

Ontario Library Association

Statement on Intellectual Freedom and the Intellectual Rights of the Individual

Introduction

The Ontario Library Association and its divisions are committed 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.

Ontario Libraries have the important responsibility to facilitate expressions of knowledge, creativity, ideas, and opinion, even when viewed as unconventional or unpopular.

The Ontario Library Association declares its acceptance of the following principles for libraries:

1. Equitable access to 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. Intellectual freedom requires freedom to critically examine and create other ideas, opinions, views, and philosophy of life, other than those currently approved by the local community or by society in general and including those ideas and interpretations which may be unconventional, uncommon or unpopular.
3. The free traffic in ideas and opinions is essential to the health and growth of a free society and that the freedom to read, listen, view, and create is fundamental to such free traffic.
4. Library governance ensures that the principles of intellectual freedom and expression of thought are upheld.

Library Service, Collections and Resources:

5. 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, and other materials including the provision of access to electronic sources of information and access to the internet. Materials are not excluded from library collections based on race, place of birth, origin, ethnic origin, ethnicity, citizenship, age, creed, disability, family structure, sex, and sexual orientation.
6. It is 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, censor or curtail access to information, the freedom to read, view, listen or participate by demanding the removal of, or restrictions to library information sources in any format.

Library Programming, Events, and Space Bookings

7. It is the responsibility of libraries to maintain the right of intellectual freedom and expression by implementing it consistently when hosting programs and events within the public space of the library including rented public space by individuals and community organizations.

8. Libraries create welcoming community spaces where community members are free from discrimination and may engage in peaceful assembly. Libraries may cancel or deny permits to individuals or organizations when speech or displays are used in a way that is unlawful.

Applicable legislation:

[Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#): Section 2(b) of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* protects “freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication”.

[Criminal Code](#): Section 63 pertains to Unlawful Assemblies and Riots. Section 297 pertains to defamatory libel. Section 318 pertains to hate propaganda.

[Ontario Human Rights Code](#): Sub-section 13 pertains to infringing on freedom from discrimination.

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