

## 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 Federation of Library Associations and the Ontario Library Association in their statements on intellectual freedom.

The OPL statement on Intellectual Freedom does not apply to the expression or dissemination of views that promote and/or incite hatred as defined by the *Criminal Code of Canada*. Such communications are prohibited on library premises and may result in a person’s immediate expulsion from the premises and referral of the matter to the Ottawa Police Services.

#### 1. Canadian Federation of Library Associations Statement on Intellectual Freedom.<sup>1</sup>

All persons in Canada have the fundamental right, subject only to the Constitution and the law to have access of the full range of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, and to express their thoughts publicly. Only the courts may abridge free expression rights in Canada.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations affirms further that libraries have a core responsibility to support, defend, and promote the universal principles of intellectual freedom and privacy.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations holds that libraries are a key institution in Canada for rendering expressive content accessible and

---

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Federation of Library Associations *Statement on Intellectual Freedom*, February 2017

affordable to all. Libraries are essential gateways for all persons living in Canada to advance themselves through literacy, lifelong learning, social engagement, and cultural enrichment.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and facilitate access to constitutionally protected expressions of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, including those which some individuals and groups consider unconventional, unpopular, or unacceptable. To this end, and in accordance with their mandates and professional values and standards, libraries provide, defend, and promote equitable access to the widest possible variety of expressive content and resist calls for censorship and the adoption of systems that deny or restrict access to resources.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and foster free expression and the right to safe and welcoming places and conditions. To this end, libraries make available their public spaces and services to individuals and groups without discrimination.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and defend privacy in the individual's pursuit of expressive content. To this end, libraries protect the identities and activities of library users except when required by the courts to cede them.

Furthermore, in accordance with established library policies, procedure and due process, libraries resist efforts to limit the exercise of these responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups.

Library employees, volunteers and employers as well as library governing entities have a core responsibility to uphold the principles of intellectual freedom in the performance of their respective roles.

## 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.
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.

---

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

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> 9 May 2017	<b>Last Review Date:</b> March 8, 2016
-----------------------------------	--