



## **LIBRARY BOARD AGENDA**

**August 26, 2026 at 6:30 PM**

**Wilsonville Public Library**

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### **PARTICIPANTS MAY ATTEND THE MEETING AT:**

Library, 8200 SW Wilsonville Road, Wilsonville, Oregon

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82479199718>

### **TO PARTICIPATE REMOTELY OR PROVIDE PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Register with the Library:

[LB@wilsonvillelibrary.org](mailto:LB@wilsonvillelibrary.org)

Individuals may submit comments by 12:00 PM on the day before the meeting date via email to the address above, or may mail written comments to:

Wilsonville Library

29799 SW Town Center Loop East, Wilsonville, OR 97070

### **CALL TO ORDER**

1. Roll Call

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

2. Approval of Minutes: 07.22.2026

### **ONGOING BUSINESS / CALENDAR ITEMS**

3. Director's Report
4. Community Survey Results
5. [Strategic Plan Results](#)
6. [Freedom to Read & Bill of Rights](#)
7. Friends of the Library Report
8. Library Foundation Report

### **NEW BUSINESS**

### **ROUND ROBIN**

## **ADJOURN**

## **NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday, September 23, 2026 6:30 PM

*Time frames for agenda items are not time certain (i.e. agenda items may be considered earlier than indicated). The City will endeavor to provide the following services, without cost, if requested at least 48 hours prior to the meeting by contacting Haley Spaeth, Administrative Assistant at 503-570-1593 or [LB@wilsonvillelibrary.org](mailto:LB@wilsonvillelibrary.org): assistive listening devices (ALD), sign language interpreter, and/or bilingual interpreter. Those who need accessibility assistance can contact the City by phone through the Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 for TTY/Voice communication.*

*Habr  interpretes disponibles para aqu llas personas que no hablan Ingl s, previo acuerdo.*

*Com niquese al 503-570-1593.*



# STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT

## 2022-2026



A SUMMARY OF THE WILSONVILLE PUBLIC  
LIBRARY'S 2022-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

**PREPARED BY:  
SHASTA SASSER**



# A WORD FROM THE LIBRARY DIRECTOR

This strategic planning process has been more challenging and impactful than previous plans. For one, there was a global pandemic happening right at the onset of the planning process. The library also saw some major staffing changes as several long-time staff retired and new staff came on board. I began the process as the operations manager and after the retirement of the previous director, I became the library director around the start of the implementation phase of this plan.

When we started working on this plan, we emphasized to the consultants, Library Strategies, that we wanted to hear from the community. We wanted to listen to what they wanted, what they thought could be improved, what was going well, etc. Those conversations and that feedback directly shaped this plan.

Staff have worked hard over the last five years to implement this plan. We stretched resources, we tried new things, we found grants, we formed partnerships, we got out of the library building and into the community. I'm proud of what we were able to accomplish. I want to thank the staff for jumping into this ambitious plan and serving the community in The Wilsonville Way.

Finally, thank you to the Wilsonville community - we exist for you. I hope you will always find opportunities for joyful discovery, lifelong learning, and community connections here.

**SHASTA SASSER**  
LIBRARY DIRECTOR





## GETTING STARTED

The work for this plan began in late 2018 as Library Director Pat Duke, Operations Manager Shasta Sasser, and Library Services Manager Steven Engelfried began researching strategic planning processes and final plans from other libraries. Ultimately, the team decided to hire a consultant to get the most out of community engagement and the planning process.

A request for proposals was published and several consulting firms applied. From the applicants, the library chose Library Strategies. Library Strategies was created for libraries specifically. Their knowledge of the strengths and challenges of libraries was integral in creating the strategic plan.

2019  
RECRUIT  
CONSULTANT

2020-21  
OUTREACH,  
CREATE PLAN

2022-26  
IMPLEMENT  
PLAN

# BENEFITS OF USING A CONSULTANT



BROAD COMMUNITY  
OUTREACH & OBJECTIVE  
PERSPECTIVES



DEDICATED PROJECT  
MANAGEMENT



ACTIONABLE PLAN WITH  
MEASURABLE OUTCOMES



# GATHERING BACKGROUND DATA

In January, 2020, the library began working with Library Strategies on gathering background data and building a foundation of knowledge about the library and the community.

First, Library Strategies needed to learn about the Wilsonville Public Library in detail to understand current positioning, structure, budget, and history. Previous strategic plans were reviewed as well as the library's website, social media platforms, policy documents, and marketing plan. Statistical data including number of visitors, checkouts, digital use, and programs were also evaluated.

