

APPENDIX

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY: GUIDELINES FOR SERVICE

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY: GUIDELINES FOR SERVICE

(adopted as policy by OLA Council in January 1982)

INTRODUCTION

In the pursuit of establishing minimum qualitative standards for children's services in Ontario public libraries, the committee first of all endorses the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1977), the CLA Public Library Standards (1967, 1969), the CLA Intellectual Freedom Statement (1974) and the Ontario Public Libraries Act (RSO 1970, amended 1971, 1972, 1973). These documents set out universally accepted tenets that inform worldwide, national and provincial approaches to quality library service and mark the way for those who would do likewise. This document is presented in the present tense to reflect the current state of many Ontario libraries and library systems. A large proportion of these qualitative standards are in effect at the present time in Ontario. Other guidelines are provincially and locally possible now. Supplemental quantitative standards must be developed through subsequent research and investigation.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of public library service is to provide ready access to sources of information, knowledge and the creative imagination for all people in Ontario. The intellectual growth of children, their cultural appreciation and recreational activities should be fostered through quality library service, with consideration and respect equal to that assured to adult patrons.

ADMINISTRATION

To realize these goals and objectives, children's librarians participate in the overall administration of public library services. This involves planning, decision-making, organizing and budgeting to offer a service which fulfills community needs.

A written job description is provided for every children's librarian.

In larger library systems a senior management position is established for a co-ordinator of children's services. The co-ordinator has experience and expertise in the field of children's services as well as management aptitudes and has the ability to relate these to the needs of children. This person is a member of all senior management committees.

Children's librarians have equal opportunities for advancement with other librarians in public service.

STAFFING

All children have the right to the services of a professional children's librarian responsible for the implementation of the recommendations of this document.

A professional children's librarian is a librarian with a degree from an accredited library school, a significant portion of whose duties lie in the field of children's work on a day-to-day basis. She also utilizes related training and experience, and insures that such specialized skills are regularly updated.

A librarian working with children is a librarian with a degree from an accredited library school, whose primary duties lie in areas other than children's work, and who may be called upon to assist in library services for children. Such librarians will also have an interest in children's services, and make every effort to update specialized skills.

In communities where the need for a children's librarian is established a full-time professional children's librarian is hired. This need is determined through an analysis of the demographic data on the community, the number of volumes in the library, and the services provided by other community agencies.

Libraries which do not have the services of a professional children's librarian require a professional children's librarian/consultant for maintenance, evaluation and promotion of the collection and services and provision of reader's advisory service.

Provision is made for all staff in children's services to participate in professional activities, serve on committees, and to attend workshops, courses and conferences both on children's services and the entire library field. This provision includes monetary support and relief from regular duties.

To maintain an effective service, suitable clerical and other support staff who have the interest and ability to work with children are hired.

RESEARCH

Staff are encouraged to initiate, recommend and participate in research into children's services.

APPENDIX

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY: GUIDELINES FOR SERVICE (CONTINUED)

ADVISORY SERVICES

The services of professional children's librarians are available to the public during service hours.

Effective library service is provided by trained staff who are familiar with the full range of the children's collection and reference tools. Age levels, interests and reference needs are essential considerations in providing these services.

Children are entitled to open access to information and facilities throughout the library.

All services to children are free, including advisory services, registration, reserves and interlibrary loans. There is no monetary penalty for overdue materials; precedent for this exists in several Ontario public libraries.

Each child is assured the confidentiality of circulation records and materials selection.

The library provides services to exceptional groups and individuals in the community; among these are the illiterate, handicapped and exceptional or gifted children, and those requiring advocacy or counselling.

Library services are also provided to those having languages and cultures other than English and French.

OTHER SERVICES

The library provides programming for children and parents, both in and out of the library, to stimulate the creative potential of the child and promote the use of the collection.

The staff of the children's department establishes channels of communication with community agencies and groups devoted to serving children.

A public relations campaign, which includes advertisement of activities, displays of library materials and booklists, is a regular and on-going function of the library.

Automated library services are provided for children as well as adults.

MATERIALS

Children are entitled to

- a separately purchased and administered collection which is designed to meet their needs from infancy to the end of childhood;
- a catalogue with author, title and subject access to the children's collection;

- appropriately sized furniture, shelves and equipment.

The collection is balanced to serve both a wide variety of users and special needs of the community.

The collection is also up-to-date, in good condition and generally attractive, and is organized for easy access and with children's capabilities in mind.

The collection includes literature of the highest quality to satisfy the wants and needs of children and to develop their human potential.

