff and volunteers will be trained to understand library practices regarding privacy and confidentiality, and the Librarian will regularly review record-keeping practices with staff members, Trustees, and volunteers.
2. Disclosing Information about Library Users
 - a. Without binding legal demand, and/or extraordinary and emergent health or safety threats that merit disclosure in the judgment of the Board, the Library will not provide user information requested by a third party. “User Information” includes: name, mailing address, telephone, email address, and 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, database search records, interlibrary loan records, computer workstations used, and the content of computer activity.
 - b. The 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.
 - c. The Librarian is the only person authorized to handle requests for library records or information about library users. If the Librarian is absent, the individual working at the desk will take the contact information of the person requesting this information and pass it to the Librarian for further action.

VII. RULES OF CONDUCT

To provide a safe and welcoming environment for all 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. Refrain from behavior within the library or its 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, as is loud or boisterous behavior.
5. Treat Library materials and other library property with care.
6. To allow safe and open access to the Library, it is not permissible to loiter near the library's entrances.
7. Smoking, alcohol consumption, and the use of illegal drugs is prohibited on Library premises.
8. Appropriate attire, including shirts and shoes, must be worn at all times.
9. Extended cell phone use is limited to the foyer or outdoor areas.
10. Sporting equipment, scooters, skateboards, roller blades, roller skates, and bicycles may not be used on Library premises.
11. Only service animals are allowed in the Library.
12. Patrons having backpacks or oversized bags may be asked to check these bags in a designated space. The Library reserves the right to inspect personal belongings for concealed materials. Patrons refusing to allow library staff to inspect their belongings may be asked to leave the premises.
13. Any purposeful damage done to the material, equipment, furniture, building, or property of the library will not be tolerated.
14. Behavior diminishing the ability of other patrons to use the library in peace, including disruptive behavior and harassment, inappropriate public displays of affection, or any form of bullying, are prohibited.
15. Possession and/or threat of use of any dangerous weapon, or facsimile of any such weapon, are prohibited in the Library or on its premises. 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.
16. Neither the Library nor its staff is responsible for patron's personal belongings.

17. 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 on Library premises is not permitted.
18. Violations of rules for Library behavior could result in the patron being asked to leave, police being called, and/or the patron being banned from library property.

VIII. PATRON SAFETY

The Library strives to provide a barrier free access to its programs, activities, and services. The Board works diligently with the Thetford Library Federation to upgrade the physical facilities of the Bicentennial Building, which houses the Latham Library, to meet the requirements of the ADA. The Peabody Library building is under the sole management of the Peabody Library Board, which is responsible for safety of the building.

The Librarian will conduct a workshop with staff and volunteers at least annually to review patron safety. The workshop will include a fire alarm drill and evacuation of the building, a review of the alarm system, a demonstration of fire extinguishers, and a First Aid review. This workshop is held with members of the Thetford Fire Department, the FAST Squad, and the Thetford Police, as appropriate.

IX. CHILD SAFETY

The 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 tween/teen space are offered to help children develop a love of books and learning. The following policies are in place to protect children and others who use the Library.

1. Employees and volunteers who work with children alone or staff the Library when children are present without parents or guardians, are subject to appropriate background checks. The Personnel Policy covers background checks in more detail.
2. Responsibility for the behavior and well-being 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 may use, borrow, or access.
4. The Library does not act *in loco parentis*. Therefore, Library staff, volunteers, or Trustees do not take the place of a parent, act as a caregiver or babysitter, or assume responsibility for 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 adequately attended by a responsible person over the age of 15, but preferably an adult, such as 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. To ensure a 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 child will be invited to make a phone call to make immediate arrangements to get safely home.
10. 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.
11. The Library realizes that special circumstances may arise on occasion preventing a parent or guardian from picking a child up in a timely manner. The Librarian will address these issues on an individual basis.
12. The Library will notify the police if a child under 12 years of age 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.

X. BUILDING USE

1. Background

The Library has limited space for Library directed programs, readings, meetings, and group activities. Part of the Library's mission is to provide space for people in the Thetford community to meet together around their interests, and to connect those interests to library collections, services, and programs. Examples of activities and programs that align with the Library's mission include those of organizations such as the Thetford Historical Society and the Thetford Library Federation. The Library will, on occasion and at the discretion of the Librarian in consultation with the Board, co-sponsor activities by other organizations.