Library Strategies also benchmarked the library to several nearby peer libraries of similar service areas and budgets to identify strengths and weaknesses. Libraries identified as peers included Sherwood, West Linn, and Tualatin.

Library Strategies then began learning about the Wilsonville community by reviewing census data, recent community surveys, and reports.

Finally, Library Strategies performed a site evaluation to learn how the physical space is being used, the services provided in the building, as well as how people interact in the space.



# RAPID RESULTS INITIAL PLAN

- INFORMATION GATHERING
- FORM PLANNING COMMITTEE
- OUTREACH & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
  - SURVEYS
  - STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS
  - STAFF SWOC ANALYSIS
  - FOCUS GROUPS
- LARGE COMMUNITY PLANNING RETREAT
- DRAFT PLAN
- FINALIZE PLAN
- PLAN IMPLEMENTATION



Library Strategies laid out a plan that focused on community engagement and culminated in a large community planning retreat that would include 40-60 attendees. After the initial planning meeting, the Covid-19 pandemic forced the library to pause and re-evaluate the strategic planning process.

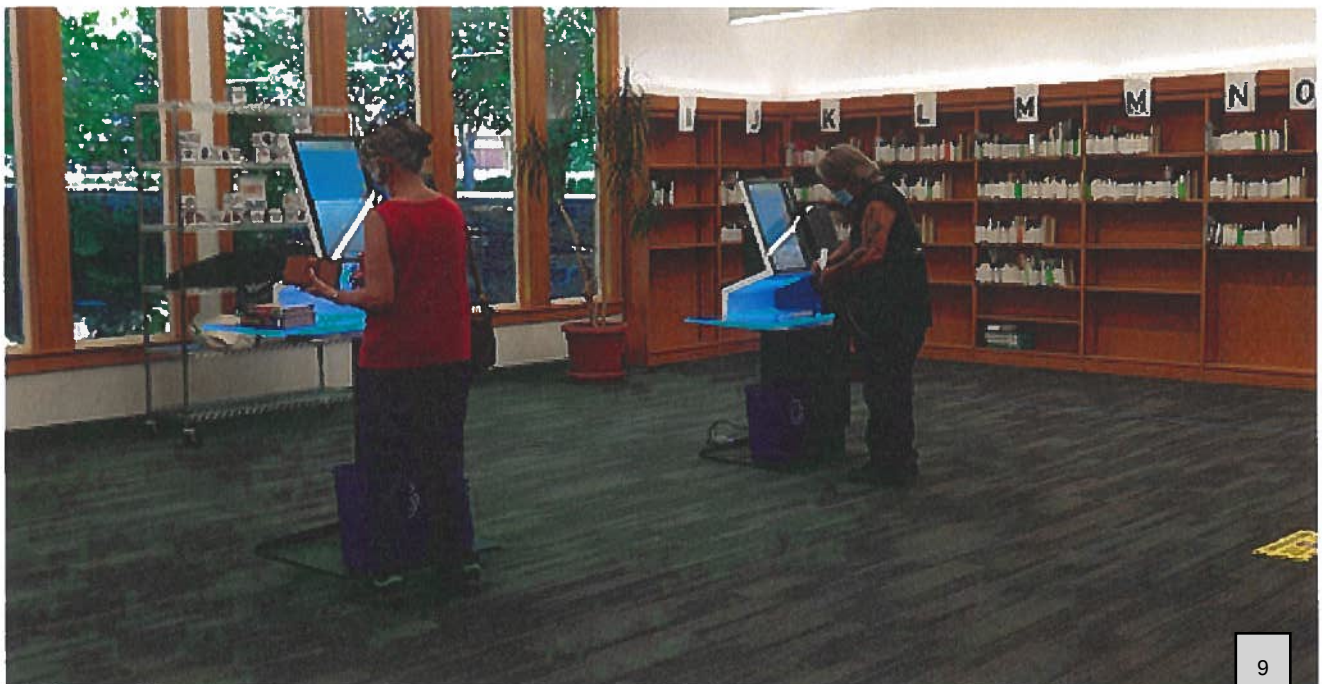
# A NOTE ON THE COVID -19 PANDEMIC

In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the way the library operated. So much was unknown at the time and serving the community safely in those new circumstances became the library's top priority.

