



Policy Type: **Foundation**

Policy Number: **FN - 04**

Policy Title: **Intellectual Freedom**

Policy Approval Date: May 1987

Policy Review Date: March 2025

PURPOSE

The Milton Public Library (MPL) Board has a fundamental responsibility to uphold and advocate for intellectual freedom. This policy affirms the library's commitment to providing equitable, inclusive, and unrestricted access to information, ensuring that all individuals have the right to explore diverse perspectives without censorship or discrimination.

SCOPE

1. The Board adopts the Canadian Federation of Library Association's **Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries** as per Appendix A
2. The Board further adopts the **Ontario Library Association's Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual** as per Appendix B

I. MPL Board Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Board, and those who work in the library, to:

- ensure that all library users have the fundamental right to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity and intellectual activity, and to express their thoughts publicly
- guarantee and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity, including those which some elements of society may consider to be unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable while maintaining a welcoming and respectful environment.
- ensure library's public facilities and services are accessible and inclusive for individuals and groups without discrimination. The library provides safe spaces where people can engage with information freely. Make available all of the library's public facilities and services to all individuals and groups who need them.

- resist all efforts to limit the exercise of these responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups
- Intellectual freedom applies to all formats, including digital resources, artificial intelligence applications, and social media.
- directs the Chief Librarian to ensure that the principles of intellectual freedom are integrated into all organizational procedures and practices.

2. Commitment to Open Access and Expression

MPL strives to create opportunities for learning, discussion, and cultural enrichment through programs, events, and exhibits. The library does not discriminate against speakers, performers, or organizations based on their viewpoints, provided their contributions align with MPL's commitment to intellectual freedom and community well-being.

To uphold these principles, MPL:

- Provides equitable access to information in all forms, ensuring that diverse viewpoints are represented.
- Supports the availability of materials that reflect a wide range of experiences, ideologies, and cultural perspectives.
- Maintains a welcoming and inclusive environment where individuals can openly engage with information and express their ideas.
- Physical and digital access to materials is not restricted based on content except when legally mandated.
- MPL affirms that children and youth can freely explore the library's collections. Parents and guardians are responsible for guiding their children's choices in alignment with their family's values.

3. Library Collections and Resources

The MPL strives to meet the informational needs of all ages, backgrounds, and educational levels of our community by providing alternative perspectives and/or opposing views on topics, including those that may be perceived as less popular and/or unorthodox. The collection broadly reflects the diversity that exists in our culture and society. A particular viewpoint in the collection expresses MPL's policy of intellectual freedom, not endorsing that point of view. Access to library collections is not restricted by age. Responsibility for the use of the collection by children rests solely with their parents or legal guardians.

To uphold these principles, MPL:

- Does not exclude materials based on the personal beliefs, background, or political stance of an author.
- Does not restrict access due to the frankness of language or depiction of controversial subjects.

- Does not censor materials because of the potential for content to be perceived as challenging or provocative.
- Does not limit selection based on the language in which the work is written or performed.
- Provides open access to all materials in the collection to users of all ages.

While MPL complies with applicable laws regarding restricted content (e.g., materials deemed illegal under the Criminal Code of Canada).

4. Programs, Events, and Public Spaces

MPL strives to create opportunities for learning, discussion, and cultural enrichment through programs, events, and exhibits. The library does not discriminate against speakers, performers, or organizations based on their viewpoints, provided their contributions align with MPL's commitment to intellectual freedom and community well-being.

To uphold these principles:

- Programs and events are developed to foster open dialogue and exploration of ideas.
- Exhibits and displays aim to represent a broad spectrum of experiences, perspectives, and creative expression.
- MPL may refuse or cancel space bookings for events promoting hate, discrimination, or content violating the Programming Policy and Room and Space Usage Policy.
- The Library guarantees the right of free expression by making available its rooms to all individuals, groups and organizations regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of the individuals or groups requesting their use. These beliefs do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Milton Public Library Board. The use of Library spaces must not contravene Canadian laws, including the Criminal and Ontario Human Rights Code.

5. Internet and Digital Access

MPL recognizes that intellectual freedom extends to digital spaces and actively works to ensure open access to online information. Free public Wi-Fi and computer access support research, learning, and digital literacy.

The internet is a vast and unregulated space that contains a range of perspectives, including those that may be controversial or offensive. MPL does not filter general internet access but employs safeguards to protect against cybersecurity threats. While the library works to maintain a balance between security and open access, it cannot guarantee that filtering technologies will be entirely effective.

Users are responsible for their own internet activity and are encouraged to exercise critical thinking when evaluating online information. MPL assumes no responsibility for content accessed via its networks.

6. Reconsideration of Library Materials and Programs

MPL respects individuals' right to question or challenge materials, programs, or exhibits. While personal objections to content are valid, intellectual freedom ensures that no individual or group has the right to restrict access to others. If a patron believes that a particular item, program, or exhibit falls outside the library's selection criteria, they may submit a duly filled-in "Request for Program Reconsideration" form or "Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials" for the Library staff to review. The reconsideration process ensures that all concerns are evaluated thoughtfully while reaffirming MPL's commitment to upholding intellectual freedom.

Related Documents:

1. Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA) **Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries** approved by CLA on 27th June 1974; Amended 17th November 1983; 18th November 1985; 27th September 2015 and adopted by CFLA on 26th August 2016. Reviewed 12th April 2019 (**Appendix A**)
2. Ontario Library Association (OLA) **Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual** Updated and Approved, Ontario Library Association Annual General Meeting 7th November 1998 (**Appendix B**)

Related Policies:

OP- 07 Public Internet Access Policy
OP -14 Collection Management Policy
OP - 21 Programming Policy
OP – 23 Room and Space Usage Policy

Appendix A
Canadian Federation of Library Associations
Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries



Approval History: ~ CLA: June 27, 1974. Amended November 17, 1983; November 18, 1985; September 27, 2015. CFLA-FCAB: Adopted August 26, 2016; Reviewed April 12, 2019.

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.

Appendix B

Ontario Library Association

Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual

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:

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.
- 3) That freedom of expression includes freedom for a creator to depict what is ugly, shocking and unedifying in life.
- 4) 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.
- 5) 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.
- 6) 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.
- 7) 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.

Updated and Approved,
Ontario Library Association
1998 Annual General Meeting: November 7, 1998