

# KANAWHA COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

## MATERIALS SELECTION POLICY

### I. GENERAL OBJECTIVES

In support of its purpose as a public service institution concerned with education, information, recreation, local history acquisition, and cultural enrichment of the community, the Kanawha County Public Library selects, organizes, preserves, and makes available the necessary books and other print and non-print materials for all the residents of Kanawha County. The goal of the Library is to promote the communication of ideas, personal enrichment, and the enlightenment of all members of the community by offering open and equal access to a wide range of library materials, services, and programs which present a rich diversity of concepts.

### II. PURPOSE OF SELECTION POLICY

Collection development is the process by which the staff of the Library determines the overall nature, depth, and scope of the Library's collection. A written materials selection policy guides the staff in the selecting, acquiring and discarding of library materials in order to meet the Library's stated goals and objectives.

### III. ADOPTED NATIONAL STATEMENTS

The Kanawha County Public Library subscribes to the principles that have been adopted by the American Library Association that are incorporated in the following statements:

- A. Library Bill of Rights
  - B. Freedom to Read
  - C. Freedom to View
- (see appendix)

### IV. AUTHORITY

Final authority for the determination of policy in the selection and acquisition of all library books and materials is vested in the Kanawha County Public Library Board of Directors.

## V. RESPONSIBILITY

Book and material selection, as with all library activities, rests with the Library Director, who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Board of Directors. The Library Director has authorized the professional staff of the Library, operating within their special subject fields and responsibility for various units of operation, to be responsible for the selection of all books and materials. All staff members are encouraged to make suggestions, and suggestions from patrons are also encouraged and considered within the framework of this policy.

## VI. PRINT MATERIALS

The Library's general policy shall be to purchase books and materials which will best satisfy the patrons of the Library within the budgetary limitations imposed by its funding sources. A conscientious effort shall be made to meet the expressed needs of the community. With this in mind, the books and materials acquired by the Library, both purchased items and gifts, are considered in terms of the following criteria:

- A. Current usefulness and public demand
- B. Permanent value as a source material or interpretation
- C. Accuracy and objectivity
- D. Authority of the author (training, skill, field of specialization, contributions to the field, reputation, competence in presentation and purpose)
- E. Physical characteristics of the item (quality, ease of storage, and maintenance)
- F. Relationship of the item to the existing collection as to quality and quantity of materials available
- G. Relative importance in comparison with other works on the subject
- H. Evaluation of critical reviewers in reputable sources such as standard bibliographies, booklists by recognized authorities, and the advice of competent people in specific subject areas
- I. Reputation of publisher
- J. Technical quality of the production and presentation of the item (quality of illustrative material, binding)
- K. Price and availability
- L. Accessibility to the title through indexes and bibliographies

An item, however, need not meet all of the criteria in order to be acceptable. Books and other materials will be considered as whole works and may not be excluded on the basis of individual passages taken out of context.

Textbooks will not be acquired unless a textbook covers a given subject better than other available material and the textbook is not being used as a text in the school system.

## VII. WEEDING

Weeding is a thorough and conscientious effort to achieve a well-balanced collection suitable to the patrons served, and should be a continuous, consistent process. Hence, books and materials which are out of date or do not meet the stated objectives of the Library and/or are in poor physical condition will be systematically removed from the collection.

Replacement of material being withdrawn or items damaged or missing is not necessarily automatic. The need for replacement is based on:

- A. Number of duplicate copies
- B. Existence of adequate coverage of the subject in the collection
- C. Demand
- D. Availability of more current and/or better quality material

## VIII. GIFTS

The Library will accept gifts of books and other print and non-print materials to be added to the collection with the understanding they meet the same standards as purchased materials. No conditions may be imposed on the Library relating to the donated books or materials after they have been accepted by the Library, and all donated items shall become the exclusive property of the Library. The Library reserves the right to determine the suitability of donated items and dispose of gifts not suitable for library use. The Library does not have staff with the expertise to value any donated materials and, therefore, can only acknowledge the fact that items were donated without the assigning of values.

Donations given to the Library for purchases of memorial books or honor books are welcomed. Unless titles are specified, most purchases are made in non-fiction. A donor may suggest the subject field and library location in which the book will be located.

## IX. CONTROVERSIAL MATERIALS

In an effort to provide patrons with diverse sources of information and the widest possible range of ideas and viewpoints, the Library should acquire some unpopular and controversial materials. It is the belief of the Library's Board of Directors that the Library has a right and a duty to keep on its shelves a representative selection of materials on subjects of interest

including print and/or non print items representing all sides of controversial questions. Library materials will not be marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of their contents. No library material will be sequestered except to protect it from damage or theft.

X. CHILDREN'S MATERIALS

The Children's Collection is designed to serve the needs of all children from infancy through sixth grade. Materials are carefully selected to suit all reading competencies usually found within these age levels. Careful selection is made to provide a well rounded collection which will encourage children to read and appreciate the value gained from reading. Emphasis is placed on books which stimulate imagination, mental growth and the development of the appreciation of good literature. The collection is designed to enrich - not duplicate - the curriculum and libraries of public or private schools.