After a pause to work through the initial rapid changes of the pandemic, the library weighed whether to postpone the strategic planning process or continue, knowing that the way we created the planning process would need to be much different than what was initially presented.

The library decided to move forward. Library Strategies worked with the library to create a new customized process. We needed to make sure there were still opportunities to hear from the community, including those who didn't use the library.

The new process would cut out the community retreat and instead add more virtual focus groups. We identified groups such as teens, Spanish-speakers, educators, community partners, Friends and Foundation members, library board, non-library users, and, of course, library users for these focus groups.





## MOVING FORWARD

In April, 2021, the library began to move forward with Library Strategies on the strategic planning process. Several meetings with stakeholders, staff, and library management were held to kick things off.

After the survey, interviews, meetings, and focus groups, a new strategic plan was formed.

# Mission, Vision, & Values

After gathering stakeholder, staff, and community input, it was time to start formulating the strategic plan document. The first step in formulating the actual plan based on all of the feedback and data gathered was to create a mission statement, a vision statement, and a list of values. These statements formed the foundation for creating the goals and strategies to follow.

## MISSION

Our mission is to enrich and advance the lives of Wilsonville residents, creating opportunities for joyful discovery, lifelong learning, and community connections.

## VISION

We envision the Library bringing people and the community together to experience hope, joy, and creativity through learning and discovery.

## VALUES STATEMENT

- We are a welcoming space where services and staff reflect the diversity of the community.
- We defend the sanctity of free exploration and expression by individuals.
- We exist for our community. Their needs are first.
- We evolve as our community evolves.
- We are a place to learn, explore, and imagine.
- We consider all residents potential beneficiaries of library services.
- We create opportunities for people to build relationships.
- We honor and celebrate the achievements of our staff and volunteers.



# Goals & Strategies



# 1

## GOAL 1: ENHANCE SERVICES & RESOURCES

### Strategy 1: Expand programs, resources, and activities for teens and 'tweens.

With the new teen space created during the renovation in 2018, youth services staff began to build up the teen advisory board (TAB) with local teens. Youth staff gave TAB the opportunity to drive the direction of programs.

A "Teen Afterschool Drop In" program was created where teens hang out after school and do activities such as crafts, videogames, or board games. This became such a hit that teens now show up even when there isn't a program planned.

While these changes are great and we have seen a rise in teen attendance at events, we realized that to fully accomplish the increase in programming that the library and the teens wanted, we would need to increase teen staffing.

Adding a full-time teen librarian remains a long term staffing goal for the library. Until then, we will continue to do the most with the staffing we have.

PROGRESS

75%

# Goals & Strategies

# 1

## GOAL 1: ENHANCE SERVICES & RESOURCES

**Strategy 2: Examine and analyze broad use of collections and make changes, which could include:**

1. Expanding Spanish and other language and cultural materials.
2. Growing digital and downloadable materials and resources.

Highlights for this strategy 2.1:

- Spanish and world languages collections were moved to a more central location in the library for easier access.
- World languages collection has increased from 3 languages to 8.
- The library was awarded a grant to purchase more books for our world language collections.
- Staff met with librarians at the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde to seek out more Indigenous materials for children.
- The Wilsonville Public Library Foundation funded an intern position to conduct a diversity audit of the teen collections.

Highlights for this strategy 2.2:

- Hoopla was added as an additional digital platform. It offers instant checkouts; no wait lists.
- LINCC has increased the digital materials budget every year of this strategic plan.
- LINCC created an additional pool of materials just for Clackamas County patrons (separate from the state-wide pool).
- Digital world languages collections were expanded in Libby.

PROGRESS

100%



# Goals & Strategies



## 1

## GOAL 1: ENHANCE SERVICES & RESOURCES

**Strategy 3: Evaluate demand for online service delivery versus physical collections and service and redistribute budget allocations as needed.**

In 2024 a collection evaluation was performed that looked at many factors including checkouts, age of collection, cost, etc. While digital use is increasing steadily, physical collection use remains solid in most areas. Some collection budgets were adjusted slightly and redistributed, but one thing is clear: there is a demand for digital and physical books!

