

PONTIAC PUBLIC LIBRARY COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

I. Introduction

Mission

The goal of the policy is to provide a well-balanced and broad collection of materials for all age groups, diverse types of material based on demand of citizens, and materials for the education and recreation of the community.

The responsibility for selection and withdrawal rests with the Library Director who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Library Board. The parameters of this collection policy will compliment the mission put forth by the Pontiac Public Library: “The Pontiac Public Library serves as a community information center committed to providing its richly diverse community with comprehensive print and electronic collections, and innovative technologies and programs designed to enrich life, stimulate intellectual curiosity and encourage life-long learning.”

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to guide the staff/director of the Pontiac Public Library in the selection and withdrawal of materials as well as to inform the public about the principles upon which selection judgments are made. Within this policy “selection” refers to the decision that must be made to add materials to the collection or retain materials already in the collection. The term “withdrawal” refers to permanently removing an item from the collection.

General Principles

Basic to this policy is the Library Bill of Rights as adopted by the American Library Association. The Library Bill of Rights affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services:

1. Books and other resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
2. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be prescribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information.
4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgement of free expression and free access to ideas.
5. A persons’ right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, views, or disabilities.
6. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Also basic to Pontiac Public Library's Collection Development policy is the Freedom to Read Act:

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

The selection and use of library materials is done on a purely individual basis, with each patron determining the appropriate resources for their needs. The Pontiac Public Library recognizes the fact that no one can restrict the freedom of others to read or use library materials. The Library does not endorse or advocate the viewpoints presented in the collection. Responsibility of the reading habits of children rests with the child's parent(s) or legal guardians. Selection should not be inhibited by the possibility that books may inadvertently come into the possession of children.

Selection of material of a sexual nature should be made on the basis of whether a book presents life in its true proportions, whether characters and situations are realistically presented, and whether the book has literary value.

Community

Pontiac, Michigan is a unique city, representing a wide range of cultures. A 2006 estimate by the United State Census Bureau placed its population at 67,124. The demographics of the city show a diverse population, with approximately half of city residents identifying as Black, approximately one-third as White, and just over 16% Hispanic or Latino. In addition to these population statistics guiding the collection development process, the library must also consider the fact that a quarter of the population does not possess a high school diploma, and more than a quarter of the population is below the poverty line.

Supplemental Resources

In the interest of getting the most from the library's allocated collection development budget, alternate access to information will be considered.

The city of Pontiac, Michigan is the county seat of Oakland County. In addition to the Pontiac Public Library, the Oakland County Library is also located in the city of Pontiac. The resources of the county library include an extensive law collection in the Adams-Pratt Library and special technologies in the Library for the Visually and Physically Impaired.

Pontiac Public Library is part of The Library Network, a public library cooperative comprised of approximately 65 libraries in southeast Michigan. With this partnership, the Pontiac Public Library and its cardholders have access to almost 70 databases. Additionally, the library participates in the interlibrary loan system established by The Library Network.

II. General Elements

General Nature

The general nature of the Pontiac Public Library collection is to maintain a collection of high quality, contemporary materials. In addition to current materials, an archival collection of materials focused on local history is housed in the library.

Responsibility

The responsibility for selection and withdrawal rests with the Library Director who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Library Board. The Outreach Librarian, Adult Services Librarian, and Youth Services Librarian will all participate in the collection development process, with specific collections assigned to each individual.

Selection

The following criteria will be considered in all collection development decisions. Non-book materials will be governed by the same principles and criteria applied to book purchases, including all media, realia, and electronic resources.

- Usefulness in meeting community needs/demands

- Accuracy and impartiality
- Attention of critics, reviewers, and the public
- Subject matter (relationship to other materials on the same subject is considered in order to keep balance within the collection)
- Cost
- Currency of information
- Encouragement of the joy of reading
- Local importance and/or historical value
- Physical durability and quality of the format
- Reputation of the author or publisher
- Format
- Quality of organization, readability, and style
- Accessibility of material in other area libraries
- Uniqueness or special feature

In addition to the above criteria, selection will be aided by knowledge of publishing trends. In order to stay abreast of such trends, professionals engaging in the selection process will examine reviews from reputable sources, such as *The New York Times*, *Library Journal*, and *Booklist*, as well selected, quality bibliographies.

Donations

The Library accepts donations. When items are donated, they immediately become Pontiac Public Library property. The Library, and only the Library, will make decisions as to how these materials are used, if at all. Materials that meet the same standards as those required of purchased materials are more likely to be added to the collection.

Weeding

Weeding is selection in reverse, also referred to as “deselection,” and enhances the reputation and reliability of any collection. Discarding or weeding of materials is the best and most economical utilization of space.

