

# Cumberland County Library System Materials Selection Policy

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## General Information

The Cumberland County Library System’s primary focus is meeting the cultural, educational, and informational needs of library users and community residents. To that end, the Library System affirms that:

- It is a forum for information and ideas, enabling library users and community residents to have the fullest access to books and other library resources;
- Free access to library materials and services is essential for community residents’ education, employment, enjoyment, and self-government;
- Parents and guardians have the responsibility and right to guide their own children’s use of the library and its resources;
- Library services must be designed to maximize the system’s available financial resources in order to meet the broadest base of community needs.

A fundamental part of the Library System’s service is the selection of appropriate materials to build and maintain collections that will provide for the interest, information, and enlightenment of the residents of Cumberland County. In meeting these needs and interests, all of the library materials owned by the member libraries will be considered to constitute the total resources of the System. To develop resources in depth within the bounds of budget and space limitations, Library staff regularly evaluates the System’s collection strengths at member libraries and builds on those foundations.

The Cumberland County Library System endorses the Library Bill of Rights (American Library Association), the Freedom to Read statement (American Library Association and American Book Publishers Council), and the Freedom to View statement (American Film and Video Association). For the purpose of this

policy, these statements are extended to include library materials and electronic resources, in print or non-print formats. (See attached).

The Cumberland County Library System recognizes that many ideas are controversial and affirms its obligation to provide materials representing various points of view on current issues, trends, and controversies. The Library System does not endorse particular beliefs or views, nor does the selection of an item express or imply an endorsement of the author's viewpoint.

The Cumberland County Library System does not restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of its library users. Parents and guardians have the sole responsibility and right to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources. Collections are separated into varying age levels (children's, teen and adult) and formats for the convenience of its customers' use.

### **Basic Criteria for Selecting Materials**

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, an awareness of the bibliographies about the subject, and knowledge of the needs of the community. Basic criteria for selecting materials include:

1. Literary merit and enduring value
2. Accuracy and authoritativeness
3. Importance of subject matter to the collection
4. Reputation and/or significance of the author
5. Importance as a document of the times
6. Relevance to community needs and/or desires
7. Suitability for the intended audiences
8. Reviews and recommendations from professional sources
9. Quality and suitability of the format
10. Popular demand
11. Appearance of the title in special bibliographies or indexes
12. Cost
13. Availability of the materials elsewhere in the area

### **General Guidelines for Material Selection Process**

The following general guidelines are used to select materials:

1. Selection of all library materials is the ultimate responsibility of the Library Director, with support from the library staff, who operates within the framework of policy approved by the Library Board.
2. Professionally accepted selection aids, catalogs, and reviewing sources will be used. This includes: professional journals; trade journals; subject

- bibliographies; publishers' catalogs and promotional materials; reviews from reputable sources; lists of recommended titles; and sales representatives for specific materials.
3. Recommendations from the public are welcomed for consideration. Requests for materials from individuals or groups will be considered for purchase with regard to selection criteria, space, and budget limitations.
  4. Materials donated to the library must meet the library's standards and needs before they are added to the collection. Donations of materials are accepted with the understanding that they will be handled at the discretion of the Library. Donations and gifts of materials believed to be rare editions will be held for evaluation by a competent authority, after which the Library will decide upon their disposition.
  5. Selections for memorials shall be the sole responsibility of the Library. The donor's suggestions are welcomed by the Library for consideration.
  6. Due to changing community needs and market availability of materials, items withdrawn from the collection because of loss, damage, or wear are not always replaced. (This includes items that have been lost and paid for by the user.) The need for replacement will be based on the **Basic Criteria for Selecting Materials** (see above).

## **Language**

The primary language of the Library System's collection is English. Materials in other languages may be considered based on the Library System's financial resources, the needs of the community and the availability of resources from other area libraries.

## **Interlibrary Loan**

Interlibrary Loan requests are periodically reviewed; and items that are frequently requested may be added to the collection.

## **Copyright**

The Cumberland County Library System and its staff observe copyright and licensing provisions for the materials it purchases. In using the Library System's materials, customers are responsible for complying with copyright laws and licensing agreements.

## **Children's Materials**

To encourage life-long reading habits, the Children's Collection in each Cumberland County Library provides materials in a variety of formats to satisfy and stimulate the informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs of the children from birth through the elementary school ages. Collections may also provide adults with materials that relate to the well-being of children and enrich preschool and school curricula.

Within budget parameters, all libraries provide the best of new materials and selected older works of lasting value. The **Basic Criteria for Selecting Materials** (see above) and **Guidelines for Material Selection Process** (see above) guide purchasing for children's collections. Additionally, attention is paid to the stages of emotional and intellectual maturity of children. This includes reading level, quality of illustrations, suitability of format, bias, and age-appropriateness of content.