The responsibility for children's reading rests with their parents and/or legal guardians, and the Library assumes no responsibility for controlling the access of children to the entire collection of the Library.

XI. GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

The Kanawha County Public Library has been designated as a selective United States Depository Library acquiring without charge only those categories of federal government documents which it has indicated for acceptance. Federal government documents not received through the depository program may be selected for purchase following the criteria for purchasing print materials, with particular emphasis on popular demand and anticipated needs of the community.

Selected local and state documents will also be added to the collection.

XII. LOCAL AND STATE HISTORY COLLECTIONS

Kanawha County Public Library acknowledges the responsibility to preserve and collect printed materials concerning state and local history. As such it will acquire and preserve community, local and state historical materials.

XIII. NON-PRINT MATERIALS

As part of its purpose to serve the communication needs and interests of the whole community, Kanawha County Public Library will acquire a variety of non-print materials. In selecting these materials, the Library will collect the most significant, representative materials necessary to meet the

informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs of the community. In the broadest sense, the selection principles that govern non-print materials are similar to those that govern print materials; however, variations exist for each type of media. The general criteria that will be used for evaluation are:

- A. Purpose, scope, and audience
- B. Subject interest
- C. Authority/credibility of producer, distributor, director, performer; technical quality
- D. Comparison of other works in the same medium
- E. Historic value
- F. Physical durability of format
- G. Cost
- H. Current usefulness and public demand
- I. Space and storage considerations
- J. Size or length in running time of format
- K. Evaluation in critical review sources
- L. Appropriateness to subject matter and ease of use as in the case of microforms, etc.

#### XIV. REVISION OF POLICY

Public library collections must be responsive to the needs of the time, and the population it serves. Therefore, this Materials Selection Policy may be revised and updated at any time as conditions warrant, and should be thoroughly reviewed at regular intervals, not to exceed five years.

#### XV. RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS/SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDITION TO THE MATERIALS COLLECTION

If a member of the community objects to the presence of a book or other type of material in the collection or wants to suggest an item to be added to the collection, that person must complete the form entitled "Reconsideration of Library Materials/Suggestion for Addition" to the materials collection and return the completed form to the Library Director and the item in question, if it is in the materials collection, to the Library before any action can be taken. During the reconsideration process, materials subject to examination will not be removed from use pending final action. This formal reconsideration request or suggestion for addition to the collection will then be considered by the Library's professional staff. After a decision is made by the Library Director regarding the request or suggestion, the patron will be sent a letter explaining this decision. If the patron is not satisfied with the decision made by the Library Director an appeal may be made in writing to the Kanawha County Public Library's

Board of Directors within fourteen days after the patron receives the letter. The Library's Board of Directors is the final authority in determining whether a specific item should be added to the collection or if an item has been selected in accordance with the "Materials Selection Policy" of the Kanawha County Public Library.

Approved by the Library Board of Directors on January 9, 1989.

“Reconsideration of Library Materials”

**Procedures for Use of Form**

1. Library patron states to library staff member his/her concern(s) about having a specific item or type of material in our collection or concern that a specific item is not in our collection.
2. Library staff member thanks patron for his/her interest about materials in the collection. Staff member calls supervisor to handle situation. If supervisor is not available, staff member gives the materials selection packet to the patron, informing patron that he/she can make this concern known by completing the form included and mailing it to the Library Director (as indicated at the bottom of the last page of the form).
3. Library staff members should express no opinion to the patron about whether the item in question should or should not be in the collection.
4. Library Director receives completed form from the patron and requests a copy(s) of item and copies of professional reviews of the item. Library Director appoints three members of the professional staff to read and submit a written review of the item. Library Director sends letter to patron acknowledging receipt of reconsideration form and explaining the next step in the procedure, with copies of the Department Head and Branch or Unit Supervisor.
5. Library Director reaches a decision based upon (a) reviews of items(s) by professional staff members, (b) reviews from professional review journals, (c) criteria set forth in the Kanawha County Public Library’s Materials Selection Statement, and (d) principles stated in the American Library Association’s “Library Bill of Rights” and the “Freedom to Read” statements.
6. Library Director sends a letter to the patron notifying patron of his/her decision. Copies of letter are sent to the Department Head and Branch or Unit Supervisor.
7. If patron desires to appeal the Library Director’s decision, the patron may request of the President of the Board of Directors in writing within **14** days of receipt of the Library Director’s letter to appear before a select committee of the Board of Directors to present his/her request for reconsideration.
8. The President of the Board of Directors within 30 days of receipt of patron’s written request to appeal the Library Director’s decision concerning the inclusion of item(s) in the collection will appoint a select committee to review the patron’s request. The select committee will present its decision at the next regular Board of Director’s meeting. The patron will be notified by certified letter of the Board’s decision. The decision of the Board of Directors of the Kanawha County Public Library is final.

KANAWHA COUNTY  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

A REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY  
MATERIALS/SUGGESTION FOR ADDITION TO THE MATERIALS  
COLLECTION

(Please type or print)

1. This form is being submitted as a:

\_\_\_\_\_ Request for reconsideration of an item already in the materials  
collection. Please omit consideration of questions 7 and 16.

