

ADMINISTRATIVE MEMORANDUM - 24-02

October 12, 2023

TO: Alabama Public Library Directors and Trustees

FROM: Nancy C. Pack, Ph.D., Director *ncp*  
Alabama Public Library Service

SUBJECT: Guidelines for Addressing Parental Concerns About Inappropriate Materials

This message is extremely important for you and your trustees to view as it speaks directly to the vitality of our state's public libraries moving forward. It is with the utmost concern for the sustainability and success of our libraries that the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS) offers these recommendations, which we urge you and your trustees to strongly consider.

### 1. Concerning Inappropriate Materials

The official stance of APLS is that it is entirely permissible to make decisions that lead to a more parent- and child-friendly library environment. Limiting a child's access to potentially harmful content or relocating controversial reading materials should not be misconstrued as censorship in any form. APLS recommends that libraries exercise their best judgment when it comes to shelving sexually explicit or otherwise inappropriate materials, regardless of the intended age group, to support a parent's right to protect their children.

We acknowledge that the libraries in our state come in a wide array of sizes and configurations. For example, a small, one-room library may be unable to physically move an item due to the constraints of a finite and limited space. To ensure a comprehensive solution for all libraries, we encourage adherence to the following three steps: 1. Assess the situation, 2. Strategically determine the placement, and 3. If feasible, create a physical separation of materials within the library. It is crucial that the approach to handling potentially inappropriate materials remains adaptable and attuned to the unique conditions of each individual library. Decisions about what constitutes inappropriate materials should be made at the local level, taking into account input from your library board and the needs and values of your community.

## **2. Concerning the American Library Association**

Public libraries are encouraged to utilize the wealth of tools available to them to support their decision-making. Embrace your community's unique needs and values, align your collection development with your long-range plan, and strive to maintain a balanced and relevant collection that serves the wide interests of your patrons.

Given the current climate, it is prudent that we as librarians articulate our own rationale for maintaining specific materials in our libraries, based on their importance to our patrons and our role in serving our communities. As Alabama public libraries, we should strongly consider discontinuing the application of the ALA's Library Bill of Rights as our guiding principle, and place a much greater emphasis on addressing community needs.

There are differing perspectives regarding Alabama's relationship with the American Library Association. While the Alabama Legislature appears inclined toward disaffiliation, Governor Ivey is recommending that individual governing boards approve expenditure of public funds related to the American Library Association in open meetings.

In response to these considerations, the Alabama Public Library Service will discontinue our institutional membership to the American Library Association.

These recommendations are intended to empower you and your library to make informed choices that reflect your unique community and mission. We appreciate your commitment to the enduring success of Alabama's public libraries, and we are here to support you fully as you navigate these decisions.

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