

## BOARD REPORT

Date: January 13, 2023  
Author: Kay Cahill, Director, IT & Collections  
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Meeting Date: January 25, 2023

TO: Vancouver Public Library Board  
FROM: Kay Cahill, Director, IT & Collections  
**SUBJECT: Collection Development Policy Update**

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### **SUMMARY**

This report recommends revisions to VPL's Collection Development Policy, reflecting the replacement of the Canadian Library Association's (CLA) Statement on Intellectual Freedom with the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA) Statement, and the Board's endorsement of the statement, based on prior similar practice. In addition, staff recommend adding an Indigenous Considerations section, a statement on our approach to collections for children, minor wording updates based on the current policy template and language use, and the removal of an outdated statement on donations.

### **PURPOSE**

This report is for decision.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

THAT the Board endorse the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' statement on Intellectual Freedom.

THAT the Board approve the updated Collection Development Policy.

### **POLICY**

The Collection Development Policy was approved by the Board on May 31, 2000 and last updated by the Board on September 24, 2008. The policy is implemented through detailed operational collection guidelines for staff selection and deselection of materials.

## **INDIGENOUS CONSIDERATIONS**

VPL is committed to being a place to support learning and action toward Truth and Reconciliation. In collection development, our primary expression of this commitment to Reconciliation is in the work that we do to establish, build, maintain and refresh Indigenous collections in each branch. These collections are based on a profile that emphasizes Indigenous authorship and voices, and that Library staff developed in consultation with local Indigenous community groups. The prominent physical presence of these collections in all branches provides a venue for Indigenous people to see themselves reflected in our spaces and collections, and provides non-Indigenous people a place to engage with Reconciliation, to learn about Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, and to increase understanding of the impact of the residential school system.

## **STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

These recommendations are relevant to our strategic priority of Learning & Creativity, and Strategic Goal 1.3, Provide relevant physical and digital collections in diverse formats and languages.

These recommendations are also aligned with VPL's Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation Strategy and the City of Vancouver's UNDRIP Strategy (see Appendices 3 and 4).

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Intellectual Freedom**

Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." This is supported by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Commitment to intellectual freedom and freedom of expression are fundamental values of public libraries, as well as being bedrock values for democratic society. VPL includes intellectual freedom as one of its core values. The meaning of intellectual freedom has historically been defined at VPL through the VPL Board's endorsement of the Intellectual Freedom statement of the national library association.

The Canadian Library Association's (CLA) statement on Intellectual Freedom was endorsed by the VPL Board and included by reference in VPL's collection development policy of 2008. The language of the national Intellectual Freedom policy was last updated in 2015. Following the dissolution of the CLA and its replacement by the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA) in 2016, the CFLA Board approved the same statement. The statement was last reviewed by the CFLA Board in April 2019 and the current statement can be found in full in Appendix 2.

The VPL Board has reviewed the current version of the CFLA Intellectual Freedom Statement within prior Board reports, but has not formally endorsed it.

## **Collection Development**

When creating and maintaining library collections, VPL selects materials based on the belief that individuals have the right to access all expressions of knowledge, opinion and creativity, in alignment with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As a result, VPL acquires and makes available a wide range of materials representing a range of points of view, including materials which express controversial or unpopular ideas. Inclusion in VPL’s collection does not constitute endorsement by the library.

Individuals and groups are entitled to criticize library materials; however, the library’s collections must not be limited by the personal views of any group or individual. The Collection Development policy directs patrons who wish to challenge the inclusion of specific materials in our collection to our “Request for Reconsideration of Materials” form, which is part of a long-standing process for investigating and responding to collection challenges. Criticism of the collection may also extend to the selection of items for displays and promotion in the library.

As per the Collection Development Policy, it is not VPL’s practice to remove items from the collection simply because they represent controversial, unpopular or outdated ideas. If a staff member considers action necessary, there are a range of approaches that staff might take to address the issue, including the addition of contextual information or moving the item to a different area of the collection.

## **Current Environment**

VPL’s consideration of collection development policy, and collection challenges, takes place in the broader context of increasing efforts to ban titles from libraries on ideological grounds in the United States, including coordinated political campaigns against libraries. These censorship efforts focus on works with LGBTQ+ characters and storylines, and books that cover issues of race.

