Libraries ACT Freedom to Read, Collect and Access Policy

Our libraries are committed to freedom to read, offering freedom of access, and do not censor.

Public Libraries are for everyone

Libraries support the free flow of information. They help people access information, ideas, stories and different experiences. They offer different formats, including books, films, audiobooks, programs, events and exhibitions.

Libraries provide content on a wide variety of subjects and reflect many different viewpoints, cultures and life experiences. Collections include information about diverse people, places, events, issues and ideas. Making content available does not mean the library agrees with or endorses it or its creators. Content should not be restricted simply because some people may find it challenging or offensive.

Everyone has the right to choose what they read, watch, listen to, borrow or take part in at the library. People should also be able to find stories that represent their culture, their families and their identities. This freedom to access information and make personal choices is important for democracy, supports an informed and inclusive community, and is an important part of the core values and ethics of public libraries.

Responsibilities and rights

Libraries have the right to freely collect and make material available in line with their Collections Policy.

Parents and guardians are responsible for helping their children choose and use library resources and services. They have the right to supervise what their children read, watch, listen to and take part in. The library respects that every parent or guardian may make different choices for their own children.

Classification

The Australian Classification Board decides whether films, games and publications need age restrictions or other limits. Libraries must adhere to age restrictions placed on resources. Resources that are not legally restricted can be accessed by everyone. Public libraries do not place special restrictions on the display or availability of unrestricted resources.

Selection and removal

The library selects and removes resources using professional guidelines and standard library practices. This helps maintain a current, dynamic collection that meets community needs.

Resources are only removed for reasons other than collection maintenance and renewal when there is a legal or professional requirement to do so, including when:

- Information is inaccurate, misleading, outdated or no longer reliable
- The Australian Classification Board has placed restrictions on the material
- A resource is subject to a court order or other legal restriction
- Providing access would breach copyright law
- The resource has been identified as defamatory or unlawful under Australian law
- Providing access would breach protocols respecting the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to determine appropriate cultural access for resources reflecting their history, culture, language and perspectives

The library does not remove, restrict or censor resources, programs, events or exhibitions because of personal beliefs, disagreement with a viewpoint, controversy, public pressure or lobbying.

Links to further information

ALIA Statement on Free Access to Information https://read.alia.org.au/alia-free-access-information-statement

NSLA Statement on Freedom to Read https://www.nsla.org.au/resources/freedom-to-read/

IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto https://www.ifla.org/public-library-manifesto/

IFLA Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom https://repository.ifla.org/handle/20.500.14598/1424

Australian Classification https://www.classification.gov.au/

Libraries ACT Collections Policy https://www.library.act.gov.au/functions/footer-pages/policies

Libraries ACT Children and Young People in the Library Policy https://www.library.act.gov.au/functions/footer-pages/policies

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