

## Attachment B

# ACCESS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS TO NONPRINT MATERIALS AN INTERPRETATION OF THE LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

Library collections of nonprint materials raise a number of intellectual freedom issues, especially regarding minors. Article V of the **Library Bill of Rights** states, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views."

The American Library Association's principles protect minors' access to print, sound, images, data, games, social media, online applications, technologies, programming and other formats such as eMedia. ALA's **Free Access to Libraries for Minors: an Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights** states:

The "right to use a library" includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials, and facilities the library has to offer. Every restriction on access to, and use of, library resources, based solely on the chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation of users violates Article V.

Only parents and legal guardians have the right and the responsibility to determine their children's—and only their children's—access to library resources. Parents and legal guardians who do not want their children to have access to specific library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their own children. Libraries and their governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent or legal guardian and child.

Libraries and their governing bodies have a legal and professional obligation to ensure that all members of the communities they serve have free and equitable access to a diverse range of library resources and services that are inclusive, regardless of content, approach, or format. This principle of library service applies equally to all users, minors as well as adults. Lack of access to information can be harmful to minors. Libraries and their governing bodies must uphold this principle in order to provide adequate and effective service to minors.

Policies that set minimum age limits for access to any nonprint materials or information technology, with or without parental permission, abridge library use for minors. Age limits based on the cost of the materials are also unacceptable. Librarians, when dealing with minors, should apply the same standards to circulation of nonprint materials as are applied to books and other print materials except when directly and specifically prohibited by law.

Recognizing that librarians cannot act *in loco parentis*, ALA acknowledges and supports the exercise by parents of their responsibility to guide their own children's reading and viewing. Libraries should provide published reviews and/or reference works that provide information about the content, subject matter, and recommended audiences for nonprint materials. These resources will assist parents in guiding their children without implicating the library in censorship.

In some cases, commercial content ratings, such as the **Motion Picture Association of America** (MPAA) movie ratings, might appear on the packaging or promotional materials provided by producers or distributors. However, marking out or removing this information from materials or packaging constitutes expurgation or censorship.

The inclusion of ratings in bibliographic records within the library catalog or discovery system may be interpreted as an endorsement by the library. Therefore, without attribution, inclusion of such ratings is a violation of the *Library Bill of Rights*. The library does not endorse or advocate for the use of rating systems, but this does not preclude library staff from answering questions about such systems. It is appropriate to provide access to sources containing information on rating systems in order to meet the specific information-seeking needs of individual users.

The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read or view.

The interests of young people, like those of adults, are not limited by subject, theme, or level of sophistication. Librarians have a responsibility to ensure young people's access to materials and services that reflect diversity of content and format sufficient to meet their needs.

(Adopted 28 June 1989, by the ALA Council; the quotation from *Free Access to Libraries for Minors* was changed after Council adopted the July 3, 1991, and the June 30, 2004, revision of that *Interpretation*; amended June 30, 2004, by the ALA Council.)

Adopted by the West Bloomfield Township Public Library Board of Trustees on July 14, 1993, revised on September 8, 2004, revised on March 16, 2022.