The American Library Association reports that through the first eight months of 2022 there were 681 attempts to ban or restrict library resources, targeting 1,651 different books<sup>1</sup>. A study by the group PEN America, which advocates for freedom of expression, similarly reports that more than 1,600 titles were banned during the 2021-22 school year. PEN America reports that there are at

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/as-book-bans-escalate-heres-what-you-need-to-know/2022/09#:~:text=2022%20book%20bans%20are%20set,reached%20an%20all%2Dtime%20high.>

least 50 groups in the US, many recently established, working at state, local and national levels in a coordinated effort to remove titles from school curriculums and school library shelves<sup>2</sup>.

In addition to coordinated grassroots advocacy, some US states are using legislation as a means of enforcing book bans. Florida, Texas and Missouri have all signed into place or supported bills which enable censorship in schools. At last reporting Texas had banned 801 titles; Florida had banned 566 across multiple school districts; and Missouri banned just under 300 titles between August and November 2022<sup>3</sup>. In one case, a public library in Jamestown, Michigan, was defunded in a vote by its residents after the library board declined to remove LGBTQ+ themed titles from its collection, and the library director resigned as a result of the harassment directed at her.<sup>4</sup>

Related censorship efforts have emerged in Canada, with one recent campaign resulting in letters to a number of public libraries seeking the removal of a curated list of titles related to the SOGI curriculum.<sup>5</sup> These letters threatened to hold library staff liable for “making explicit/pornographic books available to minors and/or facilitating in the exploitation and/or sexualization of minors.” Canadian libraries have also reported vandalism of titles and displays that feature these themes. While VPL has not received letters related to the anti-SOGI campaign, VPL collections and displays with 2SLGBTQ+ themes have been vandalized, and displays with race-related themes have received complaints.

While librarians, educators and advocates have been pushing back against this wave of ideological censorship, the general consensus is that efforts to ban books from school and library shelves is unlikely to decrease, and it is more likely that they will continue to ramp up in 2023. This trend threatens the fundamental role of the library as a place to provide universal access to the world’s information and ideas.

## **DISCUSSION**

VPL’s Collection Development Policy provides guidance toward achieving consistency in the selection of materials for the collection, defines the intended scope of our collections, and informs the public of the principles upon which selection and deselection decisions are made. It also reflects and confirms our commitment to intellectual freedom. The policy is due for review, and the current context of collection challenges has been considered as part of the review.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2022/09/19/1123156201/new-report-finds-a-coordinated-rise-in-attempted-book-bans>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/dec/24/us-book-bans-streak-of-extremism>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/aug/05/michigan-library-book-bans-lgbtq-authors>

<sup>5</sup> SOGI 123 helps educators make schools effective and safe for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities

The existing policy has been effective in meeting the needs of staff to guide selection of materials and to respond to concerns expressed about specific materials in the collection. As a result, although the policy was last revised in 2008, staff recommend minimal revisions. The proposed revised policy continues to maintain the reference to the national organization's policy on intellectual freedom, and has been updated to correctly identify the national organization as CFLA. Additionally, a section on Indigenous Considerations has been added to the policy, in alignment with our approach for all new and updated Board policies. This new section affirms our commitment to Reconciliation and UNDRIP in the work that we do to develop and maintain our collections, and to ensure that Indigenous voices, authorship, culture and experience are reflected within the collection.

A new policy statement has been added to identify that VPL provides materials for children on a wide range of issues, with consideration of developmentally appropriate reading level, comprehension and interest. While this statement was not included in the prior versions of the policy, it reflects VPL's current and historical approach to children's collections.

The statement on gifts has been removed from the updated policy. VPL stopped accepting public donations of books and materials in 2020 as the cost of handling donated materials had significantly exceeded the value of the materials received for many years.

Minor updates have been incorporated in the proposed version to align with the new policy template. As noted above, the Collection Development policy is currently serving staff well as a tool to ensure transparency with patrons and address collection challenges as they arise.

The recommended revisions are included in Appendix 1. New sections are highlighted, and removed sections are indicated with strikethrough, in red.

Staff recommend that the Board endorse the CFLA Statement on Intellectual Freedom in conjunction with approving the updated Collection Development Policy, as this endorsement is identified in the language of the policy.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The budget for physical and digital collections is included within the library's annual approved operating budget. This policy guides staff in spending the library's collection budget, which was \$5.2 million in 2022 and expected to be \$5.3 million for 2023, although not yet approved.

