# DRAFT 2: Diversity in Collection Development: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

Collection development should reflect the philosophy inherent in Article II of the American Library Association’s *Library Bill of Rights*: “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.” Achieving diversity, in the context of collection development, should focus on content and ideas. In addition, a diverse collection should reflect the experiences of a wide array of people and cultures.  
  
Library workers have an obligation to select, maintain, and support access to content on all subjects by diverse authors and creators that meet—as closely as possible—the needs, interests, and abilities of all the people the library serves. Library workers have a professional responsibility to be proactively inclusive in collection development and in the provision of interlibrary loan where offered.  
  
As a matter of policy and practice, content should not be excluded because it or the content creator may be considered offensive or controversial. A well-balanced collection should reflect equity in diversity of content, but not necessarily a one-to-one equivalence for each viewpoint. A diverse collection should include content and resources representative of and created by marginalized and underrepresented groups. It should contain a sufficient variety of diverse works chosen pursuant to the library’s selection policy and subject to periodic review.

Collection development, as well as cataloging and classification, should be done according to professional standards and established procedures. Developing a diverse collection requires:

* selecting content in different formats;
* choosing resources from self-published, independent, small, and local producers as well as information resources from major producers and distributors;
* including content in all of the languages used in the community that the library serves, when possible; and
* providing resources in formats that meet the needs of users with disabilities.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Failure to select resources merely because they may be potentially controversial is censorship, as is withdrawing resources for the same reason. Libraries have a responsibility to defend against challenges meant to limit a collection’s diversity. People who challenge resources often identify a variety of reasons, including but not limited to prejudicial language and ideas, political content, economic theory, social philosophies, religious beliefs, scientific research, and sexual content.

Library workers have a professional responsibility to be fair, just, and equitable in defending the library user’s right to read, view, or listen to content protected by the First Amendment, regardless of the creator’s viewpoint or personal history. Library staff should protect library resources from removal because of content based on personal bias or prejudice.  
  
Intellectual freedom, the essence of equitable library services, provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause, or movement may be explored. Article VII of the ALA Code of Ethics states, “We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.” This includes assuring the availability of an inclusive, equitable, and diverse collection. Library workers must not permit their biases, opinions, or preferences to influence collection development decisions.

Adopted July 14, 1982, by the ALA Council; amended January 10, 1990; July 2, 2008; and July 1, 2014. Revisions proposed January 2019.

1. “[Services to People with Disabilities: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/servicespeopledisabilities),” adopted January 28, 2009, by the ALA Council under the title "Services to Persons with Disabilities"; amended June 26, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)