

Bridgeport Public Library

Policy Manual

2022

1.0 MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Mission Statement

The Bridgeport Public Library is dedicated to supporting lifelong learning and reading by providing opportunities to learn, connect, enjoy, and discover.

1.2 General Objectives

To support this mission, the library will organize and manage its resources to:

- Provide a safe and secure environment for all patrons
- Ensure the library's resources are available to all
- Promote awareness and use of the library
- Promote full literacy for all ages. The definition of literacy is no longer limited to the ability to read, but includes the continuous process of comprehending and applying new and complex information
- Provide current information
- Provide recreational reading resources, media materials, and programs
- Provide public use of modern information technology

1.3 Public Relation Goals

Public relations goals of the library are to:

- Promote an understanding of the library's objectives and services among governing officials, civic leaders, and the public
- Promote active participation in the services offered by the library
- Inform the public of services and activities offered by the library

2. LIBRARY USE AND BORROWING PRIVILEGES

2.1 Library use

- The library will serve all residents of the community and the surrounding area. Services will not be denied due to race, color, religion, sexual orientation, and national origin.

2.2 How to obtain a library card

- To register with the library as an eligible borrower, one must complete an information card and sign a user policy agreement. Upon completion of the form, the borrower will receive a permanent card. If the card is lost or misplaced, a replacement card will be issued at the cost of \$3.00.
- During the first six weeks, new borrowers will have limited use privileges. Check outs will be limited to (1) DVD and (3) printed materials.

2.3 Facility and hours

- The City of Bridgeport and Bridgeport Public Library Board of Directors will provide and maintain adequate facilities that adequately meet the physical requirements of modern library service.
- Hours:
 - Tuesday/Thursday 9-7
 - Wednesday/Friday 9-5
 - Saturday 9-2
 - Sunday/Monday Closed
- The library will be closed for holidays as defined by the City of Bridgeport. A list of holidays is available at cityofbport.com.
- The library may open late or close early due to severe weather. The responsibility for closing the library rests with the library director. The library will not be closed without the consent of the Library Board Chairperson or member of the board unless mandated by the Bridgeport City Council and/or the mayor.

3. LIBRARY SERVICES POLICY

3.1. Borrowing privileges

- 5.1.1. Non-residents may be issued library cards at no cost
- 5.1.2. Applications for library cards must be completed by the applicant or a parent/guardian.

3.2. Borrowing Responsibilities

- 3.2.1 Patrons are responsible for all materials borrowed on their card, including all charges incurred. Parents/guardians are responsible for all materials checked out by a patron younger than nineteen (19) years.
- 3.2.2 Patrons are responsible for notifying the library promptly of any changes in contact information or loss of library card.
- 3.2.3 No patron may use another card holder’s account except when in the presence of said card holder.

3.3. Circulation and equipment policies

- 3.3.1 All materials and computers may be used within the library free of charge.
- 3.3.2 Materials may be borrowed only with a library card in good standing.
- 3.3.3 Design Studio (previously known as MakerSpace) equipment and supplies may be used with a nominal fee.
- 3.3.4

Material	Loan Period	Renewals*
Physical Book	14 days	2
Audio Book	14 days	1
eBook	7, 14, 21 days	none
DVD	7 days	1
Periodicals	7 days	1

*All renewals are dependent on waiting requests. Items with waiting requests cannot be renewed.

- 3.3.5 Reference materials do not circulate.

3.4. Claimed returned status

- 3.4.1 If a patron believes materials shown as checked out to them have been returned, the library staff may change the status of the item(s.) By changing the status of the item, the patron and the library staff agree to search for the item over the next 30 days. Having materials on claimed return status does not prevent the patron from continuing to check out materials.
- 3.4.2 At the end of the 30-day period, if the item is not found, the library will contact the patron and limit borrowing privileges. After 90 days, the item will be declared lost and the patron will be responsible for replacement costs.
- 3.4.3 If a patron pays for a claimed returned item and later returns the item, the cost of the item will be refunded to the patron provided no more than six months have passed and the item is determined by staff to be in good condition.
- 3.5. **Lost or damaged materials**
 - 3.5.1 When an item is declared lost or returned damaged, a fee of \$35.00 will be charged to the patron. The patron will have the option to pay the fee or replace the lost or damaged item with a comparable item (i.e. paperback with paperback or hardback with hardback.)
 - 3.5.2 Loss of any part of a set of DVDs or audio CDs will result in a charge for the whole unit.
 - 3.5.3 If a patron pays for lost materials and later returns the materials, the cost of the material will be refunded to them, provided no more than six months has passed and the item is determined by staff to be in good condition.
 - 3.5.4 The library will accept cash or check for payment of lost materials. The library reserves the right to use the payment for lost materials in whatever manner it deems suitable.

