

Intellectual Freedom Policy

Policy Number:	GOV-011
Policy Category:	Governance
Approved by:	OPL Board
Accountability:	CEO
Approval Date:	August 27, 2020
Effective date:	August 28, 2020
Next Review Date:	August 2023
Supersedes:	Intellectual Freedom Policy effective June 28, 2012

Purpose Statement

The Oakville Public Library (OPL) supports intellectual curiosity and enquiry, and supports intellectual freedom as the prerequisite for an informed, democratic society. The Oakville 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 OPL endorses the Canadian Federation of Library Associations’ Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries and the Ontario Library Association’s Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual. These statements do 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 Halton Regional Police Services.

Scope

This policy applies to the entire organization and those individuals or groups representing OPL.

Policy Statement

OPL endorses the Canadian Federation of Library Associations’ *Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries* (CFLA, June 27, 1974, amended November 17, 1983, November 18, 1985, September 27, 2015, Reviewed 2018):

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations recognizes and values the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the guarantor of the fundamental freedoms in Canada of conscience and religion; of thought, belief, opinion, and expression; of peaceful assembly; and of association.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations supports and promotes the universal principles of intellectual freedom as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which

include the interlocking freedoms to hold opinions and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

In accordance with these principles, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations affirms that all persons in Canada have a fundamental right, subject only to the Constitution and the law, to have access to 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 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, 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, procedures 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 library roles.

OPL endorses the Ontario Library Association's *Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual* (OLA, December 2003, reaffirmed December 2005):

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:

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.

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.

That freedom of expression includes freedom for a creator to depict what is ugly, shocking and unedifying in life.

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.

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.

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 serves 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.

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.