

## **POLICIES OF THE BENNINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY**



Bennington Public Library  
14401 N 156<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bennington, NE 68007  
402-238-2202  
<https://benningtonlibrary.org/>

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**Library Mission Statement:**

The mission of the Bennington Public library is to inspire lifelong learning, advance knowledge, and strengthen community. To deliver on this promise we rely on three great resources—our staff, our collection, and our physical space.

**Library Vision Statement:**

The Bennington Public Library creates opportunities to engage, connect, and discover.

**PURPOSE**

The Bennington Public Library provides service to individuals of the community, both adult and children. Its objective is to meet and/or exceed the minimum standards as described in the [NEBRASKA PUBLIC LIBRARY ACCREDITATION](#) as prepared and received from the Nebraska Library Commission. The function of the library is to assemble, organize, and preserve printed material and non-printed material within its physical and financial means.

**SCOPE**

The Bennington Public Library attempts to serve its public for pleasure and basic information. Special emphasis is given to children's needs and encouraging the public to read.

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The board of trustees is made up of five residents of the city of Bennington. One board member may reside outside the city limits but within Douglas County. Board members serve staggered terms of four years not to exceed eight years unless amended by a vote of the board. Officers will be elected yearly at the first board meeting of the calendar year. Board meetings should be held monthly.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The library board is to oversee and set policy with the state guidelines for the operation of the library. The board is responsible to the community. It is up to the board to carry out a responsible policy that provides for the needs of the community through a sound fiscal and management policy. Other duties are highlighted in [BENNINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY OPERATIONS](#).

## **INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM IN LIBRARIES POLICY**

### **Background**

The Bennington Public Library is committed to facilitating access to constitutionally-protected information, without censorship or scrutiny. In a democratic society, free and open access to information gives people the resources to participate in the political process and strive towards self-improvement. By collecting, organizing, and disseminating human expression in all its recorded formats, libraries are our society's most visible commitment to free speech, self-education and self-government. The Library board of trustees has adopted the American Library Association's (ALA) position on intellectual freedom, as stated in the ALA's Library Bill of Rights (Supplement A).

### **Policy Statement**

In accordance with the ALA's Library Bill of Rights (Supplement A), the Library affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide its services to patrons and the community.

- 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.
- 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.
- Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
- A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- 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.

### **Applicability**

This policy guides the Library in every aspect of the programming and services it provides to its patrons.

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM IN LIBRARIES POLICY  
Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Bennington Public Library 3/28/2023

## **CIRCULATION AND BORROWING PRIVILEGES**

### **SERVICES**

The library has accepted the [LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS](#) and endorses the [FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT](#) and the [FREEDOM TO VIEW STATEMENT](#) of the Council of the American Library Association. The library staff and the board of trustees shall uphold these statements as it provides the following: books, magazines, newspapers, large print books, video and audio tapes, interlibrary loan, storytime, summer reading, special programs, service to the aged, displays, a copy machine, and any service which may be made available in cooperation with the network systems and the Nebraska Library Commission. Services which are financially feasible and timely may be offered by the library staff. Knowledge of these services will be made known to the trustees.

### **Patronage**

The services as stated above are available to those who have registered and been approved for library material loan privileges.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY OF PATRON INFORMATION**

The Bennington Public Library protects the confidentiality of patron information as part of its commitment to intellectual freedom. Confidentiality and privacy are essential to free speech, free thought and free association.

### **Borrower Records**

Confidentiality extends to all records with identifying information about patrons, including their requests for information and materials and their loan transactions. It also includes their use of Library computers and the online sites and resources they access. The Library will keep patron information confidential and will not disclose this information except as necessary for the proper operation of the Library, upon consent of the patron, pursuant to subpoena or court order, or as otherwise required by law. This confidentiality is protected by Section 84-712.05 (13) of the Revised Statutes of Nebraska.

### **Third Party Partners**

The Library works with third party partners to provide certain services to Library patrons. Information a patron submits to the Library may be provided to these third parties so they can assist the Library in providing certain services. Patrons are encouraged to read and become familiar with the privacy policies of these third party partners.

### **External Websites**

The Library website also contains links to external websites not maintained by the Library. The Library cannot be responsible for patron privacy when visiting other websites. Once patrons link to another website, they are no longer subject to the Library's Confidentiality of Patron Information policy, but the privacy policy or statement, if any, of the website they have linked to.

This policy applies to all Library patrons. The parents or legal guardians of patrons under the age of 13 may have access to their child's borrowing record. Otherwise, this policy fully applies to minor patrons.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF PATRON INFORMATION POLICY  
Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Bennington Public Library 3/28/2023

## **LIBRARY CARD POLICY**

Bennington Public Library serves, at no charge, all residents and property owners of Douglas County, and all students attending and persons employed by any Bennington school (public or private). Anyone who lives or owns property within the boundaries of Douglas County or anyone who has a business within the boundaries of Douglas County is eligible to receive a Bennington Public Library card without cost. Children and Bennington School personnel who do not live within the City limits of Bennington or Douglas County, but who live within the boundaries of the Bennington Public School District are eligible to receive a card without cost.

A mailing address of Bennington, Nebraska is not sufficient to determine eligibility for free privileges. The resident address of the applicant or the property/business owned by the applicant must be within Douglas County for free library privileges. Funding for the Bennington Public Library is funded through the tax dollars of City of Bennington and unincorporated Douglas County residents.

All applicants who wish full services must provide photo identification with current street address verification. A parent can show identification and address verification for his/her child.

### **Non-Douglas County residents**

Anyone who does not live in Douglas County may purchase an annual (12-month) non-resident membership for \$30, which entitles each member of a household to library privileges for a 12-month period.

Each household member should be present to receive his/her library card.

### **Forms of acceptable identification (Picture ID required for check-out privileges):**

- Current Nebraska state ID
- Current driver's license or automobile registration
- Printed checks (personal, payroll)
- Utility bills dated within the past 30 days
- Business correspondence on official letterhead dated within the past 30 days
- Current lease, mortgage papers, or rent receipts that officially state the property address
- Current BPL library card of another family member

### **Library Card Renewal**

Library cards for residents are renewable every two years. At the time of account renewal, the customer must appear in person and re-verify all account information, as well as pay any fines/fees due. A parent can show identification and address verification for his/her child.