4. COMPUTER AND INTERNET POLICY

- 4.1. Computers are available for use by the public at no charge.
- 4.2. Computers are available on a first come first served basis.
- 4.3. Computers in the children's area are for use by patrons under 10 years.
- 4.4. Computers in the teen area are for use by patrons 10-17 years.
- 4.5. Computers in the adult area are for use by patrons 17 or older.
- 4.6. Children may use adult computers if they are seated with a parent or guardian.
- 4.7. Adults using a computer must continue to supervise all children accompanying them to the library.
- 4.8. The library is not responsible for the damage to any user's storage device or computer, or the loss of data, damage, or liability which may occur from patron use of the library's computers.
- 4.9. Library staff cannot provide in-depth training concerning the internet or computer programs. Staff will assist patrons with basic services. Due to the constantly changing and expanding nature of technology, library staff will not be familiar with every aspect of computers and the internet. Due to liability issues, staff will not be able to assist with unemployment filings, government assistance, or income tax returns.
- 4.10. Prices for prints are subject to change.
- 4.11. In accordance with the Children Internet Protection Act (CIPA), all internet traffic from the library computers and wireless network is filtered to block access to material harmful to minors. Even with filters, be aware the library cannot guarantee patrons will not encounter offensive or disturbing information or images. The provision of access does not mean to imply the library sanctions or endorses the content users encounter.

- 4.12. The library does not have the right or responsibility to act *loco parentis* (in place of parent); it cannot usurp the right or assume that responsibility. Parents and legal guardians are solely responsible for their child's, and only their child's, use of the internet. Parents/guardians are advised to supervise their children's internet sessions.
- 4.13. The internet computers are in public areas used by library patrons of all ages, backgrounds, sensitivities, and values. Patrons are expected to consider this when accessing potentially controversial information and images.
- 4.14. Patrons may not use the library computer or wireless network for viewing, sending, or receiving materials determined to be harmful to minors as defined by State of Nebraska Statutes 28-807(6.)
- 4.15. Patrons may not use the library computer or wireless network for viewing, sending, or receiving materials determined to be obscene by State of Nebraska Statutes 28-807(6.)
- 4.16. Acceptability of screen display will be left up to the discretion of supervising library staff. Patrons found to be viewing internet sites determined to be obscene or harmful to minors will face the following penalties:
 - First infraction will result in a warning that loss of library privileges may result.
 - Second Infraction will result in the loss of library privileges for one week.
 - Third infraction will result in the loss of library privileges for four weeks.
 - Fourth infraction, and every infraction, thereafter, will result in the loss of library privileges for six months.

Loss of library privileges includes not being allowed on the premises.

- 4.17. Police will be notified of any child pornography being accessed.
- 4.18. Information available through the internet is not warranted by the library to be accurate, authoritative, factual, or complete. Patrons are responsible for verifying the accuracy of any materials.
- 4.19. To protect the library computers from viruses, no material or data may be downloaded onto the library computers.

5. INTERLIBRARY LOAN

- 5.1. Interlibrary loan service is provided through the cooperation of individual libraries statewide and nationwide, the Nebraska Library Commission, the Western Library System, and OCLC.
- 5.2. Patrons requesting items not currently owned by the Bridgeport Public Library may request interlibrary loan service to borrow these items.
- 5.3. Patrons requesting interlibrary loan services must be Bridgeport Public Library cardholder in good standing and must use their own card.
- 5.4. Lost items will be handled as regular lost library materials.
- 5.5. Damaged materials fees will be assessed by the lending agency.
- 5.6. Renewal of interlibrary loan materials is at the discretion of the lending agency.
- 5.7. The library reserves the right to suspend interlibrary loan privileges due to abuse.

6. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

6.1. PURPOSE:

Providing a wide array of materials is an essential way BPL serves its patrons. The purpose of this policy is to state the criteria the library uses to develop and maintain its collection.

6.2. POLICY:

BPL selects materials to support its mission, vision, and values. The library upholds the freedom to read, as stated by the American Library Association in the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement and protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

- BPL will select materials of interest to all members of the community, reflecting a variety of interests, viewpoints, ages, backgrounds, and education levels.
- BPL does not restrict selection based on the expressed opinion of an individual or group.
- Parents and legal guardians have sole responsibility for what their children read, view, or hear. Only parents and guardians may restrict their own children's access to library materials. Selection of library materials will not be restricted by the possibility that materials could come into a child's possession.
- Access to the collection will not be limited or denied because of origin, race, religion, age, background, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or views. These factors shall also not be cause to exclude any materials, authors, artists, or other creators from the collection.

6.3. IMPLEMENTATION:

Selection

The collection is for patrons of all ages, backgrounds, interests, education, and opinions. It will therefore reflect the diversity of the community it serves while also working within the realities of BPL's collection space and budget. The responsibility for selection and weeding is vested in the library's Director. To select materials for purchase, the following criteria will be used:

- Subject
- Style and presentation
- Format
- Genre
- Appeal
- Comprehension level
- Quality
- Availability
- Scope
- Overall demand
- Variety of viewpoints

Additionally:

- Not all selection criteria may apply equally to all content or formats.
- Selection of materials does not imply agreement with or approval of the viewpoints expressed.
- Materials are evaluated as a whole work and not by selected passages or scenes.
- Individual items which may be considered controversial or offensive by some may be selected if it will contribute to the overall variety and balance of the collection.

- Staff uses a wide variety of selection resources including, but not limited to, professional journals, popular media, publishing trends, local interests, patron recommendations, and circulation data.
- Patron recommendations for collection are welcomed and evaluated by the criteria listed above.

Accessibility

BPL will not restrict access to any library materials in public areas.

- All library cardholders may check out materials in accordance with circulation policies and procedures.
- Materials are labeled only by classification or as a directional aid.
- Children, young adult, and adult collections are differentiated based on reading level, language comprehension, and audience. These collections may be housed in designated areas to aid in discovery.
- Determining the appropriateness of materials for minors is the sole responsibility of the parent or guardian.
- Some materials are designated for use in the library only.

(6.1.-6.3. adopted by the BPL Board of Directors January 3, 2023.)

6.4. Reconsideration of Materials

Patrons finding certain materials to be objectionable may find the procedure for submitting a formal complaint and a “Request for Reconsideration” form in Appendix D. No action will be taken unless a formal complaint is lodged.

Adopted by the BPL Board of Directors March 7, 2023.)

7. FINANCE POLICY

- 7.1. The Bridgeport Public Library Board of Directors financial policy ensures fiscal accountability, appropriate use of funds in support of the Bridgeport Public Library’s mission statement and goals, and the compliance with appropriate laws and ordinances.
- 7.2. The library director will draft an annual budget and submit it to the library board for discussion and approval.
- 7.3. After approval by the library board, the annual budget will be presented to the Bridgeport City Council for adoption.
- 7.4. On a monthly basis, the library director shall present a list of all the expenditures for the library board to review and approve. The director will also present a monthly financial statement showing the status of all accounts and funds.
- 7.5. On an annual basis, all library funds, expenditures, and revenues will be audited through the City of Bridgeport.
- 7.6. Receipts

7.6.1. Monies received as revenues from grants, library services, reimbursement of lost or damaged materials, photocopies, and printouts.

8. PATRON BEHAVIOR

8.1. General Patron Behavior

To maintain the library's mission as a reliable community resource, in a safe a productive environment, we ask patrons to observe the following expectations of behavior.

8.1.1. In respect of the rights of others, patrons are expected to maintain low voice levels.

Listening devices, cell phone conversations, and conversations with other patrons will be at a reasonably low level.

8.1.2. Alcohol and/or illegal drugs may not be brought into the library or onto library ground, nor may persons under the influence of either use the library.