Book and non-book materials are available representing

- Canadiana;
- multicultural and multilingual literature to meet the needs of the community;
- traditional literature including folklore and myths to convey a cultural heritage;
- popular and ephemeral literature that constantly changes to reflect the environment of children;
- literature designed to serve special groups such as handicapped and gifted children, and beginning, reluctant and slow readers.

The collection includes a variety of formats

- books; picture books; fiction in both hardcover and paperback; non-fiction on a variety of subjects; a non-circulating reference collection of encyclopedias, standard reference works; indexes and other bibliographic aids;
- periodicals written specifically for children and adult periodicals appropriate for them;
- pamphlets to enrich the book collection;
- audio-visual materials, including records, tapes, filmstrips, films, slides, video-cassettes and the equipment to use these in the library;
- realia such as games, puppets and toys.

A collection of adult materials on children's literature and reading, children's librarianship, child development and other aspects of the world of children is available.

CONCLUSION

Children are in every way welcome in public libraries. All the above goals are designed to assure their comfort and well-being.

SAMPLE 1

SELECTED SECTIONS FROM THE TRILLIUM PUBLIC LIBRARY'S COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

From: CONTENT OF THE COLLECTION (Policy #COL-5)

Trillium Public Library will provide as wide a spectrum of materials as budget and space limitations will allow, with emphasis on:

- a) materials which record and communicate historical, scientific, social and cultural knowledge;
- b) materials of current and future significance and interest;
- c) materials which stimulate imagination, creativity and curiosity;
- d) materials which increase the individual's ability to function as a productive member of society;
- e) materials which entertain and thus enhance the individual's enjoyment of life.

From: TYPES OF MATERIALS (Policy #COL-6)

The Library shall provide in its collection those types of materials that best help it to meet its goals and objectives. Books shall be of primary importance. Other types of material shall include periodicals, pamphlets and clippings; and non-print materials such as audio recordings and video recordings.

From: COMPOSITION OF THE COLLECTION (Policy #COL-17)

SAMPLE 1

SELECTION SECTIONS FROM THE TRILLIUM PUBLIC LIBRARY'S COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY (CONTINUED)

The composition of the library collection shall reflect the needs and interests of the community of Trillium as determined by analysis and experience on the part of the library staff. The collection shall be composed of the following major parts:

3. Children

The collection is selected for children up to the age of 12 years.

a) Fiction

The need for a balanced children's collection is recognized. Since bibliotherapy is an important aspect of children's fiction, titles concerning problem areas such as toilet training, fears, growing up, death, friendship, and dealing with a new sibling will be included. Picture books may be chosen on the basis of exceptionally good illustrations. Children's classics will be part of the collection as will popular mass market titles.

b) Non-fiction

Non-fiction titles must be accurate, up-to-date and unbiased. Titles will be selected which:

- satisfy children's natural curiosity about their environment;
- develop children's awareness of the world around them;
- are suitable for a range of age and reading levels.

c) Reference

The children's reference collection will include general encyclopedias, both Canadian and international, suitable for various age groups. These will be kept up-to-date as new editions become available. Specialized encyclopedias will be considered for such topics as: the arts, biographies, nature, children's authors and illustrators, science and technology, history and geography.

SAMPLE 1

SELECTION SECTIONS FROM THE TRILLIUM PUBLIC LIBRARY'S COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY (CONTINUED)

From: INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM (Policy #COL-18)

The public library is a democratic institution, and no individual or minority group should be allowed to limit the community's freedom to read. Democracy cannot flourish unless material representing all viewpoints is freely available. Trillium Public library subscribes to the following "Intellectual Freedom Statement", ratified by the Canadian Library Association in June 1984, which affirms its commitment to the following basic policies:

- 1) Every person in Canada has the fundamental right, as embodied in the nation's Bill of Rights, to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity and intellectual activity, and to express his thoughts publicly. This right to intellectual freedom is essential to the health and development of Canadian society.
- 2) Libraries have a basic responsibility for the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom.
- 3) It is the responsibility of libraries to 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. To this end, libraries shall acquire and make available the widest variety of materials.
- 4) It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee the right of free expression by making available all the library's public facilities and services to all individuals and groups who need them.
- 5) Libraries should resist all efforts to limit the exercise of these responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups.
- 6) Both employees and employers in libraries have a duty, in addition to their institutional responsibilities, to uphold these principles.

SAMPLE 2

OPEN ACCESS POLICY

Open access policy on a registration form

“I understand and agree that my child will have unrestricted access to all Library materials.

By signing this application for library membership, I understand that a card will be issued to my child and I agree to be responsible for the materials borrowed on this card.