### **Circulation**

Patrons should present their library card at time of check-out. If they do not have their library card, staff will ask the patron to verify identifiable information contained in their library record. Most library materials are circulated for a two-week period. Circulated material may be

renewed up to three (3) times as long as the item has no active holds. Reminders to borrowers regarding overdue materials are a courtesy service.

### **Fees**

Overdue fines are not charged on most materials. Fees will be charged for materials lost or damaged beyond repair. Charges will be based on the replacement value of the item. A processing fee may be added to the cost of replacement. If an item is more than 30 days overdue a replacement fee will automatically be charged to your account. When the total charges on your account reach \$30, your borrowing privileges may be suspended. Once an item is returned, the replacement fee for that item will be removed. Once the total charges on your account are under \$30 your borrowing privileges will be reinstated.

### **Interlibrary Loan Borrowing**

Interlibrary loan material may be available. Patrons are limited to no more than two interlibrary loan requests at a given time.

## LIBRARY CARD POLICY

Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Bennington Public Library 1/24/2023



## **COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

The Bennington Public Library is a public institution that selects materials to support its mission to inspire lifelong learning, advance knowledge and strengthen the community. It attempts to meet the informational, cultural, recreational and educational needs of all the community's residents. The Library maintains an open, unbiased environment and upholds the public's right of access to information. Collection development is an ongoing activity. The collection evolves as the needs of the community change and as technology provides additional alternative resources.

### **Principles**

In selecting materials, the Library attempts to meet the needs of all members of the community, reflecting a variety of interests, viewpoints, ages, backgrounds and education levels. The Library is guided by the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights (Supplement A) and the principles outlined in the Freedom to Read (Supplement B) and Freedom to View (Supplement C) statements of the American Library Association. Patron access to the collection will not be limited or denied because of origin, race, religion, age, background, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or views. Also, these factors shall not be cause to exclude any materials, authors, artists or other creators from the collection.

Recognizing that some materials may be viewed as controversial by individual citizens, it is the responsibility of the individual library user to select those materials which suit his/her taste. Selection of library materials will not be restricted by the possibility that materials could come into a child's possession. Supervising the use of library materials is the sole responsibility of the parent or guardian, not of the library staff.

### **Selection responsibility and criteria**

The Library Director and other designated staff members have the responsibility to select materials and electronic resources by following professional practices and procedures.

The collection is for patrons of all ages, cultures, interests, educations and opinions. Therefore, selections are based on general knowledge of subject areas, familiarity with the materials in the collections, an awareness of the selection tools available and recognition of community needs. The materials must be considered in terms of their own merit and intended audience. A balanced collection is achieved through the diversity of materials rather than an equal number of items. A variety of aids are considered prior to selection including standard review sources, publishers' catalogs, direct examination and patron requests. Selection of materials does not imply agreement with or approval of the viewpoints expressed. All selections must meet at least some of the following criteria to be considered for selection:

- Popular Demand/Appeal - current or anticipated
- Subject
- Availability - format and ease of use
- Representation of diverse points of view in relation to existing collection

- Budget/cost
- Suitability of form for library use
- Content fits within the Library's mission and strategic plan
- Relevance to community needs - local, current or historical
- Patron requests

### **Interlibrary Loan**

Because of limited budget and space, the library cannot provide all materials that are requested. Therefore, interlibrary loan is used to obtain those materials from other libraries that are beyond the scope of the Bennington Public Library's collection.

### **Collection Maintenance and Weeding**

The Bennington Public Library continually withdraws items from the collection, basing its decisions on a number of factors, including publishing date, frequency of circulation, community interest, and availability of newer or more valid materials. Items dealing with local history are an exception, as are certain classics and award-winning books. Fiction that was once popular but is no longer in demand and non-fiction books that are no longer useful are withdrawn from the collection. Final responsibility for removal of these materials and the manner of their disposition rests with the Library Director.

The replacement of specific items is made where the materials are of continuing interest. General collection development to replenish subject and interest areas is undertaken in accordance with the selection criteria stated in this policy.

The withdrawn books will be offered to the Friends of the Bennington Area Libraries for their book sales. The proceeds from such sales are used for the benefit of the Bennington Public Library. Books that are not sold will be disposed of at the discretion of the Friends of the Bennington Area Libraries.

### **Gifts and Donations**

The Bennington Public Library accepts gifts and donations with the understanding that the library retains unconditional ownership and makes the final decision on acceptance, use and disposition of all donated items and funds.

Donations are accepted without restrictions or special conditions and immediately become the property of the library. Donations need to be clean and in good physical condition and they cannot be returned. The library does not accept old textbooks or encyclopedias. Gifted materials are subject to the same selection policy principles which govern purchased materials. Materials not added will be offered to the Friends of the Bennington Area Libraries for their book sales. Any items given to the Friends of the Bennington Area Libraries will become their property and it will be their responsibility to dispose of any unused property.

By law, the library is not allowed to appraise the value of donated materials, though it can provide an acknowledgment of receipt of the items if requested by the donor.

Unless specifically solicited by the library, gifts to the library for memorials or donations are accepted through the Friends of the Bennington Area Libraries. Requests for specific titles or

items are subject to the same criteria as listed in this policy. However, every attempt will be made to accommodate the donors' wishes.

**Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials**

Library users wishing to have specific materials &/or items removed from the collection should use a Request for Reconsideration form, which may be obtained by contacting the Library Director. Upon completion of the form, and it's being returned to the Library Director, the request will be considered by the Board of Trustees.

Materials &/or items under review will remain in the circulating collection until the reconsideration process is complete.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Reviewed and reapproved by the Board of Trustees of the Bennington Public Library 4/5/2023

Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Bennington Public Library 7/27/2020

## **PROGRAMMING POLICY**

The Bennington Public Library offers programs intended to further the Library's mission to inspire lifelong learning, advance knowledge, and strengthen community.

### **Program Selection**

- The library uses staff expertise and facilities in developing and implementing programming, as well as actively partnering with other community organizations and individuals for on or off-site programming.
- The library does not knowingly discriminate in its programming.
- Library sponsorship of a program does not constitute an endorsement of the content of the program or the views expressed by facilitator or participants.
- The library welcomes groups and organizations to reserve meeting spaces at our facilities and requires patrons to comply with the Meeting Room policies.
- The library reserves the right to decide if/when to promote programming conducted by outside organizations.