## BOARD POLICY

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>SUBJECT: COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT</b>         |  |
| <b>CATEGORY: COLLECTIONS &amp; CIRCULATION</b> | <b>POLICY CODE: VPL-BD-CC-???-202?</b> |

### Objective

The objective of this policy is to support VPL in developing robust and diverse collections to best serve and inspire our public by:

- providing guidance towards achieving consistency in the selection of materials for the collection
- defining the intended scope of our collections, and
- informing the public of the principles upon which selection and deselection decisions are made.

### Scope

This policy applies to all VPL staff and to the Library's collections.

### Indigenous Considerations

VPL is committed to supporting learning and action for Truth and Reconciliation by providing strong Indigenous collections at every library branch that share Indigenous voices and culture, in alignment with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action on Education for Reconciliation; UNDRIP Articles 15 and 21; and relevant objectives from the City of Vancouver's UNDRIP Strategy and VPL's Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation Strategy.

VPL is committed to working with Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and local Indigenous community groups to inform the materials that are selected for library collections.

### Policy Statements

#### 1. General

- 1.1. Strong collections of books and other resources are at the core of excellent library service. The Vancouver Public Library is committed to developing robust and diverse collections to best serve and inspire our public. We embrace the power of knowledge to change lives.
- 1.2. VPL's collections must be of considerable scope and variety to fulfill our mission to:

- Enrich and empower lives and build community by providing universal access to the world's information and ideas.
  - Promote lifelong learning, discovery, enjoyment and the realization of potential.
  - Inspire the love of reading and the exploration of ideas, culture and knowledge.
  - Meet the diverse needs and interests of individuals.
  - Respect and reflect communities of various cultural, ethnic, religious, and philosophical backgrounds.
  - Recognize and accommodate varied educational levels, abilities and disabilities, English and non-English speaking users.
  - Meet the needs of the residents of Vancouver and to supply resources for residents in the province through InterLINK and resource sharing agreements.
  - Meet demonstrated needs in a rapidly evolving information world while also considering our responsibilities to posterity, and our role in providing access to the local human record.
  - **Support VPL's commitment to learning and action for Truth and Reconciliation.**
- 1.3. Collection development is an ongoing process requiring professional judgment and experience to balance competing needs and demands, striving for optimal use of the human and fiscal resources entrusted to us.
  - 1.4. The Vancouver Public Library values all the communities it serves. Community and individual input is encouraged and collaborative, community led approaches are used to identify unmet needs and interests.
  - 1.5. Collection Guidelines, as well as more detailed profiles for specific subject areas are maintained to guide Library staff in the selection of material.
  - 1.6. We actively collect Canadian authors and subjects and build comprehensive collections on British Columbia and Vancouver history and culture.
  - 1.7. The Central Library maintains collections to meet a wide range of needs, and acts as a support resource for branches across the system, as well as being available as a provincial resource.
  - 1.8. The Library must balance the demand for availability of popular and recreational material with the responsibility to build appropriately comprehensive collections to meet the many and varied information needs of our users.
  - 1.9. **The Library will provide a broad range of topics and ideas for children at a developmentally appropriate reading level, interest, and comprehension level.**
  - 1.10. It is vital for the Library to monitor and respond to developments in content provision technology. Content is our primary consideration; we select formats that provide for communities that require alternate formats as well as facilitate the most convenient access for the majority of our users.

- 1.11. The Library must also track social and demographic trends in order to build collections responsive to the needs of our users as they change over time. This includes maintaining an awareness of emerging languages and cultures, economic impacts on information needs, and broader changes in work and recreational habits.

## 2. Deselection

Deselection is a vital part of building and maintaining a living and responsive collection. We actively and continuously track and appraise the performance of our collections, to balance both immediate demand and long term user needs. Removal of items from the collection through active weeding is integral to this process. Material of local historical importance and interest is retained where the content has enduring worth or documents the development of a subject for in-depth research.

## 3. Intellectual Freedom

- 3.1. The VPL Board endorses the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries. The Vancouver Public Library selects materials based on the belief that individuals have the right to access all expressions of knowledge, opinion and creativity. Such freedom of access to information is essential to the health and development of a democratic society.
- 3.2. We acquire and make available a wide range of materials, representing all significant points of view, including those which express controversial or unpopular ideas. Inclusion in the collection does not constitute endorsement by the Library.
- 3.3. While recognizing the right of individuals and groups to criticize selections, we must not allow the freedom of choice within the Library to be limited by the personal views of any group or individual.

