
Intellectual Freedom

Policy 6.1

Approved: 2025-2-19

Reviewed: 2025-2-19

Review cycle: Minimum every 3 years

6.1.1 Policy Statement

As a vibrant, welcoming centre of learning for all, the St. Albert Public Library is committed to upholding the core value of intellectual freedom, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Bound by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we affirm every individual's right to both seek and receive information from all lawful points of view without restriction. We promote universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, experience, information, and ideas, while respecting the individual's rights of privacy and choice. We support the free exchange of lawful information and ideas in a welcoming and supportive environment. We endorse the Canadian Federation Library Associations Statement on Intellectual Freedom.

Recognizing that intellectual freedom and the free exchange of ideas thrive when individuals can participate fully in an environment free of discrimination and harassment, the St. Albert Public Library's commitment to intellectual freedom works in tandem with its vision, mission, and values, as well as Board policies on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Truth and Reconciliation.

6.1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this Intellectual Freedom policy is to affirm and ensure St. Albert Public Library's commitment to the principle of intellectual freedom. In Canada, libraries have a legal responsibility to uphold and protect the principle of intellectual freedom as outlined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as a legislated public body. In Alberta, this legislation is the Libraries Act and Regulations.

6.1.3. Supporting Statements

- The St. Albert Public Library will provide access to a breadth and depth of ideas, information and thoughts through library collections and services (including programs, displays, and Internet access) that encourage informed discussions, diverse opinions, and learning in our

communities. In using library services, some individuals may come across ideas and information that they consider controversial, unconventional, unpopular, or offensive. The inclusion of content within the library's collections and services does not indicate the library's endorsement.

- SAPL will welcome and encourage individuals to seek, learn and exchange diverse thoughts and perspectives and to pursue their interests, without judgement, provided they do not violate SAPL policies or contravene Canadian legislation.
 - Any expression, dissemination of views or activities that violate applicable Canadian legislation will not be tolerated on library premises and may result in a person's immediate expulsion from the premises and referral of the matter to legal authorities.
- Equity, diversity and inclusion and intellectual freedom are mutually reinforcing and SAPL will strive to support all voices by creating a welcoming and inclusive environment while upholding the principles of freedom of expression and human rights. Here for YOU, Here for ALL.
- SAPL will respect the individual's right to privacy, dignity, and choice. The ultimate right and responsibility for making choices about materials to read, view, and listen to, or services to access at the library rests with the individual.
 - Responsibility for any restrictions on children's choice and/or use of library resources or use of the library rests with parents and/or guardians. Children are those individuals under the age of 18 years. No materials are excluded from selection because they may come into the possession of a child.
- In facilitating and providing access to diverse collections that represent a broad range of viewpoints, SAPL recognizes this will include ideas and perspectives that some may consider abhorrent, controversial, unpopular, offensive, or wrong. SAPL respects the right of individuals to voice their objections about its collections, spaces, and programs, and provides opportunities for community members to do so. Formal [Requests for Reconsideration](#) can be made online.
- SAPL will provide staff with the training and tools required to uphold Intellectual Freedom.

6.1.4 Applicability

This statement applies to all SAPL services, including:

- Collections
- Programs and events
- Public computers and networks (e.g. the Internet)
- Display spaces
- Meeting rooms

6.1.5 Challenges and Appeals

Library members may challenge content in collections, programs, displays, computer or network access or meeting room use by completing a [Request for Reconsideration](#) form on the Library website. Requests are reviewed by staff, and a written response will be provided to the member within 30 days of receiving the request.

6.1.6 Related Policies and Statements (links)

- Materials Selection Policy (6.2)
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (6.3)
- Land Acknowledgement and Reconciliation Statement (6.4)

Appendix A

CFLA Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries

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.