### **Programming Guidelines**

- Programs are not used for commercial, religious, partisan purposes, or the solicitation of business.
- All library programs are free and open to the public.
- Program participants should expect that photographs will be taken at events and used on the Library's social internet sites and/or website.
- The library reserves the right to deny attendance to anyone who is disruptive to audience members or program facilitators.
- If children are attending programs without parental supervision they are expected to behave appropriately. If the child is endangering others, exhibiting inappropriate behavior, or appears frightened/scared the caregiver of the child will be called. If they are not reached, police will be called to provide assistance.
- Registration for programs may be required for planning purposes or if space is limited.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Bennington Public Library 4/25/2023

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### **Purpose**

The mission of the Bennington Public Library is to inspire lifelong learning, advance knowledge, and strengthen community. The use of social media can further that mission. Therefore, Bennington Public Library has adopted this Social Media Policy to establish acceptable behavior for the public interaction via official library social media accounts.

Bennington Public Library has established official social media accounts to inform the general public about services, programs, events, and materials available. The social media accounts are not intended to be a general exchange of ideas or viewpoints but a forum for communication related to the library's mission.

The primary goals of Bennington Public Library's use of social media is to:

- Promote the library's programs, materials, and services
- Call for library advocacy
- Share relevant community resources

When necessary, social media will also be used by the Bennington Public Library to share emergency communications, public service announcements, and other service-related information.

The primary audience is the Bennington Public Library community.

For the purposes of this policy, "social media" refers to any social media site, blog, network, and communication tools that exist now and in the future that allow public feedback and sharing on the internet including, but not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter.

### **Acceptable Behavior**

In order to provide a safe and appropriate online environment, Bennington Public Library expects comments, postings, images, videos, hyperlinks, and other content shared by community members to be respectful, tolerant, and related to the mission of the library. Abusive and hurtful language is not allowed. The following content is prohibited and will be removed by Bennington Public Library from its social media accounts:

- Selling, solicitation, commercial interests, and spam
- Copyright violations
- Obscenity
- Child pornography
- Defamatory and libelous comments
- Imminent or true threats against Bennington Public Library, its staff, its Board of Trustees, or community members
- Other speech or content not protected by the First Amendment

**Moderation**

The Bennington Public Library will regularly monitor its social media accounts and reserves the right to close comments at any time. Content that violates Acceptable Behavior may be removed. Repeat violations of Acceptable Behavior may result in temporary or permanent removal from Bennington Public Library social media accounts. Persons wishing to appeal a deleted or moderated post or a temporary or permanent ban can file an appeal with the Director to review with the Board of Trustees.

**Privacy**

Bennington Public Library social media accounts will not be used to collect information about library patrons or community members by its staff or its Board of Trustees. However, social media is a public forum, and users should have no expectation of privacy when posting, commenting, or interacting on social media sites.

**Disclaimer**

Bennington Public Library is not responsible or liable for the content of postings by third parties on any library social media account, and such postings do not reflect the opinions or positions of the library, its staff, or its Board of Trustees.

**Ongoing Use Evaluation**

The role of social media in relation to the mission of the Bennington Public Library will be evaluated periodically by the Director and Board of Trustees and may be changed or terminated at any time at the discretion of the Director as authorized by the Board of Trustees.

Questions or concerns regarding Bennington Public Library social media accounts or this policy should be directed to the Director.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Bennington Public Library 10/25/2022

## **BENNINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY OPERATIONS POLICIES**

*According to state statute, the mayor and city council shall approve any personnel administrative or compensation policy or procedure applying to a director or employee of a public library, reading room, art gallery, or museum before such policy or procedure is implemented.*

### **Staff**

The library staff will include the director and other staff as needed, to be determined by the director with the approval of the library board. The responsibility of carrying out the operations of the library and managing staffing will be handled by the director. A member of the staff must be present during all operating hours. The director must be state certified and other staff members are encouraged to be certified. Assistant director: The assistant director must be able to perform all duties of the director. The assistant is not expected to do the director's work but must be able to take over in case of prolonged absences or emergencies.

### **Pay**

The director and other staff members will be paid at a salary evaluated annually and approved by the library board.

### **Dress**

The library staff will maintain a neat and clean appearance. Dress will be appropriate for that of a public servant representing the community.

### **Training**

The library staff will maintain yearly training and attend seminars including requirements as set by the Nebraska Library Commission Public Librarian Certification Program. The library will pay fees to attend training seminars. A record of training hours required to maintain certification will be kept on file with Nebraska Library Commission. Salary time will be paid while attending seminars. Mileage will be paid a current city rate.

### **Library Staff Duties**

The director has the overall responsibility of running the library within the policy guidelines provided by the library board. The hours of operation and guidelines operation are stated in the **BENNINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY POLICY**.

General Administration: Library records must be kept up-to-date. The records include: patron registration, books loaned, new items purchased, overdue books, petty cash, fines paid for lost or damaged books, and money spent for miscellaneous items. There should be a bill or receipt for each purchase made. All bills will be presented to the city clerk. The card catalog must be kept current. The director will make annual reports as required by the state and local board policy. Each month a report will be completed providing circulation and financial information. A copy of the monthly report will be given to the city and library board members. A copy will remain on file.

General Duties: The staff will at all times help the public to use the library. They must also keep the library clean and orderly. Major cleaning will be contracted out by the director with board approval.

### **Special Programs**

The library staff will, within the policy guidelines provided by the board, work with the school and teaching staff to accommodate classes and provide reference and reading materials. The library will provide a summer reading program. It will use the inter-library loan services and other services provided by the state and local library organizations.

### **Facility Rules**

The library is a public facility used expressly within the guidelines provided by the board. Library equipment must remain in the library unless permission for the removal is provided by the board.

### **Evaluation**

The board of trustees will annually evaluate the library's operation and make changes as needed. The board will read and review the annual report compiled by the librarian.

### **Financial Policy**

The board of trustees will seek and secure adequate funds within government constraints to meet the needs of the public. The fiscal year for the library operation will be concurrent with that of the city of Bennington.



## **INTERNET/COMPUTER USE POLICY**

The Library provides computer services, including free access to the Internet to card holders in good standing, in accord with its goal to enrich the community by connecting people to the world of ideas, information, and imagination to support their work, education, personal growth, and enjoyment.

Any patron that currently has any restrictions for library usage will not be able to access the computer until the restrictions have been removed. Restriction status will include unpaid fees, damaged/lost books, or the improper use of the computer or Internet access.

The Library agrees to allow patron access subject to the terms contained in this policy. The staff of the Bennington Public Library will make all decisions regarding whether or not a user has violated these terms and may revoke the privilege at any time.

