

## BRD-002 POS

### INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

#### Position Interpretation and details:

The Ottawa Public Library (OPL) supports intellectual curiosity and enquiry, and supports intellectual freedom as the prerequisite for an informed, democratic society as part of its core values as expressed in the OPL *Strategic Directions and Priorities*. The Ottawa Public Library defends “the right of library users to freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression as the basis of a democratic society”, as embodied in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ottawa Public Library values, and as expressed by the Canadian Library Association and the Ontario Library Association in their statements on intellectual freedom.

#### 1. Canadian Library Association Statement on Intellectual Freedom.<sup>1</sup>

All persons in Canada have the fundamental right, as embodied in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-15.html>, to have access to all expressions of knowledge, opinion, creativity and intellectual activity, and to express their thoughts publicly. This right to intellectual freedom, under the constitution and the law, is essential to the health and the development of Canadian society as the foundation for freedom of conscience, thought, belief, and informed citizenship.

Libraries have a core responsibility for the development, maintenance and advancement of intellectual freedom.

It is the responsibility of libraries to safeguard and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity, including those which some elements of society may consider to be unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, libraries shall acquire or provide access to the widest variety of information resources, in all forms, and shall resist labelling, rating and levelling systems that restrict access to these resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Library Association *Statement on Intellectual Freedom*, September 27, 2015

It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee the right of free expression by making available without discrimination the library's public spaces and services to all individuals and groups.

Intellectual freedom includes the right to privacy in the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual activity. Libraries have a responsibility to safeguard information about the identity and activities of all users.

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

Employees, volunteers and employers in libraries have a duty, in addition to their institutional responsibilities, to uphold these principles. Public library boards, school boards, post-secondary governing boards, and libraries reporting to other governing entities have an ethical responsibility to uphold these principles by endorsing this Statement.

## **2. Ontario Library Association Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual.<sup>2</sup>**

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.

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<sup>2</sup> Ontario Library Association *Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual*, 1998; reaffirmed by OLA Board of Directors, December 2005.

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 services 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.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Board Trustees, CEO, Management, and other representatives of Ottawa Public Library:**

- To guarantee and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity.
- To guarantee the right of free expression by making available the library's public facilities and services to all individuals and groups who need them.
- To uphold the principles of Intellectual Freedom.

- To acquire and make available the widest variety of materials and information.
- To resist attempts by any individual or group within the community to abrogate or curtail access to information.

<b>Effective Date:</b>	<b>Last Review Date:</b>
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