The organization hosting the activity assumes all responsibility for the behavior and actions of meeting attendees, and all liability for any damages that occur in the course of the activity.

The Library reserves the right to cancel a program due to inclement weather, since the Library cannot guarantee that the parking lot and entryway are safe at all times.

Permission for an organization to use Library spaces in no way constitutes an endorsement by the Library, the Board of Trustees, or the Town of Thetford of the policies or beliefs of that organization.

2. Permission

Organizations wishing to obtain permission to utilize the Library spaces must first consult with the Librarian to determine if the space available is suitable, and if the activity aligns with the Library's mission. It is preferred that activities take place during hours of regular library operation. Special permission is required to use the space outside of the regular hours of operation.

Once the Librarian has agreed to the use of the space, the organization must complete a Library Use Form, indicating the time, date and duration of the use, and acknowledgement that this Building Use policy has been read and will be followed, before final permission is granted.

Permission to use Library spaces includes permission to use the furniture. The organization should bring equipment needed for computer projection and items such as flip charts, unless arrangements are made to use the Library's equipment.

3. Requirements for use of the Library space:

- a. Reservations to use spaces shall be made no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting day and time, and no earlier than 6 months before the event.
- b. No admission fee shall be charged.
- c. No sales events, political events, events sponsored by political parties, fundraising events or religious events shall be permitted.
- d. At the meeting's conclusion, the facilities must be clean and in the same condition they were before use. If special permission to use the Library space outside of regular hours of operations was granted, the doors shall be locked, the lights turned out, and the key returned promptly to the appointed person.
- e. With permission, organizations using the Library may serve refreshments in designated areas, under the condition that the sponsoring organization will clean up completely, replace furniture as it was found before the activity, and place all

- trash and recycling in the proper bins.
- f. There shall be no smoking on Library property at any time.
- g. Nothing shall be taped onto the walls.
- h. No open flames or candles are allowed.

4. Notices and Publicity

Organizations may post notices of their events on the bulletin boards inside the entry and the bulletin board that is just outside the Library entry from the parking lot. The notices must be no larger than letter size. The bulletin board facing the Green is reserved for use by the librarians. The Library reserves the right to remove any notice deemed inappropriate.

The Librarian will review all notices and publicity to ensure that it is clear that the Library is not responsible for the event.

- 5. Failure to abide by these requirements could result in denial of further requests to use the Library spaces.

XI. EXHIBITS

1. Background

The Library has limited space for Library directed exhibits and displays. Part of the Library's mission is to provide space for people in the Thetford community to share their interests, and to connect those interests to library collections, services, and programs. To this end, the Library provides wall space for arts and crafts exhibits.

2. Permission

Individuals and organizations wishing to utilize the library for an exhibit must consult with the Librarian. The Librarian's permission will be based on the availability of space for the exhibit and the exhibit's alignment with the library's mission.

Once the Librarian has agreed to the use of the space for the exhibit, the organization or individual must complete a Library Use Form, indicating the time, date and duration of the exhibit, and acknowledgement that this Exhibit policy has been read and will be followed, before final permission is granted.

Permission for an individual or organization to use the Library exhibit spaces in no way constitutes an endorsement by the Library, the Board of Trustees, or the Town of Thetford of the content of the exhibits, the materials exhibited, or the exhibitors.

The Library reserves the right to move items within the exhibit or remove them from the exhibit entirely.

3. Requirements for use of the Library space:

- a. Library exhibits will be given priority.
- b. Exhibits are typically scheduled for one month, or as negotiated.
- c. Each exhibitor is responsible for hanging their own artwork, and for providing all necessary materials for organizing an exhibit. The Library has a supply of S-hooks and borderless glass clip frames that can be used for hanging artwork from the moldings.
- d. Publicity is the sole 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 Librarian. All arrangements must be approved by the Librarian at least two weeks prior to the planned event. The event must be open to the public without admission fee.
- f. Prices will not be posted on the items in the exhibit, except with the approval of the Librarian. 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 sold during its display may not be removed before the end of the exhibit without the permission of the Librarian.