Use of computers is on a first-come, first-served basis. Patrons are limited to 30 minutes when others are waiting. Users must sign up to use public computers on a next-available basis and are allotted 30 minutes. Upon staff discretion, on school days from 3:15 - 6:00 p.m., students needing to use the computer for homework purposes may be given priority over other computer users. Users must end their session and leave the terminal or port when asked to do so by authorized Library staff, even if they have not completed their session. Use of computers is subject to Library Policies, availability (library staff will have absolute priority over computer usage), normal maintenance, and hours open to the public.

### **Wireless Internet**

The Bennington Public Library offers wireless Internet access for properly equipped laptops, PDAs, and other wireless devices. Users are expected to use the Library's wireless access in a legal and responsible manner consistent with the educational and informational purposes for which it is provided. Users may not violate federal, Nebraska, or local laws including the transmission or receiving of child pornography or harmful material, fraud, or downloading copyrighted material.

Users of the wireless network are also bound by the library's Internet Use and Safety Policy. Violations may result in loss of library privileges or access. Unlawful activities will be referred to the appropriate legal authority and will be dealt with in a serious and appropriate manner.

This free service is an open network provided for your convenience and its use is at your own risk. It is available to the general public, and is NOT INHERENTLY SECURE. Bennington Public Library cannot and will not guarantee the privacy of your data and communication while using the service.

There are potentially serious security issues with any computer connected to the Internet without the appropriate protection, ranging from viruses, worms and other programs that can damage the user's computer, to attacks on the computer by unauthorized or unwanted third

parties. By using this service, users acknowledge and knowingly accept the potentially serious risks of accessing the Internet over an unsecured network. Bennington Public Library is not responsible for any damages, direct or indirect, or for any liability that may arise from a patron's use of the library's Internet services, for any personal information (e.g. credit card) that is compromised, or for any damage caused to your hardware or software due to electric surges, security issues or consequences caused by viruses or hacking.

As the configuration of each manufacturer's device is unique, please refer to your documentation for connection instructions. Library staff cannot be responsible for assisting you in making changes to your devices. There is no guarantee that you will be able to make a wireless connection, that the service will be available at any specific time, or that the connection will have any specific quality or speed.

### **Internet Use Disclaimers:**

The Internet is a global computing network that provides access to a wide range of educational, reference and recreational resources, many of which are not available in print. The Internet does not fall under the control or governance of any single agency, government or organization, and therefore the Library can make no guarantees regarding the accuracy, content, nature or quality of information obtained through the Internet. Further, the Library does not endorse viewpoints presented on the Internet.

In no event shall the Library have any liability for damages of any kind arising from its connection to the Internet. Users of the Library's computers and Internet access, wireless internet access, including, in the case of minors, their parents or guardians, agree to assume full liability (legal, financial or otherwise) for actions.

A library home page has been established, which includes a variety of destinations (links) and search tools. These links have been selected by library staff as a service to help the user navigate the internet. Selections are made solely in accordance with expected future utility to library users. Selection as a link implies no endorsement by the library as to content of a web site, and users must be aware that content of external links may and will change without our knowledge.

### **Disclosures:**

Internet access in the Library allows access to ideas, information, images and commentary beyond the scope of the Library's collections, selection criteria and collection development policy. Some of the Internet material may be controversial. Court decisions over the years have interpreted the Library to be a "limited public forum" and, as such, the Library may not discriminate against constitutionally protected content or viewpoints.

### **Guidelines for Use:**

Therefore, library users **may not** perform the following actions and Library staff shall intercede when these policies are violated.

**Persons using library-supplied Public Access Computers or wireless internet services may not:**

- Use these services in a way that violates local, state or federal law. Illegal acts involving Library resources may be subject to prosecution by local, state or federal officials.
  - Post, transmit, access, or display obscene and illegal material. This includes sending, receiving, or displaying inappropriate materials, defined as text or graphics.
  - Use the services for illegal or criminal purposes.
  - Use the services to harass or defame others.
  - Violate copyright laws or software licensing agreements.
  - Use sounds or visuals which may be disruptive to others.
  - Violate another Library user's privacy.

**Persons using library-supplied Public Access Computers may not:**

- Attempt to change any pre-established system configurations.
- Install or download any software onto the computer hard drive or BIOS.
- Damage computer equipment or software.

**Further Guidelines for Use:**

- Communication services such as email, instant messaging, and social networking sites are only available as internet services. The library does not provide accounts or storage for these services.
- Patrons may save data to their own flash drives. They may not save to the hard drives of library computers. If a working copy of a document is left on a library computer, there should be no expectation that that document or file will be available at a future session.
- Print fees are \$0.10 per page for black and white and \$0.50 per page for color. Use of personal software will result in revocation of this agreement.
- Fax fee is a flat fee of \$1.00 per fax (not per page).

*INTERNET/COMPUTER USE POLICY*

*Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Bennington Public Library 10/26/2009*

*Supersedes: Internet/Computer Use Policy adopted 4/30/2007*

## **PATRON RESPONSIBILITY POLICY**

### **Guidelines for Patron Behavior**

The Library Board of Trustees of the Bennington Public Library has approved these rules/guidelines in an effort to set a standard of acceptable behavior conducive to appropriate public library use. Acceptable standards of behavior include but are not limited to this list.

- Library users shall respect the rights of staff and other patrons and shall not behave in any manner that can reasonably be expected to disturb other persons. Patrons shall not interfere with the right of others to use the library or with the employees' performance of duties. Examples of prohibited behavior include but are not limited to: noisy or boisterous activities, staring at or following another person, singing or talking loudly to self or others, making threats of any kind, destroying property.
- Speaking should be kept to normal conversational levels. Audio equipment shall not be audible to other people. Cell phone ringers should be off.
- A responsible parent or caregiver should accompany and supervise children who are using the Library (see Unattended Children Policy).
- Sleeping in the library is not allowed.
- Weapons of any type are not allowed.
- Use of tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs is prohibited. Patrons showing signs of drunkenness or drug abuse will be asked to leave the premises.
- Persons must wear shirts and shoes in the library.
- Food and drink pose a potential risk to library materials, equipment, and furnishings. We therefore ask patrons to act responsibly when consuming food and drink in the library. The limitation or restriction of food and drink in the library will be at the discretion of the library director or senior library staff when the director is not present.
- Pets are prohibited; service animals are welcome.
- Entering the Bennington Public Library facilities with hygiene or public health conditions that interfere with the use of the library by other people is not allowed. This could include but is not limited to clothing or body odor, insects, pests, or unsanitary belongings.
- Compliance with the Internet/Computer Use Policy is mandatory.
- Any person not complying with these rules or with local or state law shall be asked to leave the library premises and may receive a temporary or permanent ban from future library use.
- Patrons temporarily or permanently banned from the library may appeal this decision by contacting the Library Director at least one week before the next regular meeting of the Bennington Library Board. The patron making the appeal should attend the Library Board meeting when the matter is on the agenda.

