



# Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Policy

Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. Bloomfield Public Library (BPL), in accordance with its [Social Justice Mission Statement](#), believes it is essential that library resources, both physical and digital, remain free to use for all.

Bloomfield Public Library staff and trustees abide by the following general principles when evaluating library materials and requests for reconsideration:

- Libraries provide free access to all expressions of ideas through a variety of diverse materials reflecting differing points of view
- Libraries strive to prevent censorship - the suppression of ideas and information that certain individuals, groups, or government officials find objectionable or dangerous.
- All library users have a First Amendment right to read, view, and listen to library resources.
- Parents or guardians have the right to guide the reading, viewing, and listening of their children, but must give the same right to other parents/guardians.
- Any person has the right to express concerns about library resources and expect to have the objection taken seriously. An individual can formally question library materials through a fair and formalized complaint process (see *Formal Complaint Process* below).
- When library resources are reconsidered, the principles of the freedom to read, listen, and view are defended, rather than specific materials.
- A questioned item will be considered in its entirety, not judged solely on portions taken out of context.
- The [Library Bill of Rights](#), [Freedom to Read](#), and [Freedom to View](#) statements from the American Library Association can be used as guiding documents.

Selection of library materials is an inclusive process, where the library affirmatively seeks out materials which will serve its mission of providing a broad range of points of view and subject matter. If individuals believe that materials or representations of particular points of view and/or interests are not adequately present in the library's collection, they have the right to request those materials. Libraries strive to serve the interests of the entire community. If the library is unable to purchase the material requested, it may be able to obtain the material through interlibrary loan.



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A balanced collection attempts to represent all sides of controversial issues as far as availability of materials, space, and budget allow. Selection is based upon criteria stated in this policy. The race, religion, nationality, or political views of an author or creator; offensive language; depictions or descriptions of violence or sexually explicit activity; controversial content of an item; or endorsement or disapproval by an individual or group in the community does not cause an item automatically to be included or excluded from the library's collection.

## *Message to Parents and Guardians*

Like adults, children and teens have the right to find the information they choose. Libraries have a responsibility to provide information for a wide variety of users. Parents and guardians have the right and responsibility to make decisions about what materials are suitable for their own families. No one has the right to make rules restricting what other people use, or to make decisions for other families.

If a child borrows something from a library which that child's parent/guardian believes is inappropriate, the parent/guardian is encouraged to return the item and make use of the expertise of their librarian to locate materials they prefer.

No individual, company, or government agency controls or monitors the internet in the United States. While much of the information accessed can be valuable and enlightening, the user may also find materials that are unreliable, personally offensive, or illegal under United States law. Therefore, parents are advised to supervise their children's internet sessions at the library. By taking responsibility for their children's online computer use, whether at the library or at home, parents can minimize any potential risks associated with online computer use. Library staff do not monitor computer use.

## *Formal Complaint Process*

Materials available in Bloomfield Public Library (BPL) present a broad range of viewpoints, enabling citizens to make informed choices necessary in a democracy. BPL also selects a wide variety of library materials that satisfy the diverse interests of our community. The library upholds the right of the individual to secure these resources, even though the content may be controversial, unorthodox, or unacceptable to some. The library's collection is available to all; however, it is not expected that all of the collection will appeal to everyone.

Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Bloomfield Public Library on 12/14/21



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Individuals who find materials in the library collection questionable are encouraged to first discuss their concerns with a library staff member or the Library Director. The following steps will be used when an individual feels that further action is necessary to address concerns about a library resource. For the duration of this process, the material in question will remain in circulation in the library collection. The reconsideration process should be completed in its entirety and not subverted or ended prematurely, leaving the library open to legal challenge. Take note that some of the library's digital content is provided using third-party vendors via BPL Online. The library subscribes to services in which third-party vendors, not library staff, determines the specific titles or materials made available through the service. In these circumstances, the library is unable to reconsider materials that library users object to, but may inform the third-party vendor of user concerns and/or take these concerns into consideration in determining whether to continue using the vendor.

1. A concerned patron will be offered a packet of materials that includes the library's mission statement, strategic plan, social justice mission statement, reconsideration form, and the Library Bill of Rights.
2. Patrons are required to complete and submit a Request for Reconsideration of Material Form to the Library Director.
3. The Library Director, with a committee of professional staff, will review the reconsideration form and the material in question, to consider whether its selection follows the criteria stated in the materials collection policy.
4. Within 15 business days, the Library Director will make a decision and send a letter or email to the concerned person who requested the reconsideration, stating the reasons for the decision.
5. If the individual is not satisfied with the decision, a written appeal may be submitted within 10 business days to the Library Board.
6. If the Board plans to address the appeal at their board meeting, the individual will be notified of when and where the meeting will be held.
7. The Library Board reserves the right to limit the length of public comments.
8. The decision of the Library Board is final.