PROGRESS

100%

**Strategy 4: Expand scope of adult programming to meet the needs of varied interests and age groups.**

The last few years, adult programming has expanded drastically. Examples of new programs include:

- Murder Mystery Nights
- Tiny Art Show
- Sit and Stitch
- Mushroom Hunting
- Tabletop Game Nights
- Trivia Nights
- Computer Classes
- Repair Fairs
- One Book One Coast
- Job Fairs
- Celebration of India

PROGRESS

75%

# Goals & Strategies



## 1

## GOAL 1: ENHANCE SERVICES & RESOURCES

**Strategy 5: Establish the Library as a place to access technology not available at home.**

With the creation of the Library of Things collection, we have added the following items available for checkout:

- Mobile Hotspots
- Film and Slide Scanner
- VHS to DVD Converter
- External DVD/Blu-ray Drive
- FLIR Thermal Camera
- Digital Projector
- Projection Screen
- Automotive Code Reader
- Portable CD Player
- Scanner
- 3D Printing Pen

In addition, the library added a new microfilm reader, a Geochron, an electronic book magnifier.

PROGRESS

100%

**Strategy 6: Create a plan to incorporate technology for meeting rooms and collaborative spaces.**

In 2025, both meeting rooms were outfitted with new technology including setups for virtual meetings with cameras and embedded microphones, new projectors, a dedicated computer for each room, and ClickShare devices. This new technology is flexible and can meet the varied needs of the meeting room users - from presentations, movies, meetings, and productions. This technology is available to anyone using the rooms, including reservations by the public.

PROGRESS

100%

# Goals & Strategies

## 2

### GOAL 2: RAISE AWARENESS AND PROMOTION OF THE LIBRARY

#### Strategy 1: Update marketing plan, especially targeting underserved audiences and non-users.

An additional staff position for marketing and promotion is identified on the library's long-range staffing plan. Currently, marketing and promotion tasks are split among existing staff. Through partnerships with other city departments, other community groups, and other LINCC libraries, the library has focused on cross promotion with these groups to increase visibility.

A new marketing plan overhaul would be a priority project for a future marketing and promotion position in conjunction with library leadership. In the meantime, we will do the best we can with the staff and resources we have.

PROGRESS

40%

#### Strategy 2: Review use of social media to ensure messages are reaching desired audiences.

The library had limited presence on Instagram and some presence on Facebook at the beginning of this strategic plan. In winter of 2025, a staff person interested in social media has increased posting. Reach, views, and content engagement have doubled.

Now that the library is posting regularly and has built up its followers, the next steps will be to evaluate which target audiences we are reaching and how we can reach additional audiences.

PROGRESS

80%

# Goals & Strategies

## 2

### GOAL 2: RAISE AWARENESS AND PROMOTION OF THE LIBRARY

#### Strategy 3: Develop additional methods to attract new and existing users to the range of Library Services.

Partnerships and outreach have been a priority for the library in the last few years. By going out and meeting the community where they are, we are reaching more community members. Outreach includes regular visits to local apartments, daycares, and the food bank.

Through partnerships with WIC, DHS, Goodwill and others, we are able to offer more connections to services and reach a wider audience.

PROGRESS

90%

#### Strategy 4: Improve the website to increase ease of use by all users.

Within this strategic plan timeframe the website was evaluated and improved. More staff were trained to make changes for more timely updates. Currently in progress, the city is undergoing website backend improvements and making a plan to meet or exceed new accessibility standards.



PROGRESS

100%

# Goals & Strategies

## 3

### GOAL 3: EXTEND ACCESS TO LIBRARY SERVICES

#### Strategy 1: Deepen and extend partnerships with local schools.

##### Highlights from this strategy:

- Regular visits to middle and high schools during lunchtime
- Kindergarten Carnival welcomes new students
- Summer Reading visits to every elementary school class
- Continued to build relationships with teacher-librarians
- Work with West Linn Public Library on school newsletter
- Weekly book pickup/drop off at schools
- Educator cards offered with higher checkouts and longer borrows
- Teacher bundles where youth staff put together books on specific topics
- Family night open houses for each elementary school
- Collaboration between West Linn Public Library to bring consistent service across school district



PROGRESS

100%

# Goals & Strategies

## 3

### GOAL 3: EXTEND ACCESS TO LIBRARY SERVICES

**Strategy 2: Evaluate and explore changing/adding the hours when programs are offered.**

In the survey and focus groups, the community expressed interest in more family programming on the weekends. We have added regular weekend programming funded by the Friends of the Wilsonville Library. We also have added more evening programs. Adjusting staff schedules and adding another part-time youth librarian has allowed us to offer more weekend programs as well.

**Strategy 3: Explore/find options to remove or lessen the impact of library fines.**

Wilsonville Public Library and West Linn Public Library went fine-free in January 2026!



