**Section III -- Materials Selection**

**1. Purpose**

The purpose of this material selection policy is to guide librarians in their selection activities, and to inform the public of the principles upon which selections are made.

In the selection of materials, the Library reflects its mission and emphasizes its responsibility to provide the most searched-for materials to meet the cultural, educational, informational, and recreational needs of the community.

**2.   Collections and Responsibilities**

**2.1 Collections**

The Library maintains separate collections on the basis of format, function, and age of audience.  Materials with the same format and audience are integrated into unified collections, relying upon the Dewey Decimal classification system to organize shelf locations by subject.

**2.2 Responsibility for Materials Selection**

Ultimate responsibility for materials selection rests with the Library Director, who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Board of Trustees.

Other staff members participate on selection committees for particular collections, and all staff members are encouraged to suggest titles for purchase.  Citizens are invited to offer suggestions which are considered promptly for possible purchase.

**3.   Guidelines**

**3.1 Breadth of Selection**

In addressing the cultural and educational needs of the community, the Library recognizes the importance of an aware and effective citizenry, familiar with its past heritage and with the essential issues underlying decisions for the future.  Therefore, the Library provides a broad selection for educational backgrounds and reading skills of citizens in the Williamsburg community.  A broad selection is necessary to fully communicate the complexity of the culture shared by the community.

The Library also collects materials that enable children, teens, and adults to educate themselves continually, as a vital supplement to formal schooling.  The Library considers an item to have educational value if it contributes to the positive growth of a person, either as an individual or as a member of society.

The Library provides materials in any format which helps meet its objectives.

**3.2 Informational Needs**

The Library recognizes the fundamental informational needs of the public in an increasingly complex and technological society, and the unique community role which it plays in providing practical and immediately useful public, personal, and business information.

In addition to circulating materials, the Library provides reference staff and materials as the budget will allow, and makes use of specialized reference and inter-library loan services provided through regional, state, and national cooperative resources.

The Library recognizes the purposes and resources of other libraries and institutions in the community and does not needlessly duplicate functions and materials.  Because other libraries function to satisfy specialized research needs, the public library does not need to be, and cannot afford to be, a storehouse of last resort for the world’s great knowledge.

The Library does not attempt to acquire textbooks or other curriculum related materials.

**3.3 Recreational Reading**

The Library recognizes the recreational reading needs of the community.  Materials are selected for both permanence of value and community demand.  Because citizens want to read the novels, view the videos, hear the recordings, and familiarize themselves with the ideas that are currently popular in the nation’s culture, the obligation of their tax-supported library is to provide such materials in sufficient quantity to truly meet the demand.  Although an item may not be popular in a few years, the Library must respond to current public interest.

**3.4 Public Use**

Citizens’ needs are central to the selection process at the Williamsburg Public Library.  Because staff time and material funds are finite, every purchase is measured in terms of probable use by the public.  Procedures for selecting materials and evaluating the collection focuses on quickly, accurately, and effectively anticipating public needs.  The Library emphasizes expedient purchase and processing, so that materials are available at the time the public interest in them is high.

Subject and title circulation patterns, reserve and inter-library loan requests, explicit suggestions, observed failures in meeting requests, and other user-centered measures are used to indicate potential public interest.  Although items are selected for various reasons, including permanence of value, currency of interest, diversity of viewpoint, and creative merit, all items selected should have a reasonable probability of being needed and used by the local community.

**3.5 Selection Process**

The Library does not promulgate particular beliefs or views, nor is the selection of any given book equivalent to the Library’s endorsement of the author’s viewpoint.  Within the framework of the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement, adopted by the American Library Association, the Library provides materials representing all approaches to public issues of a controversial nature.  One of the essential purposes of a library is to provide a resource where individuals can examine many points of view and make their own decisions.

Selection is a judgemental and interpretive process, involving a general knowledge of the subject and its importance, familiarity with the materials in the collection, awareness of the materials available on the subject, and recognition of the needs of the community.  The Library responds to the special characteristics of the community in determining the public need for specific subjects and types of materials.

