

Program Policy

Purpose

Library programs are an important resource for residents to engage in voluntary inquiry, the dissemination of information and ideas, and promotion of free expression and free access to ideas. The Library's programs are developed and managed to provide for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all residents.

Program decisions are made in conjunction with the Library's mission, vision, and strategic initiatives, especially the following:

- Positioning the Library as a source for lifelong learning
- Developing opportunities for engagement, discovery, and creativity
- Developing exceptional resources that anticipate and respond to patron needs and expectations
- Embracing diversity

Library programs are developed for a broad patron base and provide access to content that is relevant to the research, independent interests, and educational needs of residents.

The Library's programs will represent a wide range of varied and diverging viewpoints.

In developing programs, staff will include topics that represent the broad range of human experience, reflecting the ethnic, religious, racial, and socio-economic diversity, not only of the region it serves, but also the larger global perspective.

All library programs are evaluated and made accessible in accordance with the protections against discrimination set forth in section 46a-64 of the general statutes.

Definition of a Program

A Library program is a free event, virtual or in-person, planned by the Library staff for the benefit of those members of the public who opt to attend. It may involve outside presenters, facilitators, or performers and may be presented in cooperation with other entities. *Use of a public meeting room by an organization or individual to hold a public event is not a Library program.*

Roles and Responsibilities

The ultimate responsibility for Library programs lies with the Library Director who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Board of Trustees. The Director may delegate program responsibilities to qualified staff members. Staff members are professionally trained to curate and develop programs that provide access to the widest array of library and educational materials.

Program Selection

Designated staff use the following criteria when selecting program topics, speakers, and performers. Any program need not meet all these criteria to be acceptable:

- Community needs and interests
- Potential popularity among our patrons
- Favorable assessments by reputable critics, reviewers, or organizations
- Historical, cultural, or educational significance
- Relation to library collections, resources, exhibits

- Connection to other community, or national programs, exhibitions, or events
- Suitability of subject and style for intended audience
- The professional qualifications of the speaker/performer
- Representation of important movements or trends
- Representation of diverse points of view
- Local origination or relevance to Old Lyme and the region

Library sponsorship of a program does not constitute an endorsement by the Old Lyme-Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library of the content or of the speaker/performer of the program.

The Library will not offer programs that:

- Are purely of a commercial nature or are designed solely for the solicitation of business.
- Support or oppose any political candidate or ballot measure. (Educational programs on ballot measures, including candidate forums, may be offered).
- Programs that support or oppose a specific religion. (Educational programs that include religious themes, but don't serve to promote a particular religion, may be offered).

Program Development, Coordination, and Supervision

Library programs may originate from Library staff, partnering institutions, or members of the public.

In the event of a co-sponsored program, supervision of the program may be delegated to the co-sponsoring organization depending upon the timing and venue of the program. All programs sponsored or co-sponsored by the Library, however, must abide by this policy regardless of where they are hosted.

Program Access

Library programs are free and open to the public on a first-come, first-serve basis. Programs may require advanced registration. The Library reserves the right to limit access to programs based on room capacity, supply limitations, predetermined speaker/performer requirements, and/or target audience. Patrons attending programs must abide by the Library's *Behavior Policy* & *Child Safety Policy*.

Any individual requiring accommodation to participate in a Library program should contact the Library at least two weeks prior to the program.

Virtual Programs

The Library may offer programs using a virtual meeting platform. All live virtual programs require advanced registration. Registered participants will receive a link to log on to the program and must not share that link with others. Information collected during the registration process will be used only to communicate information about that program or to confirm eligibility to participate in that program.

Patrons attending virtual programs must abide by the Library's *Behavior Policy*. Failure to do so may result in immediate removal from the program.

The Library may contract with third parties to manage and provide asynchronous virtual programs. These programs are pre-recorded and broadcast via the internet or recorded as presented for later viewing. These programs are subject to the standards and criteria set forth in this policy.

Virtual program attendees must provide their own internet-enabled devices to attend virtual programs. Virtual program attendees assume all inherent risk of online activity. The Library will make a good faith effort to ensure all patrons are able to attend virtual programs, but make no guarantee that every patron will be capable of accessing every virtual program successfully.

Program Materials

Books, CDs, DVDs or other ancillary materials or supplies related to the content of a program may be offered for a suggested donation or for sale at a Library program as a convenience to attendees.

Program Evaluation

Library programs are evaluated on a variety of criteria, including, but not limited to:

- Number of attendees
- Engagement of audience
- Feedback from audience
- Clarity of presentation

The Library may gather written feedback from attendees and/or conduct surveys on potential topics and speakers of interest.

Intellectual Freedom and Censorship

The Old Lyme-Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library recognizes that many topics are controversial and that any given program/speaker/presenter may offend some patrons. Program content and speakers/performers will not be made on the basis of anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the basis of the principles stated in this policy. The removal, exclusion or censoring of any program content or speaker/performer on the sole basis that an individual finds such content or speaker/performer offensive is prohibited.

The Library Board of Trustees affirms the American Library Association's *Freedom to Read* statement, *Freedom to View* statement, and the *Library Bill of Rights* (see Appendix A). These statements are used as guiding documents in all decisions relating to the Library's collections.

Reconsideration of Library Programs

The Old Lyme-Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library recognizes the importance of public feedback regarding library materials and services.

Community members requesting review of library programs should refer to the Library's *Material Review and Reconsideration Policy*. Reconsideration requests may only be submitted by residents of Old Lyme.

This policy is in accordance with Public Act 25-168 Sec. 322, 323. This policy is posted on the Old Lyme-Phoebe Griffin Noyes website (oldlymelibrary.org), and copies are available in the Library.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees October 14, 2025

Appendix A: Freedom to Read Statement, Freedom to View Statement, & The Library Bill of Rights

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

The 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 guarantee of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, 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 January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council

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.

VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019. Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.