4. The Library does not carry insurance to cover the loss of items included in an exhibit. The Library does not assume financial liability for loss or damage. Since the exhibit may be in an unsupervised area, exhibitors should consider providing private insurance if security is a concern.

5. Failure to abide by these requirements could result in denial of further requests to use the Library exhibit spaces.

XII. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

1. The Board recognizes the rights of all members to have free access to the widest diversity of views and expressions as guaranteed under the First Amendment to the Constitution.
 - a. Neither the Library staff nor the Board needs to endorse an 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 race, nationality, sexual orientation, or the social, political, or religious views of the authors.
2. The Librarian is responsible for selecting, acquiring, evaluating, and weeding all library materials in keeping with the annual budget. Guidance for collection development includes:
 - 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.
 - c. 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.
 - f. The Library will enter into consortium agreements when it is to the benefit of the library and provides enhanced services for our members. However, the Library does not have direct control of the acquisition of the materials available through these agreements.
3. The Library seeks to provide a collection of instructional, educational, and literature-based videos that enhance its nonfiction and fiction collections.
 - a. 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.
 - b. The Library video collection is not intended to supplement curriculum requirements of educational organizations within the community.

XIII. 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 must submit a formal, written Request for Reconsideration to the Librarian, 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.

XIV. GIFTS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

1. The Library is grateful to receive donations of money, books, and other materials. Books and other materials are received with the understanding that the gifts will be added to the library collection only if they fit the collection needs. While the wishes of the donor will be respected whenever feasible, the Library reserves the right to make whatever disposition seems most appropriate.
2. All offers of major gifts will be referred to the Board of Trustees for consideration and action. The Librarian will handle offers of gifts of books and materials.
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 Librarian and suggest an item or items.
4. All gifts are unrestricted 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 Librarian.
5. In accepting or considering gifts, the Board will consider any related costs such as maintenance, replacement, insurance, and other costs.

XV. POLICY REVIEW AND UPDATE

These policies shall be reviewed on a regular basis, no less than annually, to determine if modifications are needed. As appropriate, a committee shall be designated to draft appropriate revisions for consideration and approval by the Board.

PERSONNEL POLICIES

The Library's employees are the valuable asset, at all times worthy to be treated with respect. They are the Library's and Board's representatives to the community. They are expected to behave in a welcoming, mature, and professional manner, and to maintain a clean and orderly workspace. Dress shall be appropriate, neat and clean.

I. JOB PERFORMANCE AND SUPERVISION

Employees are provided a job description outlining the tasks, activities, regular working hours, and expectations of their positions. Supervision and performance reviews align with the job description. This job description will be reviewed regularly, not less than once every three years.

A subcommittee of the Board will conduct an annual performance review of each of the librarians before the start of the new calendar year. This meeting entails reviewing the job description, the previous year's goals and objectives and setting the coming year's goals and objectives. This meeting allows the board and the librarians to mutually assess and evaluate the library's priorities. The subcommittee then reports on the evaluation at the next board meeting where any new goals and objectives are entered into the minutes of the meeting.

The evaluation is discussed with the staff member, who signs the evaluation and, if s/he chooses, comments in writing. Copies of written evaluations are given to the staff member, and added to the employee's personnel file. A copy of the signed evaluation will be kept in a locked cabinet at the library.

The tools used for review are at the discretion of the Board.

Performance improvement may be suggested whenever the Board believes that performance is less than satisfactory and can be resolved through adequate counseling, as per:

Step 1: Verbal Counseling

Step 2: Written Counseling

Step 3: Written Warning

Step 4: Probation or Termination

II. NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT AND TERMINATION POLICY

The Library adheres to Vermont's at-will employment policy. This means there is no contract for continuous employment. Employees have the right to terminate employment without notice and without cause. The Library maintains the same right. A two week notice from either party is requested.

III. BENEFITS

Regular full-time employees (30 or more hours per week) are eligible for health insurance benefits.

IV. NON-DISCRIMINATION

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 physical or mental limitations of an otherwise qualified applicant or employee with a disability.