Items which are locally published or produced are evaluated by the same criteria as other acquisitions, such as probable citizen interest and permanent value.

The Director and Trustees are aware that one or more persons may take issue with the selection of any specific item, and welcome an expression of opinion by patrons.  However, the Library does not undertake the task of pleasing every patron by eliminating items purchased under the guidance of the policies expressed herein.  Citizen concerns about items in procedure are set forth in Section 8 of this policy.

The selection criteria described in this policy are also used in the evaluation of gifts of potential library materials, within the framework established by the gifts policy approved by the Board of Trustees.

The Library does not accept individual items or collections, whether temporarily or permanently, for the convenience of the members of particular organizations, rather than for the use of the general public.

Materials which are no longer useful are systematically weeded from the collection, and disposed of according to the policy for disposition of library materials approved by the Board of Trustees.

**4.1  Adult Materials**

Although materials of permanent cultural value are essential and necessary, current interest and relevance are also primary criteria in selecting adult materials.  Because the explosion of knowledge in the contemporary world means that materials age quickly, new topics of vital interest are continually appearing.  The collection must constantly change to reflect the changing informational and recreational needs of the public if the Library is to remain a meaningful source of information.

Specific considerations include:

**A.  Fiction**

Recognizing the variety of genres and literary forms available, and the need to satisfy readers of differing tastes, interests, purposes, and reading levels, the Library selects a broad spectrum of fiction.  Great attention is paid to accurately anticipating and meeting the demands of the public.

It is not the place of the Library to coerce the tastes of its patrons by selecting materials according to necessarily limited and personal standards; fiction meeting the full range of patron tastes is provided.

**B.  Technical Information**

The Library recognizes its responsibility to supply authoritative, up-to-date, and understandable material in rapidly changing technical subjects such as computers, engineering, medicine, law and public affairs.  A primary effort is made to keep the collection in these areas current and relevant.

**C.  Sciences**

Care is exercised to represent all sides of controversial questions and to maintain balance among competing views.  Therefore, conservative, liberal, revolutionary, and reactionary schools of political, religious, social, and economic thought are available in the collection.  Books which contain points of view that may be offensive to some people are purchased if they also represent a significant segment of opinion concerning a specific question.  The Library buys representative titles expressing views which may not be scientifically vetted but for which there is public demand.

**D.  Sex**

A library’s responsibility is to provide an adequate supply of information on sex, designed for all age levels of readers.  Both popular works and authoritative texts for laypersons are purchased.

**E.  Genealogical Materials**

The emphasis in collecting genealogical materials is left to the Williamsburg Historical Commission, ICHS, and the Iowa County Genealogical Society.

**F.  Williamsburg History**

Because one of the primary purposes of a community library is to collect the community’s history, the Library acquires useful municipal documents and materials relating to Williamsburg and Iowa County.  Purchase of county histories is limited to adjacent counties.

**G.  Foreign Language**

Foreign language materials are collected primarily to aid those learning the language.

**H.  Travel**

Standard travel guides are purchased and kept current.

**4.2  Youth Materials**

The Youth Services collection includes books, periodicals, recordings, and other library materials for children.

Minors are not restricted in the use of the Library.  Responsibility for the reading, listening, and viewing habits of minors rests with parents and legal guardians.

**A.  Young Adults**

The young adult collection is a browsing collection, not dissimilar to the adult fiction collection.  It is a recreational reading collection, with both fiction and nonfiction titles.

In selecting materials, the Library emphasizes the adult aspect of the term “young adult,” and guidelines for selecting adult rather than juvenile materials are applied.  Some duplication of titles in the young adult and adult collection may occur if the material is suitable for more than one age level.

**B.  Children**

The aim of the children’s collection is to serve the child’s whole cultural, educational, informational, and recreational needs; this collection also serves parents, teachers, and youth workers who assist children in learning.