## **UNATTENDED CHILDREN POLICY**

The Bennington Public Library welcomes library use by children. The Library is a public building with staff trained to provide public library services. Staff members are available to assist children with accessing library materials and services.

### **Policy Statement**

The Library desires to provide a safe and appropriate environment for visitors of all ages. For the safety and comfort of children, a responsible parent or caregiver should accompany and supervise children who are using the Library. While in the Library, parents and caregivers are responsible for monitoring and regulating the behavior of their children. The Library is not equipped, nor is it the Library's role, to provide long- or short-term child care.

Library staff members will refer to this policy when necessary, including in response to the following situations:

- An unattended child is found frightened or crying in the Library.
- An unattended child is perceived to be endangering him or herself, or that another person in the Library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child.
- An unattended child exhibits specific inappropriate behavior.
- An unattended child has not been met by a responsible caregiver at closing time.

After evaluating the situation, Library staff members will attempt to contact the parent or guardian of the unattended child. In the event that the parent or guardian cannot be reached, the child will be placed in the care of the Bennington Police Department.

This policy applies to all children visiting the Library.

### **Abuse of Library Policy and Restriction of Privileges**

- The use of the library and its services may be denied temporarily for due cause. Such causes may include failure to return materials or to pay penalties, destruction of library property, or any other illegal, disruptive, or objectionable disturbance on library premises.
- Library accounts will be restricted for fees of \$25 and over or for material overdue more than 3 weeks.
- Patrons who refuse to abide by library policies may be restricted from the library. Those who are unwilling to leave or do not leave within a reasonable amount of time, after being instructed to do so by staff, will be subject to the prevailing laws.
- Denial of computer use may occur because of any unacceptable use (see Internet/Computer Use Policy).

### *PATRON RESPONSIBILITY POLICY*

*Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Bennington Public Library 1/24/2023  
Supersedes: Unattended Children Policy adopted 10/26/2009 amended /2/25/2019*

## **EMERGENCY AND SAFETY POLICY**

The Bennington Public Library attempts to provide a safe environment for all who use our facility as well as a safe repository for library materials of all types. Despite our best efforts situations may arise of an emergency nature. These guidelines for foreseeable but unplanned emergencies which may occur in the library are designed to reduce risk to life and materials. In the event of a major disaster involving a wider section of our community, the library will adhere to the Emergency Operations Plan for the City of Bennington.

### **Weather Emergencies**

- Tornado or Violent Storm
  - When warranted, staff will monitor weather conditions via radio, and/or the Internet. When Bennington is in a watch or a warning, staff will follow the appropriate library procedures established for the situation. These procedures are reviewed by staff at least annually and are updated as needed.
  - If time allows, patrons must either leave the building or take shelter in the library's restroom when notified by staff that a tornado warning is in effect. After the library is evacuated, all doors will remain locked.
  - If the tornado strikes with little or no warning and there is no time to evacuate to the restroom, patrons and staff should take shelter away from windows and exterior walls, hiding under furniture if they cannot get to an interior room. Everyone should protect their heads as much as possible. The open stacks area should be avoided.
- Snowstorms
  - The library may open late or close early when winter weather conditions present a danger to staff and patrons. The library will follow the actions of the City of Bennington during normal business hours and the Library Director shall be authorized to close the library during other times.
  - Maximum effort will be made to maintain regular library operating hours. However, if the library is closed due to bad weather, staff will post notices on all entrances, record an announcement on the library answering machine, and notify local news stations. The Library Director will notify the Board President of the closing as soon as reasonable.

### **Facility Emergencies**

- Fire
  - At the first indication of smoke or flame or if the fire alarm is pulled by a patron, staff should investigate the situation to determine location and extent. If the problem can be easily contained, staff should proceed to do so. If there is any doubt about controlling the fire, staff should immediately call 911 and then evacuate the building, pulling the closest alarm to notify all patrons.
  - Staff should familiarize themselves with alarm locations and with the location and operation of fire extinguishers in the building. Library staff should await

emergency personnel at the entrance to notify them of the location of the fire and then gather as a group at the entrance of City Hall.

- Loss of utilities
  - If electrical power is lost for at least two hours or if the loss makes the temperature or the lighting in the library difficult for working, the library may close until the problem is resolved. Annual checks of emergency lighting should be done by the City's Maintenance Department.
  - If water is shut off to the library all restrooms should be closed immediately. Staff may be able to use facilities at City Hall or neighboring businesses.
  - If the temperature drops enough to make working in or using the library uncomfortable, the library should close until the problem is resolved.
- Hazardous materials
  - If carbon monoxide detectors warn of danger or if other chemical fumes are noticeable, staff should immediately evacuate the building and call 911 for assistance.
  - If a traffic accident in the vicinity of the library involves hazardous waste materials of any type, library staff should follow the directives of City Hall and the Bennington Police Department or other emergency personnel.
- Plumbing problems or water leaks
  - If a plumbing problem is limited to a single area, staff will close off the affected facility and call the City Public Works Department or other professional assistance if they are unable to resolve the problem.
  - If a plumbing problem or water leak affects major parts of the library, the Library Director may close the library if deemed necessary. City crews can be called upon for immediate assistance and professional help should be found as soon as possible.
- Bomb threat
  - Staff receiving a bomb threat call will try to keep the caller on the line as long as possible, noting every detail about the caller's voice, background noises, and so forth. If the caller doesn't mention the location and detonation time of the bomb this information should be requested.
  - When the caller hangs up the phone or when a bomb threat is received in other ways besides the phone, police should be called immediately. Clear the building of all staff and patrons.
  - When police arrive on the scene, staff will provide them with the information taken on the phone and then evacuate the premises, making sure the Library Director has their contact information for calls to return to work after the building has been cleared.
  - If a bomb threat has been received at a nearby facility, evacuation of the library will be based on the judgment of emergency personnel. Library staff should again make sure the Library Director has their contact information so they can be called back to work when the building is cleared.