V. HARASSMENT, HAZING, AND BULLYING

The Library will not tolerate employee harassment, hazing or bullying, including sexual harassment, in the workplace. Acts and statements that seem harmless or amusing to some people may be offensive to others. It would be difficult to list all the circumstances that may constitute harassment, but if something happens within the work environment that makes the employee uncomfortable, the employee shall report it immediately following the procedures outlined under VI. Grievances. The Library is committed and required by law to take all appropriate steps to ensure that the matter is promptly investigated and resolved.

VI. GRIEVANCES

A grievance is a claim by an employee that there has been a violation, misinterpretation, or misapplication of the written terms and conditions of these policies. Under no circumstances shall any matter which is not governed by these policies be considered a grievance.

The following procedures shall be followed in the event of a grievance:

1. The employee shall present the grievance in writing to the Chair of the Board, who will arrange a meeting to take place within ten (10) days after receipt of the grievance. The grievant and the Board shall be present for the meeting. The Board will provide the grievant with a written decision regarding the grievance within five (5) days after the meeting. Such decision shall include the reasons upon which the decision is based. In the event that the Chair is unavailable, the employee may go directly to the Board.
2. Each grievance shall be submitted in writing, and shall include a statement of the issues being grieved and reference to specific provisions within the policies alleged to have been violated and the specific remedy sought. The grievant shall retain the right to withdraw the grievance at any time or at any step of the grievance procedure. The grievance may be withdrawn at any level without establishing precedent

VII. MAINTENANCE AND AVAILABILITY OF PERSONNEL RECORDS

Personnel records including performance appraisals, salary history, etc. are kept on record. Employees have the right to review their records, and should contact the Board to arrange a time to do so.

VIII. PAY DAYS AND TIMESHEETS

Employees are paid every other Wednesday. The work week for all employees begins on

Monday and concludes the following Sunday. Timesheets for the pay period shall be filled out by closing on the Saturday before Wednesday payroll. All questions relating to paychecks shall be addressed to the Treasurer.

IX. HOURS WORKED

As exempt employees, the librarians are afforded some flexibility in when they work. However, by the end of each pay period, it is expected that each employee will have satisfied his/her full workload requirement. It's expected that work hours may cover evenings or weekends to coincide with times the library is open.

A 15-minute break is provided for each four-hour period worked. Staff working a shift of five hours or longer should plan to take a half-hour paid meal break.

1. Unplanned Absences or Tardiness

In the event of an unplanned absence or tardiness, the employee shall alert another staff member or a member of the Board to ensure the library opens on time and is adequately staffed during opening hours. Repeated absences or tardiness that cause a disruption of library services may require a performance review.

2. Storm & Emergency Closings

The librarian on duty has the authority to close the library for inclement weather or in case of extended power outages after sunset. If the librarian closes the library due to weather, all other staff will be notified by 8 a.m. All staff will be paid for hours scheduled to work.

If the Library is open: Safety of the staff comes first. If the staff on duty believes that driving is or will soon become unsafe, the library shall be closed. Please alert patrons and post signs on all doors. Contact parents/caregivers of any children in the building. All staff members shall stay until all patrons have left.

X. LEAVE

1. Vacation Leave

All employees working 15 or more hours a week are eligible for vacation benefits. Benefits are paid according to the years of service to the library and the weekly hours worked. Vacation hours are accrued on a prorated basis during each pay period after an initial six-month probationary period. Vacation time will not accrue while an employee is on unpaid leave status, long-term disability, or worker's compensation.

Vacation accrual, prorated according to hours worked, is as follows:

- 1 year of service – 1 week of vacation
- 2-4 years of service – 2 weeks of vacation
- 5-9 years of service – 3 weeks of vacation
- 10+ years of service – 4 weeks of vacation

1 week of vacation time may be carried over into the next calendar year with prior approval Board. Vacation requests shall be submitted to the Board at least three weeks in advance. If more than one staff member requests the same week(s), preference will be given to the staff member with seniority.

2. Holiday Leave

The Board grants employees eleven (11) paid holidays. The holidays are New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Indigenous People's Day, Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve Day, and Christmas Day.

