

APPENDIX G

Intellectual Freedom

Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are inseparably tied to acquiring knowledge through the freedom of access to an uncensored spectrum of ideas and information.

Attempts to have specified books or other materials removed from the shelves and restrictions placed on materials selected by the library are increasing nationwide. Granted, librarians make conscious choices about materials that are selected, but trustees must ensure that the library's collection development policy presents a variety of points-of-view, beliefs and ideas in spite of a limited budget and personal preferences.

Libraries should have in place a collection development policy that clearly defines the review process for items housed in the library collection both physically and digitally.

When outlining how nonfiction items are selected, a policy must clearly define how items are determined to be accurate. Because it is impossible for librarians to examine all items being considered for purchase, they must rely on dependable selection aids. These selection tools should be clearly stated in the library's collection development policy.

Collections should be well balanced. Nonfiction titles should be regularly reviewed, or "weeded" to ensure that items on the library shelves are up-to-date, accurate and ensure that topics have balanced representation.

Challenges & Reconsideration Policy & Procedures: Libraries should have in place a reconsideration policy that clearly covers all aspects of library services, not just physical items but digital collections, programs and displays. Challenge and reconsideration policies are often included as part of a library's collection development policy. NHLTA strongly recommends that a reconsideration policy be part of every library's collection development policy.

The internet has created a new information platform for public access. It is a global entity with millions of sites, some of which may contain materials deemed objectionable or inappropriate. This has created challenges for parents. Only parents or legal guardians have the right to decide with their children how their children use libraries.

Trustees must protect equal access to materials and the Internet. Libraries have a responsibility to provide the necessary guidance to enable patrons to be critical users of the best sources of information. The First Amendment applies to library users of all ages.

The library board and director together must:

- Maintain a well-defined materials selection policy, internet use policy, and a written procedure for reconsideration of materials.
- Make sure the policies and procedures are clearly understood and fully implemented by the staff.

Make all policies readily available to the public.

Examples of collection development policies and a link to the ALA Intellectual Freedom Toolkit can be found on the NHLTA website.