# 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.”

Library collections and resources should represent the diversity of people, cultures, and ideas in our society. There are many complex facets to any issue and many contexts in which that issue may be expressed, discussed, or interpreted. As such, librarians and collection development staff 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.

Librarians and collection development staff have a professional responsibility to be proactively inclusive in collection development and in the provision of interlibrary loan where the service is offered and used. Policies should not exclude content on the basis of being offensive or controversial this includes content that reflects a diversity of issues, whether political, economic, religious, social, ethnic, or sexual. A well-balanced collection should reflect equity in diversity of content, but not necessarily a one-to-one equivalence. A diverse collection should include content and resources representative of and created by historically 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 of the collection’s needs.

Collection development and the selection of content should be done according to professional standards and established selection and review procedures. Diversity in collection development responsibilities includes selecting content in different formats produced by self-published, independent, small, and local producers as well as information resources from major producers and distributors. When possible, content should be available in all of the languages used in the community that the library serves and should include formats that meet the needs of users with disabilities.1 The existence of controversy or potential controversy should not be the sole reason for failure to select or withdrawal of resources.

Libraries promote the integrity of information against individuals, groups, or entities that seek to limit the diversity of collections. Such challenges cite a variety of language and ideas that are deemed potentially controversial, including but not limited to political content, economic theory, social philosophies, religious beliefs, and sexual content.

Librarians and collection development staff have a professional responsibility to be fair, just, and equitable in defending the library patron’s right to read, view, or listen to content protected by the First Amendment, regardless of the author, creator, or selector’s viewpoint. Library staff should protect library collections from removal of content based on personal bias or prejudice.

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. Librarians and collection development staff must not permit their biases, opinions, or preferences to influence collection development decisions. 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.

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.

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