Holidays, in terms of time off, that fall on a Saturday or Sunday can be used the Friday before that day or the Monday after.

3. Personal Leave

After successfully completing the six-month probationary period, employees are eligible for two days of personal leave per calendar year. Personal leave is prorated based on the hours per week the employee works. It must be used within the calendar year and does not carry over. Personal leave has no cash value. An employee wishing to take personal leave must notify the Chair of the Board of Trustees in advance and ensure appropriate coverage.

4. Sick Leave

Employees will be entitled to ten (10) sick days per year, cumulative up to twenty-one (21) days for personal illness. A maximum of five (5) days of sick leave may be used for absence due to serious illness in the employee's immediate family (i.e., spouse, children, or others for whom the employee is personally responsible). The Board may require medical verification of any prolonged or repeated illness prior to the payment of sick leave benefits. Sick leave has no cash value upon termination.

5. Bereavement Leave

Employees shall be granted up to three (3) days of paid leave per instance, in the event of a death of a member of the employee's immediate family. Immediate family shall be defined as the employee's spouse, child, mother, father, sister, and brother or as accepted by the Chair of the Board. Notification of the need to use such leave shall be provided to the Chair of the Board as soon as it is practical.

6. Family Leave

Upon request, Family Leave without pay shall be granted upon request to an employee who has completed one year of continuous service. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the employee must give written notice thirty days in advance of the request to take such leave, and the expected duration of the absence. Accrued sick leave, vacation time and personal days may be used for part of the leave, but the entire leave may not exceed one year.

XI. JURY DUTY

If an employee is required to serve on a jury, or is required to appear in court, in person, in response to a jury summons, or is required to report for jury examination, or to qualify for jury duty, then the employee shall be granted time off with no loss of pay (salary payments to be reduced by any stipend, apart from mileage reimbursement, provided by the court). To be eligible for this leave, the employee must submit written evidence of his/her call to duty, the date and time spent on duty.

XII. ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS/SEMINARS

Employees shall request Board permission to participate in meetings and conferences of professional organizations related to the Library during regular working hours. Such activity is considered as continuing education and is considered relevant to the development and promotion of the Library. Such activity is permitted as long as it does not interfere unduly with the regular Library operations. A brief written report on the conference/meeting shall be presented to the Board.

XIII. AUTOMOBILE USE REIMBURSEMENT

The use of personal automobiles for work related activities will be reimbursed at the maximum allowable IRS per mile deduction. Carpooling is encouraged as is the use of applications such as Go to Meeting, Zoom and Skype. No more than 7.5 hours of work time may be used to attend a workshop or conference per day. If this is a time in which employees are not scheduled to work, they shall contact the Board.

XIV. INTERNET/ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

The Library owns the rights to all data and files in any computer, network, or other information system used in the Library. To prevent computer viruses from being transmitted through the system, no unauthorized downloading of software or updates to existing software is permitted.

XV. CONFLICT of INTEREST

Article 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the business of the Library will be conducted in such a way that no employee, volunteer or Trustee will gain a personal or financial advantage from their work for the Library and so that the public trust will be preserved. It is also the intent of this policy to ensure that all decisions made by Library employees are based on the best interests of the Library and members at large.

Article 2. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

a. "Conflict of interest" means a direct personal or financial interest of a Library employee, volunteer and/or Trustee, their immediate family, business associate, employer or employee, in the outcome of Library business.

b. "Emergency" means an immediate threat or peril to the public health, safety, or welfare.

c. "Immediate family" means parents, stepparents, siblings, step siblings, spouses, children, stepchildren, foster children, in-laws, grandparents, great grandparents, step-great grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews.

Article 3. Disqualification

An employee, volunteer or Trustee shall not personally or through any member of their family, household, business associate, employer or employee, represent, appear for, or negotiate in a private capacity on behalf the Library.

Article 4. Disclosure and Recusal

An employee, volunteer or Trustee who has reason to believe that they have or may have a conflict of interest must disclose such conflict to the Board. Members of the Library Board have the right to inquire of employees, volunteers or Trustees regarding a real or perceived conflict of interest and to require that person to desist if the majority determines there is a real or perceived conflict of interest.