Materials are purchased for a wide range of ages, abilities, and interests, from infancy through sixth grade.  Young people at all levels of ability are considered in the selection process, and materials are selected with the idea that the young person is not only the influential adult of tomorrow, but a person in his or her own right today.

The Library makes a continuous effort to include titles which foster healthy attitudes about human relations in the children’s collections.  Books on all countries, races, nationalities, and religious groups are carefully selected; however, those which bear serious discriminatory remarks or attitudes are not purchased.

The Library believes the introduction of the subject of sex to the child to be primarily the responsibility of the family.  The Library’s responsibility is to provide books written in a simple, dignified manner on the processes of human physical development, human caring, and reproduction.  Materials of an introductory nature are provided in the children’s collection, while more specific books are shelved with the adult collection.

**4.3  Media**

**General Guidelines**

The Williamsburg Public Library Media Department collects, maintains, and circulates non-print cultural, educational, informational, and recreational material.

Although written materials occasionally accompany the audiovisual items, the media materials are largely non-print and most require electronic equipment to use.  The collection includes formats which communicate through listening, watching, or computing.

Formats presently collected by the department include DVDs, audiobooks, and mixed media kits.  In addition to the physical collection, the Library also subscribes to digital media services.  Because of the long-term investment required to establish a collection in a new format and the risk of investing in a format which might prove commercially unsuccessful, the decision to add a new format is made neither frequently nor lightly.

**5.  Library Bill of Rights**

**The following was taken directly from the American Library Association website.  Click** [**here**](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill) **for more information.**

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.

A history of the Library Bill of Rights is found in the latest edition of the [Intellectual Freedom Manual.](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/iftoolkits/ifmanual/intellectual)

**6.  Freedom to Read Statement**

**The following was taken directly from the American Library Association website.  Click** [**here**](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/statementspols/freedomreadstatement) **for more information.**

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.*
2. 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.
3. *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.*
4. 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.
5. *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.*
6. 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.
7. *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.*
8. 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.
9. *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.*
10. 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.
11. *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.*
12. 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.
13. *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.*
14. The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

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

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.

*A Joint Statement by:*

[American Library Association](http://www.ala.org/)

[Association of American Publishers](http://www.publishers.org/)

*Subsequently endorsed by:*

[American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression](http://www.abffe.com/)

[The Association of American University Presses, Inc.](http://www.aaupnet.org/)

[The Children's Book Council](http://www.cbcbooks.org/)

[Freedom to Read Foundation](http://www.ala.org/groups/affiliates/relatedgroups/freedomtoreadfoundation)

[National Association of College Stores](http://www.nacs.org/)

[National Coalition Against Censorship](http://www.ncac.org/)

[National Council of Teachers of English](http://www.ncte.org/)

[The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression](http://www.tjcenter.org/)

**7.  Freedom to View Statement**

**The following was taken directly from the American Library Association website.  Click** [**here**](http://www.ala.org/vrt/professionalresources/vrtresources/freedomtoview) **for more information.**

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 guarantees 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.

For questions or comments please contact [vrtwebsite@ala.org](mailto:vrtwebsite@ala.org)

**8.  Citizen Concerns of Library Materials--Procedure**

The Williamsburg Public Library Board of Trustees recognizes the right of citizens to question and comment on materials in the Library collection.  Recognizing the importance of the expression of individual concerns in the democratic process, the basic policies set out in the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement will be followed by the Library staff and the Library Board of Trustees in responding to citizen questions about Library materials.

Citizen concerns will be dealt with promptly and courteously.  The appropriate collection manager will first discuss the material with the concerned individual.  If the individual wishes, he/she will be referred to the Director.  An individual still concerned about materials in the Library after discussion with the Director may state his/her comments on the provided form.  These written concerns will be brought before the Board of Trustees at a regular meeting for their review.  At the meeting the citizen may present his/her written comments and the staff will present a written response.  The Trustees will make a final ruling on the matter.  A final written response will be provided to the citizen.