8.1.3. For the safety of all patrons, weapons are prohibited in the library. The ban includes permitted, concealed handguns in accordance with Nebraska Revised State Statutes 69-2441.

8.1.4. Harassing behavior is not allowed. Harassing behavior is defined as behavior which creates a hostile or frightening environment. Examples of harassment include staring at or following another person, unwelcome physical contact, abusive language, and verbal propositions.

8.1.5. Smoking, including e-cigarettes, is not allowed anywhere inside the building. Smoking is not permitted within 10 feet of the entrances.

8.1.6. Beverages and snacks are allowed anywhere in the building except where otherwise posted.

8.1.7. For safety and hygiene, all patrons must wear shoes and appropriate clothing.

8.1.8. Patrons with skateboards, roller blades, and long boards must carry them while in the library.

8.1.9. Please respect the rights of others to quietly study, read, or work without interference.

8.1.10. Library staff will contact police regarding patrons who refuse to leave when asked, or who are exhibiting threatening or harassing behavior.

8.1.11. Pets are not allowed in the library unless they are therapy or service animals.

8.2. Unattended Persons

8.2.1. The library strives to maintain a safe environment conducive to the welfare of all users of the library facilities. Library staff is not trained or expected to provide care and supervision to persons in need of supervision. Monitoring activities and regulating behavior of persons requiring supervision is the responsibility of a parent, guardian, or caregiver aged 12 or over.

8.2.2. Children up to age 6 must have a parent/caregiver in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child. If a child is found unattended a first time, staff will try to find the child's parent or guardian. If a child is found unattended a second time, the police will be called. Children aged 6 and older may use the library on their own, but may be asked to leave the library, if exhibiting inappropriate behavior.

8.2.3. When visiting the Bridgeport Public Library without an adult, children ages 6 and older should have definite arrangements to be picked up at closing time or in emergencies. If a minor child is left unattended at closing, staff will first call a parent or guardian. If the parent or guardian cannot be reached or does not arrive within 15 minutes, the police will

be called to assume responsibility. A library staff member will stay with the child inside the library until the parent or the police arrive.

8.2.4. The library staff is not responsible for the safety, care, or supervision of children of any age at any time whether in the library, participating in a library program, or on library premises.

8.3. Penalties

8.3.1. Failure to comply with the patron behavior policy will result in the following penalties:

- First infraction will result in a warning that loss of library privileges will result.
- Second Infraction will result in the loss of library privileges for one week.
- Third infraction will result in the loss of library privileges for four weeks.
- Fourth and subsequent infractions will result in the loss of library privileges for six months.

Loss of library privileges includes not being allowed on the premises.

8.3.2. Any illegal activity. Harassment, or abuse will be reported to law enforcement. Behavior leading to police involvement may lead to more severe penalties than stated in 8.3.1.

9. MEETING ROOM

9.1. A copy of the “Meeting Room Application and Procedures” are in Appendix A.

9.2. The library meeting room is intended for the use in support of library programs and services. Library activities have first preference in meeting room use.

9.3. The meeting room is designed to meet general, non-commercial, informational, educational, cultural, and civic needs.

9.4. All meetings must be completed 15 minutes before closing.

9.5. Use of the meeting rooms does not constitute sponsorship or endorsement by the library of the group’s policies, views, or beliefs.

9.6. All youth meetings must have a sponsor aged 18 or older present at all times.

9.7. Groups using the meeting room are responsible for set up, clean up, and advertising. The individual or group reserving the meeting room shall be responsible for any damage to or loss of library property beyond normal wear. If library property is damaged or lost, the library director shall obtain estimates for the repairs of the damage or the cost of replacement of lost property. The individual or group will be responsible for paying the costs of damages or replacement.

9.8. Signs or decorations may not be attached to the walls or surfaces.

9.9. Meals may be brought into the meeting room.

10. CONFIDENTIALITY OF LIBRARY RECORDS

10.1. The policy of the Bridgeport Public Library is to ensure the privacy of users of its service and to consider any library records to be confidential in nature.

10.2. Nebraska Legislature in 1983 amended Chapter 84, Section 84-712.05 of the Revised Statutes of Nebraska 1643 concerning records that may be withheld from the public.