PROGRESS

100%

PROGRESS

100%

# Goals & Strategies

## 3

### GOAL 3: EXTEND ACCESS TO LIBRARY SERVICES

#### Strategy 4: Expand outreach to and involvement with the Latino community.

In terms of staffing, the library went from 1 Spanish-speaking staff person to 7. The library now has a Spanish-speaking notary.

Partnerships have been developed with the Family Empowerment Center, ESL classes have been added and regular visits are made to Autumn Park Apartments. Events celebrating Día del Niño, Día de los Muertos, and Los Posadas have been added to the library's annual lineup. Spanish storytime has been added. In addition, the Spanish materials collection has been bolstered.

Most printed flyers, notices, and forms are now available in English and Spanish.

PROGRESS

75%

#### Strategy 5: Broaden community partnerships.

New Partnerships include (but are not limited to):

- WIC
- DHS
- Goodwill
- WV Community Sharing
- Schools & District
- Coffee Creek Correctional Facility
- Heart of the City
- Adult Transition Program
- Victory Academy
- Evergreen Child Development
- Building Blocks Early Learning
- Autumn Park, Canyon Creek, Weidemann Park, Creekside, Main Street apartments
- West Linn Public Library
- City Departments: Parks, SMART
- NW Alternative Housing
- Clackamas Parenting Together
- NAMI Clackamas, Basic Rights Oregon
- The Springs at WV, SpringRidge

PROGRESS

100%

# Goals & Strategies

## 4

### GOAL 4: IMPROVE PHYSICAL SPACES

#### Strategy 1: Rework, enhance, and possibly expand the teen area.

The Teen Advisory Board and youth services staff have made the new teen space a welcoming and functional space for teens with movable shelving, computers, study space, and large monitors for movies/videogames. The new space was a vast improvement over the previous teen room.

In 2025 library staff investigated the cost of enclosing the teen space with a wall and several windows. The enclosure of the teen space would allow teens the ability to use the space without having to worry about noise levels. The estimated cost was around \$80,000. This remains a priority for future funding opportunities and will be a part of a future facilities master plan.

PROGRESS

70%

#### Strategy 2: Evaluate current public computer use and consider options for patron privacy and mobility.

Due to the nature of public computers, staff ultimately decided not to add privacy screens or cubicles. However, computers have much more distance between them than the previous layout. There has been a recent uptick in computer use, so staff are evaluating the space and deciding if more computers are needed.



PROGRESS

100%

# Goals & Strategies

## 4

### GOAL 4: IMPROVE PHYSICAL SPACES

#### Strategy 3: Make outdoor space more friendly and usable.

Access to the children's patio from the children's room was created in the 2018 renovation. Since then, toys and furniture have been purchased to make the space more inviting and usable. This space is heavily used!

The library in conjunction with Public Works and the Foundation has commissioned architectural renderings of a patio renovation for fundraising purposes. This will likely be a multi-year fundraising effort by the Foundation.

#### Strategy 4: Explore options for adding small meeting rooms.

In 2026 the Wilsonville Public Library Foundation was awarded a Wilsonville-Metro Community Enhancement Grant to purchase two study pods, one of them ADA accessible. The two study pods should be installed in the library late 2026.



PROGRESS

75%

PROGRESS

100%

# Goals & Strategies

## 4

### GOAL 4: IMPROVE PHYSICAL SPACES

#### Strategy 5: Improve signage and wayfinding tools for patrons inside the library.

In 2024 new interior wayfinding was designed and installed by Felt Hat. The new wayfinding incorporated tree themes and tied into the 2018 renovation design. Portals into the different areas of the library include Spanish and English wayfinding.



PROGRESS

100%

#### Strategy 6: Designate a gender neutral restroom.

The two single-user nonfiction restrooms have been identified as future gender neutral restrooms and will be added to a future facilities master plan. In the meantime, there is one gender neutral restroom available in the public area.



PROGRESS

50%

# Goals & Strategies

## 4

### GOAL 4: IMPROVE PHYSICAL SPACES

#### Strategy 7: Explore options for using unused land near parking lot.

The unused land near the parking lot could potentially be used for building expansion or an additional building. Potential uses could be performance space, maker space, study rooms and conference rooms. Library staff investigated the potential, but funding is unavailable for such a large project at this time.

