

Library Resource Challenges: A Tip Sheet for Preparing and Responding

If you stay ready, you will be ready.

The best preparation is done in advance of a challenge. The following resources will help you prepare and respond to challenges.

The Texas Library Association has a [TLA Intellectual Freedom Helpline](#) in place to assist you.

The TLA Intellectual Freedom Helpline will connect librarians facing materials challenges or with questions about intellectual freedom issues to other Texas librarians who have volunteered to share their expertise, resources, and support. The Helpline coordinators who assign the cases will make every effort to match individuals to volunteers with similar library experience.

Reporting Censorship

To meet its charge to “respond on behalf of libraries and librarians in Texas who are challenged in protecting the access to materials,” the committee needs to know about such incidents. Any library employee, Friend, or trustee who knows of a complaint or challenge is encouraged to contact the chair of the TLA IFC and **report such incidents to the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom**. You may always report these incidents anonymously. You can also contact the TLA office (512-328-1518) for the current IFC chair’s contact information.

TLA also offers Professional Liability Insurance

Questions? Contact Christy Reynolds at TLA.

TLA partners with Barclay Insurance to offer professional liability insurance at a discounted premium rate (\$42) to TLA members. This policy will guard against financial devastation in the event you are named in a serious lawsuit arising in the course and scope of your responsibilities as an educator. The policy year is January 1 – December 31. You may add the policy to your membership when you join or renew (online or via the membership form PDF). If you have already joined or renewed your TLA membership for 2023, you may add the insurance to your membership by updating your membership selections in Members Only.

To understand what this covers, look at this TLJournal article: “Protect Yourself from Threats of Job-Related Legal Actions.” TLA Journal, Summer 2022.

From the American Library Association

POLICY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why do I need a policy?• Basic Components of a Selection Policy• Selection Criteria	RECONSIDERATION PROCEDURES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to Respond to Challenges and Concerns about Library Resources• Informal Complaints and Expressions of Concern• Formal Requests for Reconsideration• Guidelines for Reconsideration Committees
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POLICY

[Why do I need a policy?](#)

Every library — academic, public, and school (public, private, charter, independent, and international) — should have a comprehensive written policy that guides the selection, deselection or weeding, and reconsideration of library resources. The most valuable selection policy is current; it is reviewed and revised on a regular basis; and it is familiar to all members of a library's staff. The policy should be approved by the library's governing board or other policy-making body and disseminated widely for understanding by all stakeholders.

[Basic Components of a Selection Policy](#)

Library Mission; Support for Intellectual Freedom; Objectives; Responsibility for Selection; Selection Criteria; Acquisitions Procedures; others

For library professionals to make informed choices, selection policies for all types of libraries — public libraries, academic libraries, technical school libraries, and school libraries (public and private) — should include criteria to guide in the resource selection process. The criteria should be a blend of general, specific, and technical to enable library staff to select materials in all subject areas and formats. In addition to criteria such as appropriateness to the age and level of the user, librarians must also consider creating a collection that reflects diversity of ideas and authors as well as being reflective of the population the library serves.

[Selection Criteria](#)

Selection policies should include specific criteria to guide professionals in purchasing items. The criteria should be relevant to the library's objectives: excellence (artistic, literary, visual, etc.), appropriateness to level of user, authoritative and varying perspectives on controversial issues, accessibility, and ability to stimulate further intellectual and social development. Librarians should consider authenticity, public demand, general interest, content, and circumstances of use. For libraries serving minors, librarians should consider age, social and emotional development, intellectual level, interest level, and reading level. Technical criteria should be included in the policy (for example, clarity of sound in audio materials, quality of cinematography in video, and quality of graphics in games).

RECONSIDERATION PROCEDURES

How to Respond to Challenges and Concerns about Library Resources

Libraries are a cornerstone of the community dedicated to serving the information needs of everyone. As such, they collect and make available a wide variety of information resources representing the range of human thought and experience. With such a broad spectrum of ideas and information available, it is inevitable that people will occasionally encounter resources they believe to be inappropriate or offensive. They may complain and request that such resources be removed.

Informal Complaints and Expressions of Concern

Informal complaints can occur at any time, and every library should have a process for handling verbal concerns.

Formal Requests for Reconsideration

The reconsideration section in the selection policy establishes the framework for any person or group registering a complaint or formal challenge to library resources and possible resolutions for all involved. The procedure for handling complaints and for reconsidering challenged materials should be clearly enunciated in the policy statement and applicable to everyone. The policy should stress that no materials will be removed without following the full reconsideration policy and *no materials should be removed upon the authority of a single staff member or administrator*. Avenues of appeal to the library's board, oversight committee, or governing body should be clearly presented for both those who seek a work's removal and those who desire its retention. In this section, sample policy text and procedures are offered to assist library staff to manage informal verbal complaints and formal written challenges fairly and confidently.

Guidelines for Reconsideration Committees

Under the best professional standards, reconsideration policies ask those charged with reviewing a challenged book to set aside their personal beliefs and evaluate the work in light of the objective standards outlined in the library's materials selection policy.