Collections will have materials for children of all ages — board books, picture books, early readers, fiction and non-fiction — selected to support children's personal interests as well as homework. Collections will be largely print, but also include collections of audio-visual materials such as children's videos and DVDs, audio-cassettes, book-cassette kits, compact discs, CDRoms, and other emerging formats.

Periodically, each Library assesses its collection and withdraws items that show heavy wear or damage, lack of use, or information that is no longer current. Replacement orders for classic children's titles and more heavily used titles are key to maintaining a high quality Children's Collection.

To guide selection decisions, Library staff uses quality selection resources such as *School Library Journal*, *Booklist*, *Horn Book*, *Title Source* and *Children's Catalog*.

## **Teen Materials**

Teen Collections are developed for the purpose of meeting the recreational reading and informational needs of the middle school and high school age population. These materials often serve as a transitional collection for the reader moving from the children's collection to the adult collection.

Selection criteria may include:

1. Age and interest appropriate content and presentation
2. Emphasis on quality, critically acclaimed materials as demonstrated in awards, specialized bibliographies and/or reviews
3. Quality and aesthetics of illustrations to stimulate the imagination
4. Awareness of curriculum-based needs of public, private, and home school students
5. Information and stories, which represent a spectrum of family styles, values and interests
6. Materials which represent the richness and diversity of young people's local and world community
7. Materials which meet the particular developmental needs of youth at different stages

8. Materials related to the problems, adventures, and topics of interest confronting teens on a daily basis

Materials are chosen from reviews in journals or through book lists from established sources. New purchases will be identified using quality sources such as *Booklist*, *Kirkus Children and Young Adult Reviews*, *VOYA* and *Title Source*.

Weeding is ongoing and titles are regularly replaced by new materials of current need and interest. Sources such as *Senior High School Catalog*, *Best Books for Young Adults* can be checked before titles are withdrawn.

## **Adult Materials**

### **A. Fiction**

The collection focuses on literature including classics and standard titles, diverse genres and special interests. There is no single standard for inclusion in the fiction collection. Because of the large volume of fiction published, it is possible to purchase only a representative selection with emphasis on major authors and the most popular examples of a genre.

Customer requests for fiction are purchased whenever possible, and influence the addition of more copies. Genre fiction such as mysteries, romances, espionage, horror, thrillers, science fiction, fantasy and westerns are purchased in proportion to demand and use statistics. Efforts are made to complete series, purchase award-winning titles and to represent local authors, publishers and subject matter.

Materials are chosen from reviews in journals or through book lists from established sources. New purchases will be identified using quality sources such as *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, *New York Times Book Review*, and *Title Source*.

Weeding is ongoing and titles are regularly replaced by new materials of current need and interest. Sources such as *Fiction Catalog* can be checked before titles are withdrawn.

### **B. Non-Fiction**

The nonfiction collection emphasizes timely, accurate and useful informational materials to support individual and community interests. It emphasizes materials that are current and in high demand. Resources are available for all ages and reading levels in a variety of formats. Materials are selected to represent a continuum of opinions and viewpoints when available. Titles with sustaining value and those of current, accepted authority are part of the Library collection. As a new field of knowledge emerges, the Library responds with timely additions.

Scholarly and in-depth subject collections may be considered based upon the Library System's financial resources, the needs of the community and the availability of resources from other area libraries.

Materials are chosen from reviews in journals or through book lists from established sources. New purchases will be identified using quality sources such as *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, *New York Times Book Review*, and *Title Source*.

Weeding is ongoing and titles are regularly replaced by new materials of current need and interest. Sources such as *Public Library Catalog* can be checked before titles are withdrawn.

### **C. Electronic Resources**

Connection with electronic information services and networks provides library users with information access and transfer. It does not replace materials selection and acquisition, but enhances access to information. The Library system uses the criteria below to select electronic services and databases available to staff and borrowers, and to select the recommended web sites available on the CCLS website.

Additional selection criteria for new (electronic) and emerging formats includes:

1. Impact on equipment, staff, storage and space
2. Demand for format in community
3. Durability of format for library use
4. Suitability for direct public access
5. Availability of adequate startup and continuing funding
6. Capability for networked distribution
7. Acceptable response time
8. Timeliness in updating information
9. Logical operation and ease of use for public and staff
10. Technical quality of production or reproduction
11. Reduction/replacement of in print or other format materials
12. Access available in the library as well as from the user's home, school or office.

### **D. Periodicals and Newspapers**

Libraries subscribe to a broad range of periodicals and newspapers, focusing on items of local interest, current topics and popular subject areas. Additional full-text periodical coverage is provided through electronic databases accessible in-house as well as remotely. Periodicals and newspapers are retained according to the individual Library policy and collections are reviewed annually for additions and deletions.