PROGRESS

100%

#### Strategy 8: Identify and promote environmental sustainability within the building.

Staff formed a committee to focus on making positive steps in environmental sustainability. That committee has made suggestions that have been implemented such as collecting bottles and cans for recycling, reducing printing, etc. A staff person from the library also attends the city's larger sustainability committee. The library also shares Storywalk pages books with West Linn Public Library to reduce printing and laminating.



PROGRESS

100%

# Goals & Strategies

# 5

## GOAL 5: INCREASE LIBRARY RESOURCES

### Strategy 1: Increase library resources through partnering with local organizations & grants.

The library and partners have applied for and been awarded several grants including the Wilsonville-Metro Community Enhancement Grant, Ready2Read Grant, LSTA Grant, State Library of Oregon Mini Grant.

Through partnering with other local organizations, the library has been able to offer more programming and services to the public.

### Strategy 2: Explore initiative to advocate for and increase public funding.

A task force was created by the County Commission to look at the current library district and recommend a path forward that addresses funding shortfalls for several libraries. That work is still in progress and will be part of a larger evaluation and strategic direction for the library district..



PROGRESS

100%

PROGRESS

100%

# Goals & Strategies

## 5

### GOAL 5: INCREASE LIBRARY RESOURCES

#### Strategy 3: Determine staffing increases or changes required to meet strategic plan goals.

In 2022 the library director worked with city human resources to map out a long term staffing plan. Quickly identified were two part-time positions - one in youth services and one in circulation - that were needed to reduce the library's reliance on on-call staff. In addition, the library's outreach position was increased to full-time. Future staffing needs that have been identified are a teen librarian, an additional adult librarian, and a marketing and promotions staff position.

PROGRESS

100%

#### Strategy 4: Work with the Library Foundation and Friends to continue to grow private support for programs and activities.

In addition to regular annual support for things like summer reading and summer science programs, the Friends and Foundation have both taken on additional projects to improve the library and library services. The Friends now fully support the Library of Things collection and with a Wilsonville-Metro Community Enhancement Grant, purchased the library's book bike. The Foundation funded the Geochron, the new mural in the children's room, cellular signal booster, and with a Wilsonville-Metro Community Enhancement Grant is funding two study pods.

PROGRESS

100%

# Goals & Strategies

## 6

### GOAL 6: ENGAGE WITH CITY INITIATIVES INCLUDING THE DEI COMMITTEE AND ACHC

#### Strategy 1: Engage with the City's Arts, Culture, and Heritage Commission

The director attends the ACHC meetings as an ex-officio member and works closely with the management analyst for Arts, Culture and Heritage. The director reports to the ACHC on arts-related programs at the library. The library has worked with the ACHC on the children's mural project, a temporary art installation in conjunction with Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, and the director is part of an internal review panel anytime there is a request for qualifications.

PROGRESS

100%

#### Strategy 2: Work closely with the city and county DEI committees to develop objectives for improvement in DEI.

Highlights from this strategy include:

- Increase in DEI programming & book displays
- Library Services Manager attends all DEI meetings
- Hearing loop technology added to service desks
- Video book reader added
- Staff DEI, mental health first aid, suicide prevention, and de-escalation training
- Co-hosting DEI Speaker Series
- More Spanish-speaking staff
- Wheel the World verified partner
- Sensory kits added for in library use and checkout
- World language collections expanded
- Most flyers, brochures available in Spanish

PROGRESS

100%



## NEXT STEPS

Library staff will take this year to reflect on the strategic planning process. What went well? What could we do better? What do we want to do differently next time? In what new ways can we engage the community?

Staff will begin the next strategic planning process in FY27/28. We are excited to see where the next plan will take us!



## FY27/28



# Library Bill of Rights

## Quick Links

**Contact Congress**

## Menu

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 or the views of those contributing to their creation.

We're Online!  
How may I help you today?

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.

Although the Articles of the *Library Bill of Rights* are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices. See the documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as [Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights](#).



EMAIL



PRINT



CITE

We're Online!  
How may I help you today?



*On June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1953 we said that*  
**we trust the people of this nation  
 to make their own decisions about  
 what they read and believe.**

*70 Years later, we still trust  
 them to make their own  
 decisions.*



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 pressure cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even

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 How may I help you today?

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 by definition different. Of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is read, heard, or seen. Librarians.

We're Online!  
How may I help you today?

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 c the  
young to meet the diversity of experiences in life

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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" book, and that 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.

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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.

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*A Joint Statement by:*

[American Library Association](#)

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