

San Diego Public Library Collection Development Policy

Adopted February 2025

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Purpose of Collection Development Policy

The mission of the San Diego Public Library is to inspire lifelong learning through connections to knowledge and each other. The San Diego Public Library endorses the principles of public access to information as documented in the American Library Association's "Library Bill of Rights," "Freedom to Read," and "Freedom to View," presented in the Appendices. Further, California State Law, AB 1825 passing in 2024, requires the following statements to be included in public library collection development policies:

1. The collection meets the broad and diverse interests of the community and respects both the library's autonomy and their specific community needs.
2. The public library serves as a center for voluntary inquiry and the dissemination of information and ideas.
3. Library materials should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people, and should present diverse points of view in the collection as a whole.
4. The right of the public to receive access to a range of social, political, aesthetic, moral, and other ideas and experiences is acknowledged.

The Collection Development Policy supports the Library's mission and serves as a guide for the selection and retention of materials at all San Diego Public Library locations.

Collection Level Definitions

The following collection levels are based on codes endorsed by the American Library Association.

1 - Minimal Level: A subject area in which few selections are made beyond very basic works. Librarians may purchase best-sellers, popular works, and general works on a subject. A collection at this level should be frequently and systematically reviewed for currency of information. Superseded editions and titles containing outdated information are withdrawn.

2 - Basic Information Level: Provides all of Level 1 and a selective collection of materials that serves to introduce and define a subject through a wide range of representative works, and may include some advanced titles. This level is sufficient to support the basic informational and recreational reading needs of a highly educated general public. The collection is frequently and systematically reviewed for currency of information.

3 - Study Level: Provides all of Level 2 and a collection that is adequate to impart and maintain knowledge about a subject in a systematic way, but at a level of less than research intensity. The collection includes both current and retrospective coverage through a wide range of basic works

in appropriate formats, complete collections of more important writers, selections from the works of secondary writers, and the reference tools pertaining to the subject. This level is adequate to support independent study. The collection is systematically reviewed for currency of information and to assure that essential and significant information is retained.

4 - Research Level: Provides all of Level 3 and a collection that includes major published source materials for independent research and primary sources to conduct historical research. The collection should include all important reference works and a wide selection of specialized monographs. Pertinent foreign languages materials are included. Older material is usually retained for historical research and actively preserved.

Scope of Collections

The San Diego Public Library consists of a Central Library and 35 branch libraries. It is the goal of the Library to provide a high quality collection that is responsive to the needs and interests of the general adult and juvenile population in the city of San Diego. The participation of the San Diego Public Library in the San Diego Circuit extends these resources to all residents in San Diego County.

Scope of Central Library

The Central Library has more than 1 million holdings that represent a range of popular to research level materials in print, audiovisual, microform, and electronic formats. The Central Library has a reference collection that supports in-depth research at a Study Level, but it also has a large circulating collection that can be accessed by all patrons through the holds systems.

Central Library houses special collections at the Research Level such as the history of books and printing, baseball, and California and San Diego history.

The Library continues to look for items in its specials collections that are good candidates for digitization as a means of preservation and providing access patrons who cannot come to the Central Library.

Scope of Branch Libraries

Branch collections are Basic Information Level materials that reflect the needs of the communities they serve. Because collections are based on community needs, these collections may change as the demographics of the communities change. Many branches also have special collections that go beyond the Basic Information Level, such as the African Diaspora collection at the Valencia Park/Malcolm X Branch Library and the Portuguese collection at the Point Loma/Hervey Branch Library.

Scope of Special Collections

Government Documents

Government documents are housed at the Central Library. The San Diego Public Library is a complete depository of state documents, as designated in 1945, and a selective depository for federal documents, as designated in 1895.

As a selective depository of federal documents, the San Diego Public Library is required to house titles included in the Basic Collection list developed by the Government Printing Office in partnership with federal depository libraries. In addition to the Basic Collection, the Library also collects titles from the Essential Title list. Publications that are superseded by later publications are weeded, as are lesser-used publications that are not part of the Basic Collection. The Library provides access to documents in electronic format to maximize access to patrons, and in print when the electronic format is not available.

Most documents produced by local agencies will be accepted into the collection, but the collection is not considered comprehensive.

Since 1984, the Library has also participated in the Patent and Trademark Resource Center program. The Library is required to collect, or provide electronic access to all titles in the Core Collection.

Floating Collections

The San Diego Public Library implemented floating collections in 2010. The Library continues to designate more parts of the collection to floating. Regardless of whether an item is floating, material selections are based on the needs of individual locations, as well as the library system as a whole. Branch and Central Service Area Managers are responsible for the repair and weeding of floating materials.

Leased Collections

The San Diego Public Library supplements its regular collection with the leasing of popular items to meet short-term demand. These browsing collections are referred to as, "Express." Branch Managers and the Manager of Customer Support Services at the Central Library are responsible for the selection of lease materials at their locations. Once interest in a lease copy has waned, it is determined whether the copy is returned to the vendor, or is added to the permanent collection.