An employee, volunteer or Trustee shall recuse themselves from any official action, such as a vote, if they have a real or apparent conflict of interest in the matter under consideration.

Article 5. Enforcement

Disciplinary action shall be taken against any employee, volunteer or Trustee who violates this policy.

Article 6. Exception for an emergency

The provisions of Article 3 and Article 4 shall not apply if the Board determines that an emergency exists and that operations of the Library otherwise could not take place. In such cases, an employee, volunteer or trustee who has reason to believe they have a conflict of interest shall disclose such conflict, as provided in Article 4.

XVI. SOCIAL MEDIA

Article 1: Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide standards and procedures for the appropriate use of Library social media platforms. This policy gives direction to Library employees, volunteers, appointees, and other authorized users of Library social media. This policy also creates guidelines for any public user who accesses or posts content on the Library's social media.

While this policy generally applies to the most popular platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, TikTok), social media is an evolving communications tool and that new platforms may become available over time. The Library may utilize social media to communicate information related to the business of the Library directly to the public as well as to provide members of the public the opportunity to post content or participate in discussions concerning Library business, including operations and services provided by the Library. The Library encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the Library's mission, and to the overall vibrancy of its community and degree of participation by its members, where appropriate.

The Library social media manager and moderator is the Librarian or designate.

Article 2: Definitions

The following definitions shall apply to this policy:

Content means any post, writing, comment, remark, response, material, document, photograph, graphic, or other information of any kind, regardless of form that is created, posted, shared, distributed, or transmitted via the Library's social media platform.

Designated agent means an individual designated by the Board, usually the Librarian, to receive and respond to notifications of claimed copyright infringement.

Library electronic equipment means all Library electronic equipment - including computers, cell phones, smart phones, pagers, any associated hardware or software, and any other Library equipment - that may be utilized to send or receive electronic communications.

Library social media or Library social media platform means the official social media platform of the Library.

Library social media moderator or moderator means an individual designated by the Board to monitor, manage, and oversee Library social media content, usually the Librarian or designate.

Library website or official Library website means the official website or domain of the Library.

Social media platform or social media means a form of information-sharing platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, MySpace, Google and Yahoo Groups, Wikipedia, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Flickr, Twitter, LinkedIn, or other news media or content-sharing/blogging/service) on which online content and dialogue around specific issues or area of interest are created.

User means a member of the general public who accesses, posts, creates, distributes, shares, or transmits content to a Library social media platform.

Article 3: Conduct of Library employees

Those persons designated and authorized to utilize Library social media do so with the understanding that they represent the Library via social media outlets and must always conduct themselves appropriately. Library employees must also consider content carefully, understanding that it will be widely accessible, not retractable, and retained or referenced for a long period of time. Library employees use Library social media in their official capacity, in the scope of their employment or while on duty, an administrator or as a responder to content, and so must:

- Make their name and title available when they post content in their capacity as a Library employee. Library employees may only post and respond to content on those matters that fall within their job description or roles and responsibilities.
- Keep postings factual, accurate, and up to date. If a mistake is made, admit to it and post a correction as soon as possible.
- Reply to content in a timely manner when a response is appropriate.
- Never post content on anything related to legal matters, litigation, or any parties with whom the Library may be in litigation without prior specific approval from the Board.
- Library employees are expressly prohibited from disclosing any confidential information via content posted to Library social media.
- Refrain from expressing personal opinions or positions regarding policies, programs, or practices of the Library, the Board, other public agencies, political organizations, private companies, or non-profit groups. Under no circumstances should a Library employ post, or direct another Library employee to post, a personal opinion or statement held by an individual Library official.

Library employees should have no expectation of privacy regarding the information posted on Library social media nor in anything created, sent, or received on Library electronic equipment. The Board may investigate and monitor any transaction, communication, and transmission to ensure compliance with this policy and the use of its equipment.

