



Intellectual Freedom Policy

Purpose and Scope

Burlington Public Library's collections, services, displays and programming must serve all parts of its community and respect the diversity of its citizens.

Statement of Intellectual Freedom

The library recognizes its obligations under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which guarantees Canadians freedom of expression including freedom of the press and other media.

The Burlington Public Library Board and staff endorse the statements of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations and of the Ontario Library Association Statement on Intellectual Freedom and the Individual.

The Library recognizes and abides by all laws dictated at the federal, provincial or municipal level including the Criminal Code of Canada as well as the classifications assigned to films, television series and video games by the Ontario Film Review Board.

Burlington Public Library is a resource where many points of view and modes of expression can be examined without hindrance. Few ideas and opinions have universal acceptance or condemnation in a pluralistic society. The use of language, either descriptive or expressive, can in itself, stimulate controversy.

Burlington Public Library recognizes the right of individuals to express opposition to author's ideas or their creative exercise of language in material selected for the library. However, Burlington Public Library will not endeavor to satisfy patrons by removing items purchased in compliance with the principles of this policy. Selection of material cannot be influenced by any approval or disapproval of its intellectual content by sectors of the community.

Burlington Public Library must serve all parts of its community. The diversity of its citizens will be reflected in the library's collections and services.

Selection of an item for the Burlington Public Library collection does not constitute endorsement of the viewpoint expressed in that item. Room bookings or community displays do not constitute endorsement of viewpoints expressed by groups making use of these BPL facilities.

Effective Date: Jan 1987

Projected Review Date: 2021

Motion #/Date: 87-95, June 24, 1987
99-49 Sep 16 1999

Amended Dates: #02-58, Oct 17, 2002
#17-08, Jan 19, 2017

Associated Procedures: Request for Reconsideration

Appendix 1:
Canadian Federation of Library Association (CFLA) Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations recognizes and values the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the guarantor of the fundamental freedoms in Canada of conscience and religion; of thought, belief, opinion, and expression; of peaceful assembly; and of association.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations supports and promotes the universal principles of intellectual freedom as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which include the interlocking freedoms to hold opinions and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

In accordance with these principles, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations affirms that all persons in Canada have a fundamental right, subject only to the Constitution and the law, to have access to the full range of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, and to express their thoughts publicly. Only the courts may abridge free expression rights in Canada. The Canadian Federation of Library Associations affirms further that libraries have a core responsibility to support, defend and promote the universal principles of intellectual freedom and privacy.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations holds that libraries are a key institution in Canada for rendering expressive content accessible and affordable to all. Libraries are essential gateways for all persons living in Canada to advance themselves through literacy, lifelong learning, social engagement, and cultural enrichment.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and facilitate access to constitutionally protected expressions of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, including those which some individuals and groups consider unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, in accordance with their mandates and professional values and standards, libraries provide, defend and promote equitable access to the widest possible variety of expressive content and resist calls for censorship and the adoption of systems that deny or restrict access to resources.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and foster free expression and the right to safe and welcoming places and conditions. To this end, libraries make available their public spaces and services to individuals and groups without discrimination.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and defend privacy in the individual's pursuit of expressive content. To this end, libraries protect the identities and activities of library users except when required by the courts to cede them.

Furthermore, in accordance with established library policies, procedures and due process, libraries resist efforts to limit the exercise of these responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups.

Library employees, volunteers and employers as well as library governing entities have a core responsibility to uphold the principles of intellectual freedom in the performance of their respective library roles.

Approved June 27, 1974, Amended Nov. 17, 1983; Nov. 18, 1985 and September 27, 2015.

Endorsed by Burlington Public Library Board, January 2016

Appendix 2:

Ontario Library Association Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual

In affirming its commitment to the fundamental rights of intellectual freedom, the freedom to read and freedom of the press, as embodied in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Library Association declares its acceptance of the following propositions:

1. That the provision of library service to the public is based upon the right of the citizen, under the protection of the law, to judge individually on questions of politics, religion and morality.
2. That intellectual freedom requires freedom to examine other ideas and other interpretations of life than those currently approved by the local community or by society in general, and including those ideas and interpretations which may be unconventional or unpopular.
3. That freedom of expression includes freedom for a creator to depict what is ugly, shocking and unedifying in life.
4. That free traffic in ideas and opinions is essential to the health and growth of a free society and that the freedom to read, listen and view is fundamental to such free traffic.
5. That it is the responsibility of libraries to maintain the right of intellectual freedom and to implement it consistently in the selection of books, periodicals, films, recordings, other materials, and in the provision of access to electronic sources of information, including access to the internet.
6. That it is therefore part of the library's service to its public to resist any attempt by any individual or group within the community it serves to abrogate or curtail access to information, the freedom to read, view and listen by demanding the removal of, or restrictions to library information sources in any format.
7. That it is equally part of the library's responsibility to its public to ensure that its selection of material is not unduly influenced by the personal opinions of the selectors, but determined by the application of generally accepted standards of accuracy, style and presentation.

Approved, OLA Board of Directors, December 2003

Reaffirmed, OLA Board of Directors, December 2005

Endorsed by Burlington Public Library Board, January 2004

Respectfully submitted: Christine Dalgetty, Director Service Experience