Section 84-712.050-Records which may be withheld from the public; enumerated. The following records, unless publicly disclosed in an open court, open administrative proceeding, or open meeting, or disclosed by a public entity pursuant to its duties, may be withheld from the public by the lawful custodians of the records;... Records or portions of records kept by a publicly funded library which, when examined with or

without other records, reveal the identity of any patrons using the library's materials or services."

In summary, the Bridgeport Public Library and staff may not disclose information about a cardholder's record or use of the library to anyone other than the cardholder, except by court order or written permission from the cardholder.

- 10.3.** The library staff follows the American Library Association Code of Ethics which states: "We protect each user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired, or transmitted."
- 10.4.** Library records are for the sole purpose of protecting public property and are not to be used, directly or indirectly, to identify types of materials used by individual patrons. Under no circumstances will the library staff answer to a third party about what a patron of the library is reading, or the kind of information requested from the library's collection.
- 10.5.** Parents' or guardians' access to confidential information of a minor cardholder is restricted to information related to the payment of overdue fines or lost/damaged materials.

11. GIFTS

- 11.1.** Gifts of books and other materials may be made directly to the library. The library does not accept materials that are not outright gifts and reserves the right to assign any of materials wherever the need is greatest. Materials will be considered for addition to the library collection using the same principles of materials selection applied to purchases for the library collection. (See Collection Development Policies.)
- 11.2.** Gift materials not utilized for the library collection will be disposed of through sales and recycling as deemed appropriate.
- 11.3.** Unrestricted gifts of money, lands, or property will be gratefully accepted by the board. Gifts, memorials, or bequests with specific restrictions attached will be reviewed by the board before acceptance or rejection.
- 11.4.** The library does not provide appraisals of gifts or potential gifts.

12. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

12.1. Medical Emergency

- 12.1.1. If serious, call 911.
- 12.1.2. Calm the person and call for assistance.
- 12.1.3. Do not move the person unless circumstances become life threatening.
- 12.1.4. Get the person's name, address, and phone number.
- 12.1.5. Call the person's home, if necessary.

12.2. Fire

- 12.2.1. Call 911 to report fire.
- 12.2.2. Alert all building occupants of the situation to start the evacuation procedure. Check bathrooms, books stacks, meeting rooms, etc.
- 12.2.3. Standby at meeting areas until released by fire department officers. Meeting area for the library is the corner of M and 7th Street.
- 12.2.4. The designated supervisor will do a final check for employees and patrons in the building prior to exiting the danger area.

12.3. Tornado

12.3.1. A tornado watch is issued when there is a potential for tornado activity in the area. Staff should alert patrons. No other action is necessary.

12.3.2. A tornado warning is issued when a tornado has been sighted in the area. City warning sirens will sound. Staff should alert patrons and quickly check the building to see if any patrons may need assistance. **TAKE SHELTER IMMEDIATELY**

12.3.3. The tornado shelters for the library are the vault and storage rooms. Escort patrons to these areas and close the doors.

12.4. EMERGENCY NUMBERS

12.4.1. Bridgeport Fire Department, EMS, and Sheriff 911

12.4.2. Non-emergency Sheriff 262-0408

13. POLICY REVIEW

The policies of the Bridgeport Public Library will be reviewed every three years but may be updated more frequently as needs and services change.

Appendix A: Meeting Room Procedures/Rules

MEETING ROOM

The library meeting room is intended for the use in support of library programs and services. Library activities have first preference in meeting room use.

The meeting room is designed to meet general, non-commercial, informational, educational, cultural, and civic needs.

All meetings must be completed 15 minutes before closing on any day except Tuesday. The library will stay open until 7:15 on Tuesdays at the discretion of the library director. Groups wishing to stay late on Tuesday must contact the library director two weeks prior to the requested date. If an employee is available to stay late, the Director will reserve the time for the patron or group.

Use of the meeting rooms does not constitute sponsorship or endorsement by the library of the group's policies, views, or beliefs.

All youth meetings must have a sponsor aged 18 or older present at all times.

Groups using the meeting room are responsible for set up, clean up, and advertising. The individual or group reserving the meeting room shall be responsible for any damage to or loss of library property beyond normal wear. If library property is damaged or lost, the library director shall obtain estimates for the repairs of the damage or the cost of replacement of lost property. The individual or group will be responsible for paying the costs of damages or replacement.

