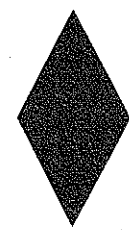


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# Kids Need Libraries, Libraries Need Kids



**Companion  
Document to the  
*Children's Rights in  
the Public Library  
Statement***



This document provides supplementary material which may assist Library Boards in Ontario in making their decision to adopt these children's rights. Please read it carefully and include your children's librarian and children's staff in your discussions and decision.

The children's rights document has been in the planning stage since the striking of the **OLA Task Force on Children's Services** in 1995. The process has been long and very thorough and is another step toward the development of the strategic plan for children services in public libraries in Ontario. Input has come from librarians and children's staff across the province. After analyzing the results of the 1996 Children's Services Survey it was concluded that there was a vast difference in the service and collections available to children throughout the province. It was obvious that some guidelines and standards are necessary to ensure the child's place in "One Place to Look."

*The Children's Rights in the Public Library* document was well received by those attending the session at the OLA Policy Forum in 1997. The rights were then taken to the OLA Super Conference in 1998 allowing even greater input. Discussion groups were formed for specific issues that were then incorporated into each of the rights. The material from these discussions assisted the preparation of this companion document.

We are calling for your action. Adopt *Children's Rights in the Public Library*. Let your community know that you respect and acknowledge the importance of children. Join the rest of the province in proclaiming *Children's Rights in the Public Library*.

OLA will acknowledge your proclamation when you advise them in writing of your decision to adopt the rights document. You will be sent a copy suitable for framing when they receive your letter.

### Task Force on Children's Services

Sharon Wilson, Chair  
*King Township*

Cindy Cooper,  
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*Halton Hills*

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## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Children in Public Libraries have the right to:

### 1. INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

Children have the same rights as all others to intellectual freedom. Various levels of government and Library Associations have defined these rights.

A library's collection, policies and services should be consistent with the concepts of intellectual freedom as described in the documents listed below.

Rights are outlined in:

- Ontario Library Association's Statement of Intellectual Freedom (Appendix A)
- The Canadian Library Association's Statement of Intellectual Freedom (Appendix B)

You might also like to refer to relevant sections of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage; Human Rights Directorate; Minister of Supply and Services; Hull, PQ; 1991.)

*The Ontario Human Rights Code*, 1981, 1986, guarantees equitable or just access to public service without discrimination. The benefits of the law and of society should also be provided equitably and without discrimination. This principle is reflected in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and in various international treaties to which Canada is a signatory.



## 2. EQUAL ACCESS TO THE FULL RANGE OF SERVICES AND MATERIALS AVAILABLE TO OTHER USERS.

Children should be afforded the same rights and privileges as adults in the library including library cards, borrowing privileges, access to the entire collection and support for their right to read.

### ACCESS TO THE LIBRARY

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

Children have the right to have their own library card. Library policies should reflect this right, and be revised to allow cards for children from birth through to their adult years.

They have the right to a library that is open an adequate number of hours during the times when children are available to visit.

Sufficient staff should be available for full library service to youth at all times.

### ACCESS TO MATERIALS

Children should have equal access to information resources regardless of their geographic location. They should have equal opportunities to reserve materials from within and outside of their local library, e.g., interlibrary loans.

Young library patrons should be afforded equality of access to electronic resources, e.g., data base searching



on CD ROM, Internet. They also have the right to equal consideration to the location of those resources within the library, e.g., computer workstations in children's departments.

Children should have access to alternate formats, e.g., videos and special collections. Access to videos should be limited only as restricted by the Ontario Film Review Board.

### ACCESS TO SERVICES

The needs and interests of young people are important in their own right. The full range of qualified staff skills, collection, equipment, and methods should be utilized to answer all patron's requests, regardless of age.

All children's requests should be answered without judgement, with confidentiality and with equal respect

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

The library provides programming for children and parents, both in and out of the library, to stimulate the creative potential of the child, to encourage and facilitate the habit of reading, independent learning, and the use of the library.



### 3. A FULL RANGE OF MATERIALS, SERVICES AND PROGRAMS SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED AND DEVELOPED TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.

Materials, services and programs should be provided for children from birth to their teen years

#### **MATERIALS**

Provide developmentally appropriate resources for children as they progress in their abilities to read independently and think critically.

Provide collections that adequately meet the educational, recreational and personal needs of children.

Provide collections that include high quality literature to satisfy the wants and needs of children.

Collections should reflect the ethnic diversity of the community as well as the needs of children to become familiar with other ethnic groups and cultures.

Make available collections that include a wide variety of formats, including but not limited to: books, videos, CD ROMs, books on tape, laser discs.