Some kinds of content are not permitted on any Library social media platform

and shall be subject to removal by the Library social media moderator, such as:

- pornographic language or images;
- content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation;
- solicitations of commerce, including advertising of any business or product for sale;
- links to any unauthorized site or content;
- the promotion or endorsement of a political campaign or candidate;
- personally identifiable information or sensitive personal information that, if released, violates federal or state law;
- conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
- information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- malicious or harmful software (malware);
- defamatory or personal attacks;
- threats of violence or threats to public safety;
- confidential, private, or exempt information or records as defined by state or federal law;
- conduct that violates any federal, state, or local law;
- copyrighted materials in violation of state or federal law; or
- content that is clearly unrelated to the subject matter of any post made on the platform by or on behalf of the Library.

The Library social media manager is authorized to remove content or links that do not conform with the requirements of this policy in a neutral and consistent manner. Users should understand that third parties having control of a social media platform may edit or delete content independently of the Library, and without the consent, authority, or control of the Library.

Users may contact the Library social media moderator at any time to identify content or other conduct on the Library social media that violates this policy. All content posted to any Library social media platform is bound by that platform's applicable statement of rights and responsibilities or terms of service. The Library reserves the right to report any violation of that platform's or site's statement of rights and responsibilities or terms of service to the platform's or site's provider with the intent of the provider taking appropriate and reasonable responsive action.

Article 4: Account Management

Library employees and volunteers may only establish or use Library social media on behalf of the Library after approval by the Librarian or their authorized representative or designee. The Librarian will review all requests to contribute to

Library social media and has the sole authority to authorize their use and establish and/or terminate Library social media accounts. The Librarian or designate will be responsible for maintaining a list of all social media platforms in use, the names of all administrators of these accounts, as well as the associated usernames and active passwords.

All Library social media platforms shall be created by a duly designated Library information technology (IT) officer with the approval and under the direction of the Librarian or designate.

Article 5: Use of Personal Social Media

No employee or volunteer shall use their private social media accounts to post any message deemed inappropriate, such as hate-speech, or messages that would give cause to hold the Library, or its Board, in disrepute.

Article 6: Copyright Infringement Notification

The Library complies with the provisions of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998(DMCA). Federal law makes it illegal to download, upload, or distribute in any fashion copyrighted material in any form without permission or a license to do so from the copyright holder.

The Library respects the intellectual property of others and requires users of Library social media to do the same. In accordance with the DMCA and other applicable law, the Library may remove content on Library social media that is copyrighted and may deny access to the Library social media users who are deemed to be copyright infringers pursuant to this policy.

The following notification shall be made accessible on all Library social media platforms and on the Library's official website:

If you believe that any material on the Library official website or Library social media platforms infringes on any copyright which you own or control, or that any link on Library social media directs users to another website that contains material that infringes on any copyright that you own or control, you may file a notification of such infringement with the designated agent as set forth below. Notifications of claimed copyright infringement must be sent to the Library's designated agent, for notice of claims of copyright infringement.

Article 7: Enforcement

Employees found in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment in compliance with the Library's personnel policy, employment contract, or collective bargaining agreement, as appropriate.

XVII. BACKGROUND CHECKS

All employees and all volunteers who work with vulnerable populations such as children, and work when there is no other staff person in the library, shall be subject to an appropriate background check through the Vermont Crime Information Center's program for agencies that serve vulnerable populations, at no cost to the employee or volunteer.

Attachment 1: Acknowledgement of reading the Library's Policies

I, _____, acknowledge that:

- A. I received a copy of the Library's policies on _____ (date) and it is my responsibility to familiarize myself with the sections that pertain to my position, as directed by the Board and Librarian.
- B. I understand that it is my responsibility to ask questions if there is anything in the policies that I do not understand.
- C. I understand that the language used in this personnel policy is not intended to create, nor shall it be construed to create, a contract of employment between myself and the Library.
- D. I understand that this policy replaces any and all prior versions, and that the Board reserves the right to add, amend or discontinue any of the provisions of this policy for any reason or none at all, in whole or in part, with due notice given to all affected parties.

Employee's or Volunteer's Signature

Date

Attachment 2: 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 3: 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 4: The Freedom to Read Statement

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

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

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

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

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

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of

limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

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

We therefore affirm these propositions:

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

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

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

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

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

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to

whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

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

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

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 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](#)
[National Council of Teachers of English](#)
[The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression](#)

**Adopted by the Latham Library Board of Trustees
July, 2021**

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