

“A truly great library contains something in it to offend everyone.”

Jo Godwin

Intellectual Freedom Checklist

The best defense is a well-prepared offense -- written policies, standardized procedures, informed trustees and staff.

Use this checklist to determine your library's level of preparedness.

DO YOU HAVE?

- A written mission statement defining the kinds of service the library will offer the community?
- Written policies that cover material selection, Internet use, programs, exhibits, and other services, as well as access to materials, acceptable use, and patron confidentiality, formally adopted by the governing body and periodically revised?
- Written procedures that include how to handle concerns and requests for reconsideration of materials or services?
- Readily available forms that can be given to concerned patrons?
- Copies of the New York Library Association and the American Library Association Intellectual Freedom Manuals?

DO YOU DO?

- Regular training of staff, volunteers, and trustees about the library's policies and the principals of intellectual freedom?
- Regular training of staff and volunteers in public service techniques, including how to handle complaints or expressions of concern?
- Public relations programs aimed at individuals and community groups to inform them of the materials and services provided by the library and how the community benefits from the library's practice of intellectual freedom?

DO YOU KNOW?

- Local, state, and federal laws regarding intellectual freedom?
- Local, state, and national organizations that are advocates of intellectual freedom and that have resources to assist libraries?
- Influential individuals in the community who may have a significant positive impact on the library?
- Groups or individuals in the community likely to initiate complaints or concerns regarding intellectual freedom?

Intellectual Freedom Checklist *continued*

DO YOU KEEP IN TOUCH?

- Encourage communication among school, public, and academic libraries in your area.
- Read newspapers, popular magazines, and professional journals, attend conferences, and watch the news.
- Know about local, regional, national, and global intellectual freedom issues.
- Be familiar with New York Library Association and American Library Association policies regarding intellectual freedom. These will assist your policy and procedure writing, and offer support in the case of a request for reconsideration.

DO YOU TELL THE WORLD?

- Don't wait until you have to defend the *Library Bill of Rights* -- PROMOTE IT! Don't wait for a request for reconsideration or Banned Books Week to broadcast the library's philosophy about intellectual freedom. Every day is a good day to promote free access to ideas and information for all people, regardless of age, origin, background, or views. Librarians know how powerful and effective intellectual freedom is; now we need to educate our communities.
- Get your governing body involved as well. As the political body representing the library, it is the ideal advocate for the library and for intellectual freedom.
- Cultivate good relations with journalists, particularly those who write for local newspapers, radio, or television.
- Initiate and maintain good relationships with civic, religious, educational, and political groups in your community. These organizations may be able to assist with outreach and be there with support in the case of a request for reconsideration. Intellectual freedom is everyone's issue.