



The People's University

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PRESENTATION FOR THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES



Cleveland Public Library's Commitment to Intellectual Freedom

Cleveland Public Library's Longtime Commitment to Intellectual Freedom: Linda Eastman Denounces Nazi Book Burning in 1933

Excerpted from the *Plain Dealer*, May 13, 1933

The silence of American educators and statesman in the face of Chancellor Hitler's order which caused the burning of millions of books in the name of Germany's new nationalism was questioned last night in a letter from Alfred A. Benesch, president of the Board of Education, to the *Plain Dealer*.

Quoting from the letter:

As president of the Board of Education, a body whose function is to spread knowledge and truth, I conceive it to be not only my right, but my solemn duty to enter a vehement protest against the unparalleled conduct of the German Government in sanctioning and inciting the public burning of books deemed objectionable to the recrudescence of 'neo-nationalism.'

It is at least passing strange that thus far the voices of but two eminent Americans have been heard crying in the wilderness in condemnation of this refinement of medieval barbarism—those of Helen Keller and Linda A. Eastman...

So far as I am aware, not a single college president, not a single member of Congress, not a single representative of the administration at Washington, has felt the urge to utter a word of protest.

It is the surest subterfuge to say that the issue is one which concerns only the internal administration of the German Government. Since when have art, literature, science, poetry, music, and philosophy, which are the common property of human kind, become matters of 'local politics'?

American Library Association

Library Bill of Rights

- 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, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- 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.

Current State

Excerpted from the American Library Association (ALA) Executive Board's August 18, 2021, statement on censorship

In recent months, a few organizations have advanced the proposition that the voices of the marginalized have no place on library shelves. To this end they have launched campaigns demanding the censorship of books and resources that mirror the lives of those who are gay, queer, or transgender, or that tell the stories of persons who are Black, Indigenous or persons of color. Falsely claiming that these works are subversive, immoral, or worse, these groups induce elected and non-elected officials to abandon constitutional principles, ignore the rule of law, and disregard individual rights to promote government censorship of library collections. Some of these groups even resort to intimidation and threats to achieve their ends, targeting the safety and livelihoods of library workers, educators, and board members who have dedicated themselves to public service, to informing our communities, and educating our youth.

ALA strongly condemns these acts of censorship and intimidation.

We are committed to defending the constitutional rights of all individuals, of all ages, to use the resources and services of libraries. We champion and defend the freedom to speak, the freedom to publish, and the freedom to read, as promised by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

We stand opposed to censorship and any effort to coerce belief, suppress opinion, or punish those whose expression does not conform to what is deemed to be orthodox in history, politics, or belief. The unfettered exchange of ideas is essential to the preservation of a free and democratic society.

Libraries manifest the promises of the First Amendment by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions, and ideas, so that every person has the opportunity to freely read and consider information and ideas regardless of their content or the viewpoint of the author. This requires the professional expertise of librarians who work in partnership with their communities to curate collections that serve the information needs of all their users.

Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights

Access to Library Resources and Services Regardless of Sex, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, or Sexual Orientation

The American Library Association stringently and unequivocally maintains that libraries and librarians have an obligation to resist efforts that systematically exclude materials dealing with any subject matter, including sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Amended 2020.

Challenged Resources

ALA declares as a matter of firm principle that it is the responsibility of every library to have a clearly defined written policy for collection development that includes a procedure for review of challenged resources. Amended 2019.

Diverse Collections

Collection development should reflect the philosophy inherent in Article I of the *Library Bill of Rights*: “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, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.” A diverse collection should contain content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences. Amended 2019.

Cleveland Public Library Policy: Reconsideration of Library Service Materials

CPL Collection Development Policy, Section 508 (adopted November 18, 2021):

Cleveland Public Library welcomes expressions of opinion from its patrons regarding materials selected or not selected for the collection. Individuals may request reconsideration of a Library materials selection decision by submitting a written Request for Reconsideration of Material form via the Library's website. Paper copies of the form may be obtained at all Library locations. When a Request for Reconsideration of Material form is received, the Library's Executive Director, CEO consults with appropriate staff to obtain information about the item (e.g., professional reviews, awards, etc.). During the reconsideration process, material that a patron is requesting be removed from the collection will remain accessible to Library patrons without restriction. The Library's Executive Director, CEO prepares a written response that is sent to the patron in a timely manner.

Cleveland Public Library Procedure: Reconsideration of Library Service Materials

- Within 15 business days, the director will make a decision and send a letter to the concerned person who requested the reconsideration, stating the reasons for the decision.
- If the individual is not satisfied with the decision, a written appeal may be submitted within 10 business days to the Board of Trustees.
- If the Board of Trustees plans to address the appeal at their Board meeting, the individual will be notified of when and where the meeting will be held.
- The Board of Trustees reserves the right to limit the length of public comments.
- The decision of the Board of Trustees is final.