Collections should maintain a high level of currency by providing resources that have been published within the last three years, especially in subject areas where currency is essential (e.g., science, health, technology).

Collections need to be maintained. Every book or other format in a collection should be examined regularly, at least once every three years for condition, use and currency.



#### **SERVICES**

Provide support to parents and adults working with children through materials, services and programs.

Services should be designed to accommodate the special needs and interests of children, e.g., borrowing policies, and special programming such as reading buddies, toy lending libraries, and book clubs.

#### **PROGRAMS**

Provide a sufficient amount of programs that target children at each of their developmental stages (e.g., age specific story times).

Programming should reflect diversity

Provide programs that take the library out into the community.



#### 4. ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR COLLECTIONS AND SERVICES RELATED TO POPULATION, USE AND LOCAL COMMUNITY NEEDS.

Effort must be made to determine the immediate demands of local community and the long term needs.

To determine appropriate levels of funding support, statistics need to be gathered. Statistics that may be useful include, but are not limited to:

- Circulation statistics for each format of children's materials
- Holdings statistics for each format for children's materials
- Turnover rate - This tells you the average number of times that each item circulates. To calculate turnover rate, take your annual circulation divided by the holdings.
- Average cost for each format
- Demographics of catchment area
- Customer feedback

User profiles are very helpful in assessing the community needs.

Funding needs to be sufficient and appropriate for a wide range of formats, such as reference tools, book tape kits, CD-ROM, periodicals, etc.

In order to provide basic service to children it is necessary to have adequate funding for a variety of resources and qualified staff to provide the following:

- Reader's advisory services to children and adults concerned with children
- Information/reference services to children and adults concerned with children
- To provide programs and outreach
- For promotion and awareness of the library and its services



#### 5. A LIBRARY ENVIRONMENT THAT COMPLEMENTS THEIR PHYSICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES.

Children need a special area designed specifically for them.

In order to achieve this, the following must be considered:

- Space should be large enough to accommodate all functions of a children's department. This includes easy access to collections, study space, reading area, reference desk, child sized washrooms, computer workstation, programming room, online catalogue, etc.
- Specifically designed child-sized shelving for each format
- Furnishings for children should be appropriate to the height of children
- Lighting should be natural where possible. Shelves need to be well lit everywhere to enable staff and patrons to find materials readily.
- Signs need to clearly identify specific collections and areas.



## 6. TRAINED AND KNOWLEDGEABLE STAFF SPECIALIZING IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES.

Children's services specialists should enjoy, appreciate and respect children.

They have expertise in and are knowledgeable about:

- child development
- the latest interests and trends of children (e.g., favourite music, popular activities, games, technology, latest fads)
- the principles of children's librarianship and public service to children
- children's literature
- storytelling and programming
- the planning process
- management skills. Including goals and objectives, budget process, supervisory skills, etc.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Children's services specialists should be supported in professional development that increases their competency, allowing them to provide the best possible service to children. This can be achieved by: attendance at conferences, providing professional journals and memberships to library associations.



## 7. WELCOMING, RESPECTFUL, SUPPORTIVE SERVICE FROM BIRTH THROUGH THE TRANSITION TO ADULT USER.

Decisions must be made with customer service to children as a priority. These decisions may include but are not limited to policies, furnishings, signage, location. Decisions regarding other library service can impact on children's services. An example would be locating the large print area near the children's area can create sound concerns from the seniors about noise levels.

### COLLECTIONS

Collections must include current transitional materials that include childhood/teen issues and trends, e.g., sexuality, substance abuse, and health issues affecting children and teens.

### STAFF TRAINING

Children's services staff or other trained specialist to organize and/or provide training to all library staff on issues relating to children and services to children.

All library staff should be trained in the particular needs of children in order to provide customer service for children.

Staff should be aware of and tolerant of the differences in the behaviour of children and adults

Reference interviews with children are different so appropriate staff training is required (e.g., staff need to ask more prompting questions, and listening between the lines is often needed)



Training in methods of handling, in a positive manner, discipline issues of children and young adults is required for adults who come in contact with them.

Staff who are aware of child development will have a larger skill base on which to handle many issues and reference questions.

### **SERVICE**

Children must be valued as customers to the same degree as adults are.

Staff should provide service to children that shows an awareness and tolerance of the behaviour of children.

The methods of handling discipline issues are different with children and young adults. Trained and sensitive staff can better deal with discipline problems.

Staff must approach children's behavioural and conduct issues with sensitivity and respect.

Hours of operation should reflect the needs of children and young adults. e.g., Open mornings for story time and open after school and on weekends for studying.