### **E. Audio-Visual Materials**

Audio-visual collections serve the general information, education and recreation needs of the community. The collection may include audio books, music, video recordings and computer software which represent a diversity of views and expression. Rating labels are not affixed to materials. Emerging formats are considered based on what is judged to be the best and most affordable way to

present the information on the subject. Advances in technology will often dictate changes in formats from time to time.

Additional selection criteria for audio-visual materials include:

- Technical quality of audio and visual reproduction
- Presentation or experience that is unique to format and provides an alternative to print
- Significance of performance or diversity in interpretation
- Critical acclaim as demonstrated in awards, nomination for awards, and/or reviews

## **Materials as Gifts to the Library**

Gifts or donations of materials to the collection can be in the form of money or actual materials. These items are added to the collection solely at the discretion of the Library. Gifts and donations are evaluated in accordance with the Library System's Basic Criteria for Selecting Items and the other parameters outlined in this collection development policy.

If a gift of materials is accepted by the Library, the item(s) becomes the property of that Library, to be used or disposed of as determined by the Library.

Upon request, the donor can receive a written acknowledgement of the gift. If the donor wishes to receive such an acknowledgement, he/she should leave name and address and number of items donated. Library staff will not appraise the books or indicate a value in the acknowledgment letter.

## **Memorial Gift Items**

Financial contributions in the form of memorial gifts are accepted by the Cumberland County Library System and its member libraries. Books or other materials are added to the collection, usually in memory or honor of an individual or group. While the donor's suggestions for purchase are welcomed by the Library for its consideration, selections for memorials shall be the sole responsibility of the Library.

A memorial may be placed in the Library collection, either for reference or circulating use. The Library to whom the gift is made will insert a memorial book plate in each item, and records of the gift will be maintained by the Library until the item is no longer in use.

## **Withdrawal of Library Materials**

In order to maintain a timely, accurate and useful collection that is in good condition, Library staff will continually and systematically evaluate its collections. Staff will evaluate the usefulness of materials, withdraw outdated or worn items

and replace items as needed. Materials may also be withdrawn if they are little used or superseded by a new edition or better work on the same subject. Titles can be checked against standard bibliographies in the subject to see if the items have historical or literary value. Holdings which are readily accessible in other libraries may also be considered when making weeding decisions.

Items withdrawn from the collection may be sold at book sales benefiting the Library, offered to other libraries or non-profit organizations, or discarded at the sole discretion of the Library.

## **Requests for Reconsideration of Materials**

The Cumberland County Library System recognizes that many ideas are controversial and affirms its obligation to provide materials representing various points of view on current issues, trends, and controversies. The Library System does not endorse particular beliefs or views, nor does the selection of an item express or imply an endorsement of the author's viewpoint. Further, Library materials will not be marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of the contents, nor will items be sequestered, except for the purpose of protecting them from damage or theft.

Comments from members of the community about the collection or individual items in the collection frequently provide librarians with useful information about interests or needs that may not be adequately met by the collection. The Library welcomes expression of opinion by patrons, but will be governed by this Materials Selection Policy in making additions to or deleting items from the collection.

When a member of the community has a question or an objection concerning the presence of an item in the collection, this concern should be discussed with Library staff. If this discussion does not address the citizen's concerns, the staff member will refer the individual to the Library Director.

If after discussing the issue with the Library Director, the citizen is not satisfied, the library user will be given the opportunity to file a formal, written *Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials* form with the Library owning the item. All *Requests for Reconsideration of Library Materials* are reported to the Library Board and become a matter of public record. (As a courtesy, other Cumberland County Library System members owning the item are also informed of the reconsideration request.)

Upon receipt of a formal, written request, the individual(s) responsible for the selection of the item will review the request and provide a written letter to the objector notifying him/her of the disposition of the materials.

In the event that the person who initiated the request is not satisfied with the decision, he/she may appeal for a hearing before the Board of Trustees by



making a written request to the President of the Board. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to limit the length of presentation and the number of speakers at the hearing. The Board will determine whether the request for reconsideration has been handled in accordance with stated policies and procedures of the Cumberland County Library System. On the basis of this determination, the Board may vote to uphold or override the decision of the Library Director.

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## **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 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 18, 1948.  
Amended February 2, 1961, and January 23, 1980,  
inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996,  
by the ALA Council.*

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## **The Freedom to Read Statement**

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are

working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

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

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

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order

to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

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

We therefore affirm these propositions:

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

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

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

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

3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

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

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. *It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.*

The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.*

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

7. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they*

*can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.*

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

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

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

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

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## **Freedom to View Statement**

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. Endorsed by the ALA Council January 10, 1990*

### ***Policy Notice***

This policy is subject to change at any time without notice. Updates to the policy may be obtained from the Library System.