General Selection Criteria

Under the general supervision of the Deputy Director, the Supervising Librarian for Technical Services is responsible for the collection development process. Centralized Collection Development (CCD) staff is responsible for identifying titles for acquisition. Exceptions to this are periodicals and standing order plans, which are chosen by Branch Managers and Central Service Area Managers. All library staff and members of the public are encouraged to recommend titles for purchase, but those recommendations are to be evaluated by CCD staff using the same selection criteria as general purchases. An electronic resources committee consisting of staff at Central and in Branches evaluates and recommends resources for purchase. The criteria used for general purchases include:

- Public demand and anticipated demand
- Relevance to the interests of the community
- Professional reviews and awards
- Accuracy and authoritativeness
- Literary merit
- Reputation or qualifications of the author or publisher
- Permanence of the subject matter
- Suitability of physical format
- Condition of material
- Budget, cost, and space considerations
- Availability of materials at other area libraries

In addition, the following criteria are taken into account for electronic resources:

- Ease of use
- Comparison of content and cost to other formats
- Past usage of similar electronic resources

Publications, such as textbooks, are not purchased unless they cover topics that apply to the general public, such as mathematics and English grammar. Mass market paperbacks are not purchased by CCD staff unless the title is not available in any other format, and there is high public demand. Mass market paperbacks may be purchased by Managers through special orders using donated funds.

Collection Maintenance and Evaluation

Fulfillment of the Library's collection goals and objectives requires a continuous process of collection evaluation. This includes the active analysis of subject areas by professional staff. All library materials are subject to evaluation for relocation, conversion to an electronic format, or withdrawal. Materials in electronic format are subject to discontinuation or replacement. The weeding of the library collection is an essential task in maintaining an attractive, current, and

accurate collection. Weeding also ensures ease of use. The criteria used for weeding all materials include:

- Accuracy and currency of information
- Physical condition of materials
- Availability of newer, more comprehensive or more accessible material
- Relevance to collection
- Ease of borrowing materials from another library
- Relevance to community needs
- Date of last circulation and number of circulations, or degree of documented usage if an electronic resource
- Number of copies in the collection

It is imperative that library managers weed materials that are out of date on a regular basis, especially in subjects that are time-sensitive, such as law, medicine, and testing. When new editions of a title are published, the older edition should be weeded. Exceptions to this are special collections for historical reference.

Library managers have access to tools that help identify materials that should be subject to review, such as materials that have not circulated in many years.

Weeded materials that are in usable condition may be offered to Friends Groups, Better World Books, or other libraries.

If a branch is weeding an item that is a Last Copy, it should be sent to the Central Library for review. Exceptions to this include items that are in formats no longer collected by the Library or items that are damaged.

For items that are still circulating well, but are damaged in ways that cannot be repaired by library staff, the manager should contact CCD staff about the possibility of purchasing a replacement copy.

Donated Materials

The San Diego Public Library welcomes donations of books and other materials. The Library reserves the right to decide the disposition of all gifts received. The selection criteria used for purchased materials are applied to gift materials. Additional criteria to be used in evaluating gift materials include:

- Titles must be less than five years old, except for subject areas such as art, history, classics, or of noted community need

- Items must be in good physical condition and not include markings of the content, such as underlining and highlighting
- Materials cannot be abridged versions of titles already owned by the Library
- Materials cannot be illegal reproductions of copyrighted works or publisher's advanced copies and uncorrected proofs

Gifts not added to the collection may be sold to benefit the Library, discarded, or recycled.

Reconsideration of Materials

Anyone may question specific material which has or has not been purchased by the library. This procedure is for the purpose of considering the opinions of those in the community who are not directly involved in the selection policy. Questions about the selection process or about a particular item can be answered by Branch Managers and Central Service Area Managers. If a request is made for formal reconsideration Managers will hand the patron the *Reconsideration of Library Resources* form to be filled out and signed by the patron. The form is given back to the Manager, who then forwards it to the Supervising Librarian for Technical Services.

The Supervising Librarian for Technical Services will inform the Library Director and both Deputy Directors that a formal request for reconsideration has been made. The Supervising Librarian is to form an ad hoc committee to review the material, with the Supervising Librarian as chair. The committee will meet within ten (10) business days. The committee will review the material and read critical reviews of the material. The committee may consult with other staff or City of San Diego personnel. The committee will determine whether the material conforms to the Library's Collection Development Policy based on the resource as a whole, and not by passages or sections taken out of context. After review, the committee will submit a recommendation to the Library Director.

The Library Director will review the committee's recommendation, make a decision, and notify the patron in writing. The patron may appeal the Library Director's decision to the Board of Library Commissioners for their review.

Appendices

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.

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, 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](#)
[Association of American Publishers](#)

Subsequently endorsed by:

[American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression](#)
[The Association of American University Presses, Inc.](#)
[The Children's Book Council](#)
[Freedom to Read Foundation](#)
[National Association of College Stores](#)
[National Coalition Against Censorship](#)
[National Council of Teachers of English](#)
[The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression](#)

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