## **Personal Safety**

- Health Emergencies or Accidents
  - Staff should exercise caution when assisting anyone with a health complaint. Make the affected person comfortable and call for emergency personnel immediately in the event of a serious problem. Staff should not attempt to provide first aid unless certified.
  - At no time should staff ever dispense medication, including aspirin, to the public.
  - Following the incident, staff should complete the City's Accident Report form and submit it to the Library Director and/or City Hall.
- Patron Unruliness or Violence
  - Library patrons are expected to conduct themselves in a manner which shows respect to other patrons and to staff. Disruptive behavior which disturbs others or destroys property will not be tolerated. Disruptive behavior includes but is not limited to any violation of the Guidelines for Patron Behavior/Patron Responsibility Policy or the Public Internet and Computer Acceptable Use Policy.
  - Parents/Guardians are responsible for the behavior of their children while in the library. Children who are being disruptive and do not respond to a staff request to stop will be asked to leave the building and if necessary the parent will be called to pick the child up from the library. If a parent is unavailable after one hour, the Bennington Police Department will be contacted.
  - Staff members may handle patron situations directly if they feel comfortable doing so. Or, they may report the problem patron to the supervisor on duty or approach the patron with other staff members. If the situation escalates or if the patron refuses to listen to staff, the police shall be called immediately.
  - Staff members may dismiss the offender for the rest of the day or for up to two weeks depending on the severity of the offense. Repeat offenders or those who commit an extremely serious offense may be permanently barred from the library facility by the Library Director. Appeals of the dismissal must be submitted in writing one week prior to regular Library Board meetings and will be reviewed by the Library Director and members of the Library Board at the regular meeting following receipt of the appeal.
  - Patrons who remain on library premises after being asked to leave, or patrons who enter the library during the time period in which they have been banned from the library, will be subject to arrest and prosecution for trespassing.
  - Staff members will use standard internal communication tools to make others aware of patrons who are temporarily or permanently barred from the library. Within two working days of any incident regarding dismissals extending beyond the same day, staff members will record in writing their version of the situation.

## **Reporting Emergencies**

- All emergency situations should be reported to the Library Director as soon as possible. The Library Director will contact the President of the Library Board and the City Hall as appropriate. The full Library Board will be informed of the emergency at the next regular board meeting.



- Because timely and accurate reporting of emergencies is crucial, library staff should refer to the Emergency Operations Plan of the City of Bennington before information regarding emergencies is made public. Information about non-emergency situations that may affect the public should be approved by the Library Director before being released.

*EMERGENCY AND SAFETY POLICY*

*Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Bennington Public Library 10/26/2009*

## **BULLETIN BOARD POLICY**

As an educational, cultural, and community institution, the Bennington Public Library welcomes postings, exhibits and displays of interest, information, and enlightenment for the community members to view. As such, the bulletin board and business card holder is made available for the posting of community announcements.

Use of the library's bulletin boards does not imply endorsement by the Bennington Public Library of the events or services posted.

In order to best utilize the limited space available for such postings, those utilizing the library's bulletin board and business card holder are asked to adhere to the following policy:

- Library materials take priority over community announcements.
- All postings will be approved at the discretion of the Library Director considering space availability. Library staff will be responsible for removing notices.
- Non-profit, cultural, educational, scientific, humanitarian, self-help, employment, commercial or other community services' postings for events or activities will remain posted, as space allows, until the event, or deadline for registration for the event, has passed.
- Notices that are not date sensitive may be posted for up to three months, space permitting. Each notice will be marked with the initials of the Library Director, and the date in which it was posted.
- Limited space demands that no signage larger than 8 1/2 X 11 may be posted, and Library staff may choose to post a reduced size of a notice in order to make more space available.
- The bulletin boards are located in a public space, so postings must be appropriate for viewing by all ages. No nudity or profanity is allowed.

*BULLETIN BOARD POLICY*

*Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Bennington Public Library 11/26/2018*

## MEETING ROOM POLICY

The City of Bennington Public Library welcomes the public use of its meeting facilities in keeping with the Library's vision of creating opportunities to engage, connect and discover. Meeting rooms are primarily for use by the library to present library-sponsored events. When not in use by the library, meeting rooms are available for use by the community. Library/City needs may preempt any other scheduled event.

The intent of this policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for the use of the Bennington Community Conference Center meeting rooms. The responsibility for implementing this policy and for scheduling meeting rooms rests with the City Clerk and Library Director. The City Clerk and the Library Director retain final authority for approving requests to use the meeting rooms. Questions, which are not covered in this policy, should be addressed to the City Office 402-238-2375 or the Library 402-238-2201.

Use of the meeting rooms does not constitute Library/City endorsement of viewpoints expressed by participants. Advertisements or announcements implying such endorsements are prohibited.

Utilization of meeting rooms must be in full compliance with all local, state and federal laws.

### Reservation and Application Procedures

- Reservations are required to use community conference meeting rooms.
- An application must be completed to make a reservation.
- The applicant reserving a room (point of contact for group reservation) must be at least 19 years old. The applicant, as well as the membership of the group as a whole, will be held responsible for any and all damages that may occur as a result of the use of the facilities.
- A valid Bennington Public Library card in good standing is needed by the applicant to secure a reservation. If the applicant does not yet have a Bennington Public Library card, one will be issued to the applicant.
- Reservation requests will be honored on a first-come, first-served basis.
- The room reservation should allow for setup time and cleanup.
- Local non-profit applicants will be exempt from paying a rental fee. *Donations are always welcomed and appreciated.*
- The rental fee for private/for profit applicants is due by the date of the event.
- Application forms need to be submitted as far in advance as possible. Reservations cannot be made more than one year in advance or less than 72 hours in advance of the requested date.
- An applicant will be restricted to a maximum of two meetings per month. Exceptions to this restriction can be made at the discretion of the Library Director.
- To provide an opportunity for new applicants to use the meeting rooms, an applicant meeting on a repetitive basis cannot reserve meeting rooms more than a year in advance.
- Confirmation or denial of rental requests will be done by e-mail.
- If your event is scheduled outside of library hours, it is your responsibility to pick up a key from the Bennington Public Library no sooner than one week prior to your event.
- **The key must be returned in person no later than a week after the event. (Please DO NOT place the key in the library book return).**

## LIBRARY HOURS

Monday	10:00 AM - 7:30 PM
Tuesday	10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Wednesday	10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Thursday	10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Friday	CLOSED
Saturday	9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

### Cancelledations

If it is necessary to cancel a reservation, the City Clerk or Library Director must be notified as soon as possible.

