



CAL STATEMENT ON RIGHT TO READ

Jun. 13, 2022

The Colorado Association of Libraries (CAL), in alignment with the American Library Association (ALA), holds that the freedom to read is a fundamental and Constitutionally-protected right. CAL supports all library users' right to free inquiry—to read, listen to, and access the ideas of others—as guaranteed by the First Amendment. By curating diverse and inclusive collections and providing equitable access to them, our libraries safeguard the freedom to read.

Therefore, CAL opposes any efforts that obstruct the freedom to read through banning, removing, or restricting access to books, materials, or e-resources. We stand with the ALA in condemning any acts of censorship.

From 2021 to 2022, the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) has reported a dramatic increase in book challenges and outright removal of books from libraries. Library materials about race, gender and LGBTQIA+ issues are being targeted, and certain partisan groups are demanding their removal. These groups have claimed that these works are subversive and inappropriate, and have sought to circumvent law and established reconsideration processes to keep these books out of the hands of readers. One technique is to take passages out of context, ignoring the larger themes of a work. Another is to pressure libraries to remove items while under review, allowing a series of challenges to effectively block access to them. CAL opposes any efforts to censor, remove, or exclude the voices of BIPOC, queer, transgender, and other marginalized individuals, and we regard this as a flagrant violation of intellectual freedom.

While a group or individual may find a book or library resource objectionable, they do not have the lawful authority to decide who may or may not read it. Likewise, a parent may determine which materials are appropriate for their own child to read, but not make that decision for other people's children. As library materials are used for voluntary inquiry, individuals have the choice to check them out or not.

In libraries, the freedom to read is ensured when collection decisions are made without the influence of politicians, board members, parents, or other external biases. Librarians are extensively trained and deeply invested in curating quality collections that reflect a diversity of ideas, information, stories, and experiences. There is a professional and ethical responsibility to be proactively inclusive in collection development. Collection decisions are guided by formal policy and not made based on personal beliefs; **they are made to meet the information needs of the entire community of users.**

CAL is committed to supporting our librarians and the communities we serve. We believe that reading is among our greatest freedoms, and libraries have an obligation to provide equitable access to varying expressions of ideas across all accessible formats. We recognize that intellectual freedom is vital to our democracy and, therefore, will vehemently continue to defend the freedom to read.

Resources used to create this Statement:

[American Library Association: The Freedom to Read Statement](#)

[American Library Association: Library Bill of Rights](#)

[American Library Association: Diverse Collections: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#)

Additional Resources for Libraries facing resource challenges:

- [Colorado Association of Libraries Intellectual Freedom Committee Page](#)
- [Colorado Library Consortium: Understanding Strident Claims about Electronic Resources](#) (CLIC)
- [Colorado Library Consortium: Libraries Under Attack](#) (CLIC)
- [How to Respond to Challenges and Concerns about Library Resources](#) (ALA)
- [Guidelines for Library Policies](#) (ALA)
- [Guidelines for the Development of Policies and Procedures Regarding User Behavior and Library Usage](#) (ALA)
- [Library Privacy Guidelines](#) (ALA)
- [User-Initiated Exhibits, Displays, and Bulletin Boards: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#) (ALA)
- [Meeting Rooms: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#) (see also [Religion in American Libraries: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#)) (ALA)
- [#FReadom Fighters](#)