

# MEEHAN MEMORIAL LANSING PUBLIC LIBRARY COLLECTION POLICY

## **PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT**

This formal policy serves five vital purposes:

- It acts as a blueprint for our collection, guiding staff in decision-making regarding the selection, management, and preservation of the collection.
- It identifies responsibilities for developing collections.
- It establishes parameters and priorities, guiding staff in developing budgets and allocating resources.
- It informs the public of the principles guiding our collection development.
- It states the Library's commitment to intellectual freedom and to providing information expressing a variety of viewpoints.

## **REGULATIONS**

### **COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION**

Knowledge of our community is essential in making decisions about the Library's collection. Our collection reflects the large, diverse, dynamic community we serve.

The Meehan Memorial Lansing Public Library defines its primary service audience as residents of the City of Lansing, its surrounding area including a small area of Wisconsin, located just across the river. As a secondary audience, we serve all residents of the state of Iowa who are also eligible for a library card. The library's service area is of rich cultural tradition. Our community is proud of its many arts, civic, educational, sports, and recreational opportunities and institutions. The area lies in the rich recreation district "driftless" area of the State of Iowa. The City itself consists of approximately 1,000 people, and more patrons come from adjoining townships. The middle school and high school is located in the community with the elementary being in New Albin, twelve miles north. The area is a large retirement area thus the majority of library patrons are of that age group.

### **PURPOSE OF COLLECTION**

It is the purpose of the Meehan Memorial Lansing Public Library to provide the residents of the community and surrounding area an access to printed and other forms of materials, within the limits of space and budget, and to provide other resources and services which will aid them in the pursuit of education, information, research, recreation and in the creative use of leisure time. The library also proposes that every individual will have access through it to the more extensive materials and services provided by the State Library of Iowa.

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

The Meehan Memorial Lansing Public Library is committed to:

- Maintaining an up-to-date collection of basic works of lasting value.
- Providing timely materials expressing a variety of opinions on issues of current and historical interest.
- Purchasing or borrowing items requested by users in accordance with policy.
- Supplying self-help materials for informal personal growth.
- Supporting educational, civic, and cultural activities within the community.

The library director will select materials on the basis of community interests and general needs. The general collection will include currently published juvenile, young adult and adult fiction and non-fiction, significant books of the past and present, and the local newspaper.

In Library acquisition, priority is given to printed materials, primarily books, over other media. Other media that are appropriate and cost effective will be considered if the funds are available to support them. This includes audio and electronic formats. The library will attempt to provide related equipment not readily available within the community, taking into consideration cost, durability, and manageability such as computers, printers(black/white, color, 17" print capability, 17" scanning capability)

## **INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM STATEMENTS**

### **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 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 other 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 presupposed 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; revised January 28, 1972, January 16, 1991, July 12, 2000, June 30, 2004, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee.)

### **Library Bill of Rights**

We support the American Library Association in its affirmation 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 by ALA June 18, 1948. Amended February 2, 1961 and January 23, 1980, inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996 by the ALA Council.)

### **STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

Meehan Memorial Lansing Public Library Board of Directors has delegated to the library staff the responsibility of making the selection for the library collection.

## **CATALOGING**

The mission of the library staff is to support the teaching, research, and service mission of the library by providing bibliographic access to the collections housed in the library. To accomplish this goal, the library staff strives to: Create, organize and maintain accurate and comprehensive bibliographic data for all the material in the Library's collections. The library collection is according to the Library of Congress cataloging practice.

## **GIFTS & DONATIONS**

When the library receives a cash gift for the purchase of books or other materials, the selection will be made by the director. In the case of a memorial tribute, the general nature of the book, or its subject area, will be based upon the interests of the deceased, wishes of the donor, and the needs of the library. Memorial books will be identified by an inscription in the book. Memorial Books will also be governed the same as other books regarding weeding.

Any books or materials presented to the library will be evaluated as any other selection. In the donation of older, used books, the donor should understand that the library reserves the right to dispose of them if they do not meet the library's need or selection criteria through the library's annual book sale or recycle.

## **EVALUATION, MAINTENANCE, & WEEDING**

It is the objective of the library to maintain a sustainable collection based on the needs of the community.

### **Reconsideration of Materials**

The selection and de-selection of materials is an on-going process, involving many different staff and many interactions with the community. Members of the community may have questions about the process or about selection of specific items. These questions are addressed as follows:

1. Questions concerning the process or a specific item in the collection can be answered by a librarian. The professional staff can clarify scope and depth of the collection, the role of individual and parental responsibility, and the use of selection guides. Many inquiries can be answered without pursuing the reconsideration process. The principles governing selection can be found in the Collection Development Statement.
2. Patrons may wish to suggest alternative materials and can make suggestions for purchase.
3. Patrons may choose to ask for a formal review of specific materials. To do so, the patron must send a letter to the library board requesting reconsideration for a book.
4. Procedures for Requests for Reconsideration:

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- a. All members of the library board will read, view, or listen to the material within 45 days of receiving the request. The Board will meet to discuss and evaluate the material, and a response will be determined. The Board's response and a recommendation for action will be sent to the Library Director within 60 days after receiving the request.
- b. The Library Director, or designee, will respond to the individual who submitted the "Request for Reconsideration", and the Board of Trustees.
- c. The individual who submitted the Request for Reconsideration may appeal in writing the Director's response to the Library Board within 10 days after receiving the Director's response.

### DEALING WITH CHALLENGES:

The library will strive to meet the requests and concerns of the public in a very forthcoming manner. Keeping in mind that the library is a public entity, the board of trustees and staff are only caretakers of that entity. The library's goal is to keep an open mind to new and interesting aspects of life and interact those aspects into the world of Meehan Memorial Lansing Public Library so we can grow and change as the world around us changes.

### COLLECTION POLICY REVIEWS:

The Meehan Memorial Lansing Public Library Director, Staff, and Board of Trustees will regularly review this policy. Public notice will be made of any policy changes and patrons will be expected to abide by the terms of any updated policy.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees

Reviewed: 12/17/2019 by Library Board of Directors:

Eddie Penno 1-21-2020  
Eddie Penno

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Dave Darling

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