### Use and Care of Facilities

- Meeting rooms are to be left as they are found, including arrangement of furniture, etc. This includes cleaning, vacuuming, emptying trash, wiping down tables, chairs, counters, sinks, floors, glass, etc. Basic cleaning supplies and a cleaning checklist will be provided.
- An applicant using a community meeting room shall be responsible for any damages to the room or its contents, including any audiovisual equipment. **Please do not sit on tables.**
- Permission to use meeting rooms may be withheld from an applicant who damages the room, carpet, equipment, or furniture; causes a disturbance, or any other failure to comply with the rules and regulations.
- A charge will be assessed for any special cleaning or repairs made necessary due to damage by the applicant.
- Equipment, supplies, or personal effects cannot be stored or left in library meeting rooms before or after use. Neither the city/library nor its employees shall assume responsibility for any property of an applicant. At the end of each meeting, all of an applicant's property must be removed from the meeting room.
- Tacks, nails, glue, or tape shall not be used on walls, furnishings, or equipment.
- The applicant is responsible for any special arrangement or rearrangement of furniture. Library/City staff will not aid in furniture or equipment arrangement. Any special table or seating arrangements shall be the responsibility of the applicant.
- Attendance at meetings must be limited to the capacity of the individual meeting room.
- Clear access to exits must be maintained within the room's seating arrangements.
- Smoking, open flames, burning incense, and lit candles are prohibited.
- Exit doors should be kept clear and should not be propped open.
- An applicant's activities involving more than normal wear and tear on rooms are NOT permitted.
- Dishes and kitchen utensils must be furnished by the applicant.
- Kitchen and bathrooms must be left clean and in good order.
- **Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.**
- **No animals are allowed in the meeting rooms, with the exception of trained service animals.**
- An applicant may arrange to use meeting room audio/visual equipment where it is available. However, no one shall operate meeting room equipment unless they are properly trained by library/city staff prior to an event. Library/City staff cannot guarantee that personal electronic items will work with meeting room audio/visual equipment.

**Other Considerations**

- In addition to the above regulations, an applicant may from time-to-time be denied use of meeting rooms if granting the request would result in undue interference with regular library operations. Undue interference includes, but is not limited to: insufficient parking space for library customers, noise level of the group, food odors, unsupervised children, etc.
- An applicant who repeatedly cancels without proper notice or fails to use a reserved meeting room may lose their meeting room privileges.
- Library/City staff shall have the right to cancel, reschedule, or transfer meeting room locations or dates that conflict with library-sponsored programs and/or special events. In such cases, the library will make its best effort to give advance notice.
- The City/Library reserves the right to revoke permission to use any meeting room to any applicant who violates or refuses to comply with the rules and regulations established for use of the meeting rooms.

**Rental Fees**

<b>Room</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Amenities</b>	<b>Rental Fees</b> (Waived for library, or city sponsored activities and nonprofit groups)
B	30 Meeting/tables & chairs 48 Banquet/tables & chairs 72 Theater/chairs only	86" interactive touch panel TV Kitchen	\$20/hour \$120 maximum 8 hour maximum
C	18 Meeting/tables & chairs 24 Banquet/tables & chairs 28 Theater/chairs only	TV Kitchen	\$15/hour \$100 maximum 8 hour maximum
BC	48 Meeting/tables & chairs 84 Banquet/tables & chairs 117 Theater/chairs only	86" interactive touch panel TV Kitchen	\$35/hour \$200 maximum 8 hour maximum
Checks should be made payable to City of Bennington			

*MEETING ROOM POLICY*

*Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Bennington Public Library 2/28/2023*

*Supersedes: Meeting Room Policy adopted 12/17/2018*

## Supplement A

### **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, age, 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 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.
- VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019

## **Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights**

Although the Articles of the Library Bill of Rights are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices.

Following are those documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights and background statements detailing the philosophy and history of each. For convenience and easy reference, the documents are presented in alphabetical order. These documents are policies of the American Library Association, having been adopted by the ALA Council.

**Access to Digital Resources and Services:** Digital resources and services allow libraries to significantly expand the scope of information available to users. Like all resources and services provided by the library, provision of access to digital resources and services should follow the principles outlined in the Library Bill of Rights to ensure equitable access regardless of content or platform. Amended 2019

**Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors:** Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources available to other users violate the Library Bill of Rights. The American Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users. Amended 2019

**Access to Library Resources and Services Regardless of Sex, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, or Sexual Orientation:** The American Library Association stringently and unequivocally maintains that libraries and librarians have an obligation to resist efforts that systematically exclude materials dealing with any subject matter, including sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Amended 2020

**Access to Resources and Services in the School Library:** The school library plays a unique role in promoting intellectual freedom. It serves as a point of voluntary access to information and ideas and as a learning laboratory for students as they acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed in a pluralistic society. Although the educational level and program of the school necessarily shapes the resources and services of a school library, the principles of the Library Bill of Rights apply equally to all libraries, including school libraries. Amended 2014

Challenged Resources: ALA declares as a matter of firm principle that it is the responsibility of every library to have a clearly defined written policy for collection development that includes a procedure for review of challenged resources. Amended 2019

Diverse Collections: Collection development should reflect the philosophy inherent in Article I of the Library Bill of Rights: “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.” A diverse collection should contain content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences. Amended 2019

Economic Barriers to Information Access: All resources provided directly or indirectly by the library, regardless of format or method of delivery, should be readily and equitably accessible to all library users. Imposing any financial barrier may disadvantage users, and libraries of all types—public, school, and academic—should consider eliminating barriers that limit access to library resources and other services. Amended 2019

Education and Information Literacy: Libraries and library workers foster education and lifelong learning by promoting free expression and facilitating the exchange of ideas among users. Libraries use resources, programming, and services to strengthen access to information and thus build a foundation of intellectual freedom. In their roles as educators, library workers create an environment that nurtures intellectual freedom in all library resources and services. Amended 2019

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion: Libraries are essential to democracy and self-government, to personal development and social progress, and to every individual’s inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To that end, libraries and library workers should embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion in everything that they do. Adopted 2017