Signs or decorations may not be attached to the walls or surfaces.

Meals may be brought into the meeting room.

Meeting Room Application

Organization Name _____

Date Requested _____

Time Requested _____

Responsible Party

Name _____ Phone # _____

Position in Organization _____

Please describe the meeting or event you plan to hold:

I understand the rules and procedures of use of the meeting room at the Bridgeport Public Library.

Signature of Responsible Party

Appendix B: 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.

**Adopted by the Bridgeport Public Library Board of Trustees on December 8th, 2022.

Appendix C: 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.

**Adopted by the Bridgeport Public Library Board of Trustees on December 8th, 2022.

Appendix D: PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING A COMPLAINT ABOUT MATERIALS IN THE COLLECTION

1. The staff member receiving the complaint will give the patron the Bridgeport Public Library Collection Policy, the Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read Statement, and a copy of the “Bridgeport Public Library Request for Reconsideration Form.” The customer seeking reconsideration must read, view, or listen to the entirety of the work before requesting reconsideration of library material. The patron will also be asked to read the Bridgeport Public Library Collection Policy, the Library Bill of Rights, and the Freedom to Read Statement before completing the form.

The staff member will inform the Library Director of the incident.

2. Upon return of the fully completed form, the media will be reviewed independently by the Library Director. The Director will write a brief analysis, including in it a recommendation as to whether it should remain in the collection. This should be done within 45 days of the receipt of the request for reconsideration.

3. The recommendation and review will be examined by the Library Board at its next regularly scheduled meeting. At this time a decision will be made as to the material’s inclusion in the collection.

4. The recommendations and decisions made during steps 2 and 3 should reflect the relationship of the material in question to the Bridgeport Public Library Collection Policy, the Library Bill of Rights, and Freedom to Read Statement.

5. The material in question shall remain available for circulation until a final decision is reached.

6. The Library Director shall inform the patron of the decision in writing within two weeks. The reasons for the decision are to be explained and a copy of the review enclosed.

7. No new requests for said material will be accepted for a period of 6 months after a decision has been rendered.

Adopted by the BPL Board of Trustees March 7, 2023.

Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials Form

The Bridgeport Public Library welcomes comments and suggestions regarding the continued appropriateness of materials in the collection, especially concerning outdated materials. Suggestions will be considered and utilized by the library in the ongoing process of collection development.

Individuals may take issue with library materials that do not support their tastes and views. Staff is available to discuss concerns and identify alternate materials that may be available. If a patron's concern is not satisfied through discussion with staff, a formal, written request for reconsideration of materials may be submitted to the Library Director. Copies of this form as well as the Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read Statement, and the Bridgeport Public Library Collection Development Policy are available at the circulation desk or from the Library Director. Only one reconsideration form will be accepted from a household at a time.

The Bridgeport Public Library is not a judicial body. Laws governing obscenity, subversive materials, and other questionable matters are subject to interpretation by the courts. Therefore, no challenged materials will be removed solely for the complaint of obscenity, or any other category covered by law until after a local court of competent jurisdiction has ruled against the material. No materials will be knowingly added to the library collection that have been previously determined to be in non-compliance with local laws.

For a request for reconsideration to be considered, the form must be completed in full. The patron submitting the request must hold a valid library card. The patron will also read, view, or listen to the entirety of the work, the Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read Statement and the Bridgeport Public Library Collection Development Policy.

1) Your Information

Name _____

Telephone _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zipcode _____

2) I represent: (circle one)

Myself

Organization (please list)

Yes

No

13) Have you read the Freedom to Read Statement? (circle one)

Yes

No

14) Please explain how the material fails to meet Intellectual Freedom standards?

15) Who would be negatively impacted by this material and how? (Evidence with citations required.)

16) Are there resource(s) you would recommend to provide additional information and/or other viewpoints on this topic? (Please include professional reviews for each title.)

17) What would be the value in restricting the reading choices of community members, including children?

Signed* _____

Date _____

*Unsigned forms will be void.

STAFF USE ONLY:

This form was received by _____

Date _____ Time _____

Action taken _____

**Adopted by the BPL Board of Trustees March 7, 2023.