I also agree to be responsible for any loss incurred through the use of a library card issued as a result of this application and further agree that the applicant will obey all rules and regulations of the Trillium Public Library Board.

I understand that if I wish to restrict my child’s access to the library collection, I would not have given my signed consent to this application for library membership and that I may instead accompany my child and permit borrowing of library materials using my parent/guardian membership card.”

Letter concerning the library's open access policy

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The Trillium Public library is pleased to see children develop good library habits at any early age. These include properly taking care of books and other library materials, responsibility for all materials checked out, and returning books on time, so that others may use them. We urge you to make these good library habits known to your children at the time a library card is issued.

You should be aware that library policy permits all children access to all materials in the system. As a parent or guardian, if you desire to limit your child’s access to library materials, you should make this desire known to your child. The library cannot withhold circulating materials for any patron, regardless of age.

There are special regulations governing the use of reference materials and rare and expensive collection. Users should ask a library staff member regarding their use, when special needs arise.

SAMPLE 3

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM: SOME WORDS FOR THE CONCERNED CITIZEN

Some words for the concerned citizen

We are sorry that you find something objectionable in the library's collection but pleased to respond to your expression of concern. This statement is intended to help explain the library's position on intellectual freedom and the reasons that materials that may sometimes be offensive or of little value to some individual citizens are kept in the library's collection.

- Libraries serve the entire community and have a responsibility to try to serve as many needs and interests as possible. Library staff try to choose books and other materials on the basis of quality, usefulness or recreational value. Some things in the library's collection may be offensive to you but not to other people.
- We cannot bar some people from some parts of the collection on the basis of their age, sex, viewpoint, or any other factor. You would be justifiably angry if we refused to allow you access to materials in which you had great interest or for which you had a need because you were too old, too young, or of a particular religion, background or viewpoint.
- Since we cannot forbid some people to use some materials and since different people have different literary tastes and information needs, it is easy to see that someone will eventually be offended by something in the library. In this case, if you are the offended party, please remember that your standards may not be the same as someone else's and that what is offensive to you may be appealing or educational to your neighbour.
- We encourage children and young people to use the library. However, the library does not have the legal right to act in the place of the parent. Therefore, if you are concerned that your children might bring home a book which does not meet your personal standards, please accompany them when they use the collection. We are not free to forbid your children to read anything, but you are, as their parent or guardian.

SAMPLE 4

CHILD ACCOMPANIMENT POLICY

Child accompaniment policy

The Library Board policy regarding children left unattended in the library states:

“While the Library Board welcomes children using library services, parents and guardians of children requiring supervision are reminded that small children should not be left unattended in or about the library premises. Children are the responsibility of their parents/guardians.”

Please stay with your small children while you are in the library and do not leave them in the care of library staff.

SAMPLE 5

SCHOOL PROJECT SUPPORT

School project support statement

The Public Library's policy is to purchase information on a broad general range of information resources. It may occur that these materials meet the demands of school projects, but this is not the reason for their purchase. In view of the fact that the library does not buy multiple copies of books for school projects, efforts are made to ensure that alternate sources such as pamphlet file material, materials on local history and reference books are available.

School project assistance statement

The extent of help offered depends largely on the staff member's perception of the patron's ability and willingness to use the library resources -- a judgement gained through a reference interview.

This does not normally include the research for school projects which is expected to be part of the learning process. However, staff members will give all the necessary assistance required to enable students to find their own materials.

SAMPLE 5

SCHOOL PROJECT SUPPORT (CONTINUED)

TEACHER NOTIFICATION FORM

Trillium Public Library
Box 828,
Trillium, Ontario
N0N 0N0

Dear Teacher:

_____ came to the library today. We regret that we were unable to fill the request for _____ because:

1. ____ All material on this subject is presently on loan
2. ____ Reasonable search failed to supply suitable material
3. ____ The assignment places too many restrictions on the types of materials your students may use
4. ____ Many students are requesting information on this topic; we are unable to provide so much on the same subject to so many students at once
5. ____ All material on this subject is in reference and must be used in the library only
6. ____ Further clarification of the question or topic is needed
7. ____ The assignment deadline does not allow time for interlibrary loan of materials
8. ____ Other: _____

Staff Initial _____

May I request that you give us advance notice of assignments so that we may better serve your students? I encourage teachers to drop in to the Trillium Public Library for a personal visit and to become acquainted with our materials. I also suggest that it is advantageous to check out our resources prior to assigning research topics or projects to students. The staff will be pleased to advise and assist you. For further information or assistance please contact:

Jocelyn Kary
Chief Executive Officer
Trillium Public Library
Telephone: 765-4321