Materials may be withdrawn on the basis of the following:

- Condition – worn, damaged, or soiled items
- Currency – materials containing obsolete or inaccurate information
- Demand – items no longer used, items used at a frequency that no longer requires multiple copies
- Covered – topic is sufficiently covered by other collection materials
- Fitting – material does not fit into the scope of the library collection

It is not the Library’s policy to automatically replace all materials withdrawn, lost and/or stolen. Replacement decisions are made using the same selection criteria used for all materials.

Mending practices are implemented at the discretion of the library and take place as necessary. Only materials that still fit the current parameters of the collection are considered for mending.

Materials withdrawn from the collection will be disposed of in the most appropriate manner, including but not limited to, donation to local organizations, included in the Friends of the Pontiac Public Library bookstore, and recycled.

Preservation

The funding put into the library's collection development will be optimized by taking steps to increase the longevity of an item. Efforts will be made to order items of the highest quality per budget allocation, such as opting for hardcover books of titles that will be in high demand and may have a lengthy shelf life. Additionally, items that are in fragile condition, or hold a high potential for theft will be placed in the closed shelving section of the collection.

All efforts will be made to maintain an appropriate environment for the longevity of library materials. Books on shelves will be placed in an upright position, as to decrease strain on the book's binding, and given the appropriate amount of space.

All damages items will not be repaired for the collection. Instead, the decision to keep items that are in poor condition will rest upon the value of the item to the collection in relation to the potential cost of repairing the item.

Intellectual Freedom and Censorship

In all instances the library defends the principles of the Freedom to Read Act (see section I of this policy) and the use of library materials. No materials are judged on the basis of the author's race, nationality, or political, social, or religious beliefs. Materials are judged as entire works, not on isolated passages or sections.

Patrons may request reconsideration of a book previously selected by use of the "Request for Reconsideration" form. The Library Director will review the request, add the request to upcoming Board meeting, and notify the customer of the outcome of the consideration.

Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials

Requested by: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Representing: Self _____ or an Organization _____

Name of Organization Representing: _____

Item to be Reconsidered:

Author: _____

Title: _____

How was the item brought to your attention? _____

Do you know what the literary critics and reviewers think of this item? Yes____ No____

Have you read/viewed/listened to the entire item? Yes____ No____

What, in your opinion, is the theme of the item? _____

What is your objection to the item? (please cite pages) _____

In what section is the item housed? Adult____ Teen____ Juvenile____

What do you feel might be the result of reading/viewing/listening to the item? _____

What are your recommendations for the item? _____

Signature of Requestor _____

Name of staff member receiving completed form: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for your interest in the library's collection. Although careful consideration is given to all materials before purchase, we are always willing to re-evaluate them.
You will be notified of the outcome of this consideration.

III. Description of Format and General Collection

The goal of Pontiac Public Library's collection development is to collect a wide range of materials that enhance the lives of its patrons. The format purchased is determined in regards to the frequency at which the item will be used and the financial situation of the library budget. New formats will be considered for purchase as demand and use dictates.

The Pontiac Public Library has a special collection of historical documents focused on the local area. This collection is kept in closed stacks, and does not circulate.

Newspaper subscriptions are limited to the *Oakland County Press* and *Detroit News*. Hard copies of these newspapers are kept for 3 months, and then recycled. Additional newspapers are available via the Internet, including The Library Network databases. Furthermore, the Library maintains a microfilm collection of *The Oakland Press* (current title) covering most dates from January 1835. Other microfilms kept at the Pontiac Public Library include *The Pontiac Times*, *Auburn Argus*, and *Pontiac-Waterford Times*. Equipment necessary to view this format is available for use at the library.

Magazine titles collected by the library represent titles with a high level of notoriety and those that are representative of the community we are serving. The newest issue of a magazine cannot circulate, but can be used in the library.

The Library buys new videos in DVD format only. We recognize the value of the current VHS tapes that are in the collection, and will continue to circulate this format while it is still useful and our patrons express an interest.

The Library added music CDs to its collection in January 2010.

Playaways include a pre-loaded digital text and ear buds. They are kept behind the Circulation Desk for browsing purposes, with the titles clearly displayed. In addition to this electronic material, the library collection does include MP3s and Downloadable texts via our catalog. Access to these materials is obtained via the Library's iBistro Catalog.

IV. Description and Goals for General Collection

In order to ensure the collection of the Pontiac Public Library can serve its community to the highest degree of quality, continuous evaluation of the collection must take place. During the evaluation process, staff will make use of circulation statistics, literary reviews, and patron feedback in the decision process.

V. Policy Review and Record of Adoption

Beginning in 2010, the Pontiac Public Library Collection Development Policy will be reviewed every 3 years. At these intervals, the librarians, under the direction of the Library Director, will meet in order to review the policy and make any necessary amendments. Revisions will be presented to the Library Board by the Library Director.