

LIBRARY COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Library and Community Services
800 Alma St., Menlo Park, CA 94025
tel 650-330-2501



Purpose and Goals

The mission of the Menlo Park Library is to be the city's focal point for information, learning, and culture and to enrich lives through collections, programs, and expertise of the Library. In order to enact this mission, the Library acquires and makes available materials which inform, educate, entertain and enrich persons as individuals and as members of society. As no library can possibly acquire all print and non-print materials, every library must of necessity employ a policy of selectivity in acquisitions. It is the goal of the Library to provide a high quality collection of books and other materials, in a variety of formats, for all ages, that is responsive to the needs and interests of the community it serves. The Menlo Park community is made up of people with a wide range of backgrounds, tastes, interests, and attitudes, and the collection must reflect the diversity therein. The purpose of this policy is to guide librarians and to inform the public about the principles upon which selection and retention decisions are made.

Freedom of Access

To support an informed public, the collections shall represent diverse points of view, and may include materials that some members of the public consider to be controversial in nature. The Library will provide free and equitable access to library collections to all users, despite individual or group prejudice or offense about a particular item or type of material. The Library neither approves nor disapproves of the views expressed in materials included in the collection. The inclusion of an item is not to be considered an endorsement, official or otherwise, by the Library. Menlo Park Library adheres to and supports the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read statement (see Appendix A) as official library policy. Our librarians are obliged to oppose the efforts of anyone to abridge the public's right to read. The Library staff believes that the right to read is an important part of the intellectual freedom that is basic to democracy. Children are not limited to the children's collection, although this collection is located in a separate part of the library to facilitate use. Parents or guardians are responsible for a child's reading and library use – this is not the Library's responsibility.

The Library's Collection

Menlo Park Library's primary service area is the incorporated City of Menlo Park. The Library operates two physical locations for Menlo Park Library: the Main Library (Main) and the Belle Haven Branch Library (Branch). The Library provides public access to physical books and periodicals, audiovisual media in various formats, electronic resources including eBooks, resource databases and streaming content, and other items of interest to Menlo Park residents including but not limited to vegetable and flower seeds, athletic equipment, portable computers, and other items as need and interest may arise.

At any given time, a significant portion of the Library's collection is in circulation, i.e. checked out to individual borrowers, including to borrowers that reside in other cities who have requested Library materials through the Peninsula Library System interlibrary loan and delivery consortium in which the City of Menlo Park is currently a member. When not in circulation to borrowers, the majority of the items in the Library's physical collection are housed at Main, it being the larger central facility of the two locations. The Main location is tailored to and prioritizes the interests and needs of City of Menlo Park residents. The Branch's physical collection is smaller and prioritizes the needs and interests of the immediate neighborhood of which the Branch is located. The Library collections are consistently and timely maintained to these standards to the greatest extent feasible within the available resources.

Inter Library Loan and Delivery

Budget and space limitations preclude the Library from duplicating the specialized and comprehensive collections that exist elsewhere in the broader Bay Area. Instead, the Library offers its patrons access to a greatly expanded collection via the interlibrary services of the Peninsula Library System (PLS) and LINK+. PLS is a consortium of 35 city, county, and community college libraries in San Mateo County that allows patrons of the member libraries to search a joint catalog of member library holdings, borrow and return books at any library in the system, and use other joint library services. LINK+ is a consortium of public and academic libraries in California and Nevada whose members loan one another available items from their collections.

Selection

“Selection” refers to the act of identifying and evaluating specific items for addition to the Library’s collection. Selectors are responsible for choosing titles which fit in with the evaluation criteria in this plan, and help the Library fulfill its mission. Selection is a discerning and interpretive process, involving a general knowledge of the subject and its important literature, a familiarity with the materials in the collection, and a recognition of the needs of the community. Staff members selecting library materials are assisted by reviews from reputable sources, authoritative discussions of the subject, popular demand, requests of library patrons, and circulation statistics and trends. The Library selects resources based upon the principle of open access to materials for all; materials are not excluded due to frank or controversial content. Decisions are made solely on the merits of the work in relation to the building of the collection.

Evaluation of Criteria

All materials, whether purchased or donated, are considered in terms of the following criteria, which are applied as appropriate across all subjects, languages, material types, and formats:

- Accuracy of information and depth of content
- Quality, including accuracy, clarity, originality of thought, literary merit or artistic excellence
- Reviews in professional or popular media
- Popular interest and community demand
- Cost and availability
- Suitability of physical format and durability for heavy library use
- Skill, competence, and purpose of the author
- Relationship to materials in other area libraries
- The work’s presence in standard bibliographies or indexes
- Contemporary significance or permanent value
- Ability to meet the needs of the community; appropriateness to interests and skills of intended audience
- Relation to existing collections and other material on the subject
- Material’s contribution to a diversity of viewpoints and cultural perspectives
- Items with local emphasis or significance

The Library collects a range of general-interest materials. Owing to budgetary and space constraints, the Library is unable to maintain a collection used for academic research or the pursuit of highly specialized and professional interests. The Library’s collection is non-archival, but does contain City of Menlo Park documents that are required by law to be on display to the public for specific periods of time. Materials are acquired in multiple formats when appropriate, including print, audiovisual, and digital resources. For any given work, the determination of which format(s) is acquired is based--in part--on factors such as the work’s intended audience and its intended purpose. When all other factors are equal, ease of access by and broadness of appeal to the public should be the primary consideration in choosing formats. New formats shall be considered for the circulating collection when a significant portion of the community population has the necessary technology to make use of the format. User demand, cost per item, ease of use, equipment requirements, storage requirements, staff requirements for processing, maintenance, and training, and availability of items in the format are also factors that are considered in the adoption of a new format.