\_\_\_\_\_ Suggestion of an item to be added to the materials collection.  
Please omit consideration of questions 6, 10, 14 and 15.

2. Type of material (book, magazine, newspaper, film, filmstrip, record, tape,  
etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Author/Editor \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher/Producer \_\_\_\_\_

4. Work is/would be included in adult \_\_\_\_\_, young adult \_\_\_\_\_, or children's  
\_\_\_\_\_ collection.

5. Request initiated by:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your objection to this work? Please be specific; cite pages, sections,  
etc.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Why do you believe this item should be added to the materials collection?  
Please be specific.

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8. What do you think might be the effect of reading/seeing/listening to this work?

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9. For what age group would you recommend this work?

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10. Do you believe there is anything good about this work?

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11. Have you read/seen/listened to the entire work?

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If not, which parts?

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12. Have you checked reviews of the work?

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13. What do you believe is the theme of the work?

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14. What would you like your library to do about this work?

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15. What, in your opinion, is a better work of this type that we might consider adding to our collection?

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16. Why do you believe the item being suggested would have a long term usefulness to the materials collection?

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17. The Library Materials Selection Policy lists criteria that are considered in evaluating items for addition to the collection, are you aware of these criteria?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No.

If you are requesting an item be reconsidered that is materials collection, please list the criteria you believe the item does NOT meet and why.

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If you are suggesting an item be added to the materials collection, please list the criteria you believe the item meets and why.

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18. Other comments: (attach additional sheets if necessary)

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Date\_\_\_\_\_

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE MAIL THIS FORM TO:

Director  
Kanawha County Public Library  
123 Capitol Street  
Charleston, WV 25301

## APPENDIX 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.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
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.

*Adopted June 19, 1948. Amended February 2, 1961 June 27, 1967, and January 23, 1980 inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996, by the ALA Council.*

## APPENDIX B

### THE FREEDOM TO READ

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove books from sale, to censor textbooks, to label “controversial” books, to distribute lists of “objectionable” books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as citizens devoted to the use of books and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating them, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

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

We trust Americans to recognize propaganda, and to reject it. We do not believe they need the help of censors to assist them in this task. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of free press in order to be “protected” against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

We are aware, of course, that books are not alone in being subjected to efforts at suppression. We are aware that these efforts are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, films, radio and television. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy.

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

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

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

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

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

We therefore affirm these propositions:

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

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

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

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

3. It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to determine the acceptability of a book on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.

A book should be judged as a book. No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free man can flourish which draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

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

To some, much of modern literature is shocking. But is not 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 taste differs, and taste cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised which will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept with any book the prejudgement of a label characterizing the book or author as subversive or dangerous.

The idea of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for the citizen. It presupposes that each individual must be directed in making up his mind about the ideas he examines. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large.

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society each individual is free to determine for himself/herself what he/she wishes 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 not freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive.

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

The freedom to read is of little consequence when expended on the trivial; it is frustrated when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for his/her 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 principle means of its testing and growth. The defense of their freedom and integrity, and the enlargement of their service to society, requires of all bookmen the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all citizens the fullest of their support.

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

*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; revised January 28, 1972, by the ALA Council.*

*An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Library policies and procedures which effectively deny minors equal 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.

Article V of the *Library Bill of Rights* states, “A person’s right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.” The “right to use a library” includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials and facilities the library has to offer. Every restriction on access to, and use of, library resources, based solely on the chronological age, educational level, or legal emancipation of users violates Article V.

Libraries are charged with the mission of developing resources to meet the diverse information needs and interests of the communities they serve. Services, materials, and facilities which fulfill the needs and interests of library users at different stages in their personal development are a necessary part of library resources. The needs and interests of each library user, and resources appropriate to meet those needs and interests, must be determined on an individual basis. Librarians cannot predict what resources will best fulfill the needs and interests of any individual user based on a single criterion such as chronological age, level of education, or legal emancipation.

The selection and development of library resources should not be diluted because of minors having the same access to library resources as adult users. Institutional self-censorship diminishes the credibility of the library in the community, and restricts access for all library users.

Librarians and governing bodies should not resort to age restrictions on access to library resources in an effort to avoid actual or anticipated objections from parents or anyone else. The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries do not authorize librarians or governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents or legal guardians. Librarians and governing bodies should maintain that parents – and only parents – have the right and the responsibility to restrict the access of their children – and only their children – to library resources. Parents or legal guardians who do not want their children to have access to certain library services, materials or facilities, should so advise their children. Librarians and governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child. Librarians and governing bodies have a public and professional obligation to provide equal access to all library resources for all library users.

Librarians have a professional commitment to ensure that all members of the community they serve have free and equal access to the entire range of library

resources regardless of content, approach, format, or amount of detail. This principal of library service applies equally to all users, minors as well as adults. Librarians and governing bodies must uphold this principle in order to provide adequate and effective service to minors.

Adopted June 30, 1972; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991, by the ALA Council.

## APPENDIX C

### 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 possible 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 and other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis on 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 by the ALA Council January 10, 1990.*