

POLICY

Subject: Public Bulletin Board and Literature Policy

Adopted: September 11, 2003

Amended: May 9, 2017

Reviewed: June 1, 2021

The Library provides space on its public bulletin board for announcements and notices of local community events, and in its literature display racks for distribution of free materials that may be of interest to library patrons. Both of these services are in keeping with the Library's overall philosophy of providing access to a wide range of information sources.

Policy

1. All notices, posters, and free literature must be approved by library staff before being placed on the bulletin board or in the display racks. Staff may discard items not approved for placement and excess copies of any items received. Staff may remove items no longer current or relevant.
2. Items will be posted or made available on an equitable basis, subject to available space, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of the individuals or groups represented.
3. Religious and political materials are permissible for informational purposes or special events; materials that have the primary effect to proselytize for a single point of view will not be displayed.
4. In general, no items devoted solely to the sale, advertising, solicitation or promotion of commercial products or services for a single profit making business will be accepted. Staff may make exceptions for announcements of educational opportunities provided by profit making businesses, or items including a variety of beneficiaries.
5. Posting of a notice or placement of materials in a display rack does not imply endorsement by library staff or Board of Trustees.

Adapted from: Exhibit Spaces and Bulletin Boards, an interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights
Adopted July 2, 1991 by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 2004 and July 1, 2014.

Exhibit Spaces and Bulletin Boards

An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

Libraries often provide exhibit spaces and bulletin boards in physical and/or electronic formats. The uses made of these spaces should conform to the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*: Article I states, "Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation." Article II states, "Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval." Article VI maintains that exhibit space should be made available "on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use."

In developing library exhibits, staff members should endeavor to present a broad spectrum of opinion and a variety of viewpoints. Libraries should not shrink from developing exhibits because of controversial content or because of the beliefs or affiliations of those whose work is represented. Just as libraries do not endorse the viewpoints of those whose work is represented in their collections, libraries also do not endorse the beliefs or viewpoints of topics that may be the subject of library exhibits.

Exhibit areas often are made available for use by community groups. Libraries should formulate a written policy for the use of these exhibit areas to assure that space is provided on an equitable basis to all groups that request it. Written policies for exhibit space use should be stated in inclusive rather than exclusive terms. For example, a policy that the library's exhibit space is open "to organizations engaged in educational, cultural, intellectual, or charitable activities" is an inclusive statement of the limited uses of the exhibit space. This defined limitation would permit religious groups to use the exhibit space because they engage in intellectual activities, but would exclude most commercial uses of the exhibit space.

A publicly supported library may designate use of exhibit space for strictly library-related activities, provided that this limitation is viewpoint neutral and clearly defined.

Libraries may include in this policy rules regarding the time, place, and manner of use of the exhibit space, so long as the rules are content neutral and are applied in the same manner to all groups wishing to use the space. A library may wish to limit access to exhibit space to groups within the community served by the library. This practice is acceptable provided that the same rules and regulations apply to everyone, and that exclusion is not made on the basis of the doctrinal, religious, or political beliefs of the potential users.

The library should not censor or remove an exhibit because some members of the community may disagree with its content. Those who object to the content of any exhibit held at the library should be able to submit their complaint and/or their own exhibit proposal to be judged according to the policies established by the library.

Libraries may wish to post a permanent notice near the exhibit area stating that the library does not advocate or endorse the viewpoints of exhibits or exhibitors.

Libraries that make bulletin boards available to public groups for posting notices of public interest should develop criteria for the use of these spaces based on the same considerations as those outlined above. Libraries may wish to develop criteria regarding the size of material to be displayed, the length of time materials may remain on the bulletin board, the frequency with which material may be posted for the same group, and the geographic area from which notices will be accepted.

Adopted July 2, 1991, by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 2004 and July 1, 2014.