## 4. Reconsideration of Library Materials

Library **staff** will review the selection of any specific materials upon written request from any member of the public. A completed copy of the form, "Request for Reconsideration of Library Material" is reviewed by the appropriate librarian(s) in light of the criteria outlined in this policy. A written response will be sent to the person or organization making the request.

## ~~5. Gifts~~

~~The Library welcomes donations of books, materials, or money for the purchase of books, materials, equipment or facility enhancement.~~



~~We reserve the right to decide the disposition of all gifts received. All donated material is reviewed according to the same selection criteria applied to purchased materials. Processing costs and space are significant considerations.~~

~~All gifts become the property of the Vancouver Public Library. Material which is not needed for the collection may be sold for the benefit of the library.~~

### **Non-compliance Consequences**

Library employees who contravene this policy may be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment.

### **Policy Administration Roles and Responsibilities**

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Director, IT &amp; Collections</b> | Oversees and recommends updates to the policy as required.      |
| <b>SFHR</b>                           | Reviews policy as required and recommends changes to the Board. |
| <b>Board</b>                          | Approves policy and revisions to the policy                     |
| <b>Chief Librarian &amp; CEO</b>      | Administers the policy.   |

### **Related Policies**

- Digitization and Lending of Print Books (Board Policy)
- Inclusive Library Services Policy (Board Policy)
- Canadian Federation of Library Associations Statement on Intellectual Freedom

### **Approval History**

|                    |                      |                     |                      |              |                   |                   |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>ISSUED BY:</b>  | <b>Library Board</b> | <b>APPROVED BY:</b> | <b>Library Board</b> | <b>DATE:</b> | <b>2000/05/31</b> | <b>NEW POLICY</b> |
| <b>REVISED BY:</b> | <b>Library Board</b> | <b>APPROVED BY:</b> | <b>Library Board</b> | <b>DATE:</b> | <b>2008/09/24</b> |                   |
| <b>REVISED BY:</b> | <b>SFHR</b>          | <b>APPROVED BY:</b> |                      | <b>DATE:</b> |                   |                   |

|                            |  |                     |                |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------|----------------|
| <b>DATE OF NEXT REVIEW</b> |  | <b>REVIEW CYCLE</b> | <b>5 Years</b> |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------|----------------|

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **CFLA 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.

You can find CFLA-FCAB's Position on Third Party Use of Publicly Funded Library Meetings Rooms and Facilities: An Interpretation of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries here: [http://cfla-fcab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CFLA-FCAB\\_statement\\_meeting\\_rooms.pdf](http://cfla-fcab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CFLA-FCAB_statement_meeting_rooms.pdf)

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **VPL Indigenous Rights & Reconciliation Strategy Alignment**

The Library's implementation of the Collection Development policy will act on the following objectives from the VPL Indigenous Rights & Reconciliation Strategy.

#### **Objective 1.1**

Direct VPL capacity and resources to support Indigenous communities to reclaim, uphold, and continue Indigenous languages, traditions, knowledge systems and cultural heritages

#### **Objective 2.1**

Work with Indigenous communities and partners to offer library services and programs in a manner that is culturally appropriate, accessible, and reflects the expressed needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples

#### **Objective 2.2**

Ensure all VPL staff have a constructive and respectful understanding of the distinct histories and unique rights of Indigenous Peoples and contribute to public education and understanding of Indigenous rights and reconciliation

## APPENDIX 4

### City of Vancouver UNDRIP Strategy Alignment

The Library's implementation of the Collection Development policy will enable action on the following calls to action from the City of Vancouver's UNDRIP Strategy.

1.8: Work with Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh to develop and fund sustained public education about their history, culture, laws, contributions etc. for visitors and residents.

4.1: Identify ways for City staff, elected officials, and the public to learn about the original Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh laws of these lands (as they wish to share), and to learn how colonial laws and abuse have impacted Indigenous Peoples and their laws. May include signage, public art, film, and other educational resources.

4.10: Expand supports to return the original languages to the land, through naming, grants for cultural programming, and public education on hə́nqəmíḥəm and Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh.

4.12: Identify ways to support Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh to create cultural learning and healing centres/programs for education, training, and sharing of traditional knowledge, laws, languages and cultures of these lands.