Evaluating Library Collections: Libraries continually develop their collections by adding and removing resources to maintain collections of current interest and usefulness to their communities. Libraries should adopt collection development and maintenance policies that include criteria for evaluating materials. Amended 2019

Expurgation of Library Materials: Expurgating library materials is a violation of the Library Bill of Rights. Expurgation as defined by this interpretation includes any deletion, excision, alteration, editing, or obliteration of any part(s) of books or other library resources by the library, its agent, or its parent institution (if any). Amended 2014



Internet Filtering: The negative effects of content filters on Internet access in public libraries and schools are demonstrable and documented. Consequently, consistent with previous resolutions, the American Library Association cannot recommend filtering. However the ALA recognizes that local libraries and schools are governed by local decision makers and local considerations and often must rely on federal or state funding for computers and internet access. Because adults and, to a lesser degree minors, have First Amendment rights, libraries and schools that choose to use content filters should implement policies and procedures that mitigate the negative effects of filtering to the greatest extent possible. The process should encourage and allow users to ask for filtered websites and content to be unblocked, with minimal delay and due respect for user privacy. Adopted 2015

Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries: A strong intellectual freedom perspective is critical to the development of academic library collections and services that dispassionately meet the education and research needs of a college or university community. The purpose of this statement is to outline how and where intellectual freedom principles fit into an academic library setting, thereby raising consciousness of the intellectual freedom context within which academic librarians work. Amended 2014

Labeling Systems: Prejudicial labeling systems assume that the libraries have the institutional wisdom to determine what is appropriate or inappropriate for its users to access. They presuppose that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. The American Library Association opposes the use of prejudicial labeling systems and affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read, view, listen to, or otherwise access. Adopted 2015

Library-Initiated Programs and Displays as a Resource: Library-initiated programs and displays utilize library worker expertise for community interests, collections, services, facilities, and providing access to information and information resources. They introduce users and potential users to library resources and the library's role as a facilitator of information access. Concerns, questions, or complaints about library-initiated programs and displays are handled according to the same written policy and procedures that govern reconsiderations of other library resources. These policies should apply equally to all people, including, but not limited to, library users, staff, and members of the governing body. Amended 2019

Meeting Rooms: Many libraries provide meeting rooms and other spaces designated for use by the public for meetings and other events as a service to their communities. Article VI of the Library Bill of Rights states, "Libraries which make ... 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." Amended 2019

**Minors and Online Activity:** The online environment offers opportunities for accessing, creating, and sharing information. The rights of minors to retrieve, create, and interact with information posted on the Internet in schools and libraries are extensions of their First Amendment rights. Amended 2019

**Politics in American Libraries:** The Library Bill of Rights specifically states that "all people" and "all points of view" should be included in library materials and information. There are no limiting qualifiers for viewpoint, origin, or politics. Adopted 2017

**Prisoners' Right to Read:** ALA asserts a compelling public interest in the preservation of intellectual freedom for individuals of any age held in jails, prisons, detention facilities, juvenile facilities, immigration facilities, prison work camps, and segregated units within any facility, whether public or private. Amended 2019

**Privacy:** All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. The American Library Association affirms that rights of privacy are necessary for intellectual freedom and are fundamental to the ethical practice of librarianship. Amended 2019

**Rating Systems:** Rating systems are tools or labels devised by individuals or organizations to advise people regarding suitability or content of materials. Rating systems appearing in library catalogs or discovery systems present distinct challenges to intellectual freedom principles. The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read or view. Amended 2019

**Religion in American Libraries:** The First Amendment guarantees the right of individuals to believe and practice their religion or practice no religion at all and prohibits government from establishing or endorsing a religion or religions. Thus the freedom of, for and from religion, are similarly guaranteed. Adopted 2016

**Restricted Access to Library Materials:** Libraries are a traditional forum for the open exchange of information. Attempts to restrict access to library materials violate the basic tenets of the Library Bill of Rights. Amended 2014

**Services to People with Disabilities:** Libraries should be fully inclusive of all members of their community and strive to break down barriers to access. The library can play a transformational role in helping facilitate more complete participation in society by providing fully accessible resources and services. Amended 2018

Universal Right to Free Expression: Freedom of expression is an inalienable human right and the foundation for self-government. Freedom of expression encompasses the freedoms of speech, press, religion, assembly, and association, and the corollary right to receive information. Amended 2014

User-Generated Content in Library Discovery Systems: Libraries offer a variety of discovery systems to provide access to the resources in their collections. Such systems can include online public access catalogs (OPAC), library discovery products, institutional repositories, and archival systems. With the widespread use of library technology that incorporates social media components, intelligent objects, and knowledge-sharing tools comes the ability of libraries to provide greater opportunities for patron engagement in those discovery systems through user-generated content. These features may include the ability of users to contribute commentary such as reviews, simple point-and-click rating systems (e.g. one star to five stars), or to engage in extensive discussions or other social interactions. This kind of content could transform authoritative files, alter information architecture, and change the flow of information within the library discovery system. Amended 2019

User-Initiated Exhibits, Displays, and Bulletin Boards: Libraries may offer spaces for exhibits, displays, and bulletin boards in physical or digital formats as a benefit for their communities. The use of these spaces should conform to the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights. Amended 2019

Visual and Performing Arts in Libraries: Visual images and performances in the library should not be restricted based on content. Librarians and library staff should be proactive in seeking out a wide variety of representational and abstract artwork and performance art, with limitations or parameters set only with respect to space, installation, fiscal, and technical constraints. Adopted 2018

Supplement B

## **FREEDOM TO READ**

The FREEDOM TO READ is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove 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.



## **FREEDOM TO VIEW**

The FREEDOM TO VIEW, along with the freedom to speak, to hear, and to read, is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. In a free society, there is no place for censorship of any medium of expression. Therefore these principles are affirmed:

1. To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

This statement was originally drafted by the Freedom to View Committee of the American Film and Video Association (formerly the Educational Film Library Association) and was adopted by the AFVA Board of Directors in February 1979. This statement was updated and approved by the AFVA Board of Directors in 1989.

Endorsed January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council

POLICIES OF THE BENNINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY  
Approved by the Bennington Public Library Board of Trustees

Revised 11/24/1997  
Revised 01/26/1998  
Revised 3/29/1999  
Revised 11/27/2006  
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Revised 10/26/2009  
Revised 9/27/2010  
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Revised 2/25/2019  
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Revised 10/25/2022  
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