The library does not purchase the following materials:

- Costly books of little demand
- Textbooks (unless they are of general interest and the best in the subject field)
- Family genealogies
- Books that are not professionally bound
- Books that are self-published
- Highly obscure or specialized works
- Rare books
- Items that require original cataloging
- Vanity press publications
- Obsolete formats such as cassettes, vinyl records, and VHS tapes

Staff will also consider items in terms of their ability to provide balance to the collection and their availability via LINK+ and intersystem loans from other PLS libraries. The library recognizes the importance of acquiring materials in formats that can be utilized by City of Menlo Park residents with disabilities. The Library will seek to match community demand with the existing collections of such materials. Multiple copies of items may be purchased in response to user demand as evidenced by number of holds, anticipated popularity, and repeated requests. The Library will only add items to its collection that conform to U.S. Laws (e.g. copyright, trade laws). Generally, the library is limited to selecting works that are currently in print and available through customary domestic trade suppliers.

Purchase Suggestions

Purchase suggestions from library users are welcome and all suggestions are given serious consideration. Suggestions are subject to the same selection criteria as other materials, and are not automatically added to the collection. If the title is acquired, the library card holder will be given the first opportunity to borrow the item. Review or solicitation copies submitted for consideration as potential acquisitions are accepted under the same terms as those for donated items.

Donations

Gifts of books and other library materials in good condition are accepted by the Library and evaluated for inclusion in the collection using the same criteria that are used for materials acquired by purchase. Gifts which do not meet the Library's evaluation criteria and policies may be refused. Donated books that are not added to the Library's circulating collection may be given to Friends of Menlo Park Library, an independent nonprofit charitable organization for their fundraising book sales or, alternatively, the books may be given away. The Library is under no obligation to add a donated item to the collection nor to notify the donor of the disposition of that item. Donors cannot impose conditions relating to any gift either before or after the Library accepts the gift. Donation-receipt forms are available upon request at the time of donation and are completed by donors. Values are assigned by donors, not by library staff. Donations to the library may be eligible for tax donations; check with your tax advisor.

Monetary Donations

The Library may accept monetary donations, lifetime gifts and bequests. All such offers will be subject to review by the Library Director or their designee before they can be accepted, and offers may be referred instead to the Library's partner charitable nonprofit organizations e.g. Friends of Menlo Park and/or Menlo Park Library Foundation. While the Library welcomes gifts designating funds for specific audiences or types of materials in the collection, the designation of funds for specific titles may not be accommodated if such titles are inconsistent with the Library's selection criteria.

Collection Maintenance

The Library's collections are regularly evaluated to ensure that the materials they contain remain current and in good condition, and that they continue to reflect the interests and needs of the Library's patrons. Collection maintenance is undertaken with as much care and consistency as the initial selection of materials. Maintenance is critical to keeping the collections current, attractive, responsive, diverse, and useful to the needs of the community. In the pursuit of maintaining an up-to-date, useful collection, statistical tools such as circulation reports, collection turnover rates, and hold fill rates are studied to determine how the collection is being used and how it should change to answer patron need. Periodic visual inspections of the collections themselves also help selectors determine how and to what extent individual items and categories of works are being used and which materials are candidates for withdrawal, minimal repair, or replacement.

Withdrawing Materials

Material withdrawal is an important part of collection development. Systematic deselection is required to keep the collection responsive to patron needs, to ensure its vitality and usefulness to the community, and to make room for newer materials or newer formats. Items are withdrawn from the collection with the same degree of attention as initial selection. Withdrawal of library materials is vested in the Library Director who authorizes qualified staff to perform this process. Librarians must use their professional judgement when determining which items to deselect. The staff will evaluate the library's collection for discarding of materials that are one or more of the following:

1. Obsolete: outdated, factually inaccurate, or misleading, or superseded by new information
2. In poor physical condition: worn, damaged, or lost
3. No longer relevant to the needs and interests of the community: not in high demand, low circulation frequency

Other factors influencing the withdrawal of an item may include space limitations, altered scope of the collection, ease of access to materials through PLS or LINK+, and holding a higher number of copies of a particular item than are necessary. Withdrawn items may be offered to the Friends of the Library for resale, given away or donated, or recycled.

Repurchasing Materials

Materials that have been lost or damaged may be replaced using the same criteria as for initial selection. Replacement of lost, stolen, or withdrawn materials is not automatic. The decision to replace is influenced by:

- The number of copies the Library owns
- The availability of newer materials on the subject
- Existence of adequate coverage of the subject
- Item circulation numbers
- Popular demand for the title
- Availability of space
- Cost and availability of replacement copy
- If the item is a core collection title, or significant in its subject area

Requests for Reconsideration

The Library welcomes expression of opinion about its collection. Residents of the City of Menlo Park may raise an objection to a book or other materials in the library by submitting a Request for Reconsideration form with a written explanation of their objections, citing specifics from the material in question. These requests are forwarded to the selection librarians, who evaluate the recommendation and decide upon the actions to be taken, in relation to the library's mission statement and the selection criteria of this collection development policy. After evaluation, a response will be made by the Library Director within 30 days of receiving the formal objection.

Review

This collection development policy will periodically be evaluated and revised as times and circumstances require. Comments and suggestions from the public or library staff should be submitted to the Library Commission for consideration. This collection development policy will be reviewed no less often than once every five years.

Policy history

Action	Date	Notes
Policy adoption	May 10, 2002	Library Commission reviewed
Policy updated	May 20, 2019	Library Commission reviewed
Policy updated	February 28, 2022	Library Commission reviewed

APPENDIX A

American Library Association Statements

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
- V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- VI. Libraries that make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

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 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 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