An easy to obtain library card that provides them with the same services as other users.



## **8. AN ADVOCATE WHO WILL SPEAK ON THEIR BEHALF TO THE LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION, LIBRARY BOARD, MUNICIPAL COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY TO MAKE PEOPLE AWARE OF THE GOALS OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES.**

### **MANAGEMENT**

- Children's services should be represented on the management team.
- Children's staff provide written and/or give oral presentations to the library board on a regular basis (monthly, quarterly).
- Children's staff prepare the children's services budget and/or if necessary defend it to the library board or to the local council.

### **PUBLIC RELATIONS/PROMOTION**

The goals of children's services must be made known to all levels of the library staff, board, and community. Develop a public relations program, implement it in the community and evaluate its effectiveness. By promoting the service actively, the advocate will ensure that the children's service has a high profile in the community.

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

The advocate represents the child's library needs to potential partners in the community. Collaborates with agencies to promote a love of reading, life long learning and children's health and well being. Establish regular channels of communication both written and oral with each group. Actively seek partnerships. As appropriate develop a partnership plan, implement it and evaluate.



## 9. LIBRARY POLICIES WRITTEN THAT INCLUDE THE NEEDS OF THE CHILD.

Libraries must have Library Board adopted, written policies. Libraries should review their policies, regularly (E.g., every 3 to 5 years) to ensure that they adequately reflect the needs of the child. Policies on:

- collection development/selection and include the weeding of the collection
- unaccompanied children in the library
- Internet access
- library card registration
- rules/code of conduct
- unrestricted access
- intellectual freedom/censorship
- volunteers
- programing
- and others as needed

The above represents the minimum policies required. Libraries may want to consider additional children's policies which may specifically relate to children's services (e.g Story time registration).

Policies must be guided by any requirements deemed by law. E.g: Child Welfare Act, Criminal Code, Ontario Film Review Board, etc.

Any policies developed for children should reflect the needs of the child and be consistent with the intent of those written for adults.





## APPENDIX A

### ONTARIO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual

In affirming its commitment to the fundamental rights of intellectual freedom, the freedom to read and freedom of the press, as embodied in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Library Association declares its acceptance of the following propositions:

- 1) That the provision of library service to the public is based upon the right of the citizen, under the protection of the law, to judge individually on questions of politics, religion and morality
- 2) That intellectual freedom requires freedom to examine other ideas and other interpretations of life than those currently approved by the local community or by society in general, and including those ideas and interpretations which may be unconventional or unpopular
- 3) That freedom of expression includes freedom for a creator to depict what is ugly, shocking and unedifying in life.
- 4) That free traffic in ideas and opinions is essential to the health and growth of a free society and that the freedom to read, listen and view is fundamental to such free traffic
- 5) That it is the responsibility of libraries to maintain the right of intellectual freedom and to implement it consistently in the selection of books, periodicals, films, recordings, other materials, and in the provision of access to electronic sources of information, including access to the internet
- 6) That it is therefore part of the library's service to its public to resist any attempt by any individual or group within the community it serves to abrogate or curtail access to information, the freedom to read, view and listen by demanding the removal of, or restrictions to library information sources in any format.
- 7) That it is equally part of the library's responsibility to its public to ensure that its selection of material is not unduly influenced by the personal opinions of the selectors, but determined by the application of generally accepted standards of accuracy, style and presentation.

November 7, 1998



## APPENDIX B

### CANADIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION Statement of Intellectual Freedom

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.

Libraries have a basic responsibility for the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom.

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.

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.

Libraries should resist all efforts to limit the exercise of these responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups.

Both employees and employers in libraries have a duty, in addition to their institutional responsibilities, to uphold these principles.

*(Ratified by the Board of Directors and Council of the Canadian Library Association, at the 29th Annual Conference in Winnipeg, June 1974)*



## DOCUMENT DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this document please use the following definitions.

**Child/Children** - refers to youth from birth to the age of 14 years.

**Community** - includes: local community: community partners: parents: teachers including preschools, day-cares, schools, colleges and universities; other services and agencies such as social services and health care; health care providers; recreation providers; local government; community associations and organizations; local authors and illustrators; publishers; religious community.

**Children's Collections** - consists of materials that are accurate, relevant to the community, up to-date, well balanced, and include all formats, serving the needs of their diverse, multi-cultural community. The collections meet the recreational and educational needs of children as well as the interests of parents, teachers and care givers, in order to foster the lifelong habits of reading, independent learning and library use.

**Children's Services** - provides professional staff dedicated to serving the needs (information and recreational) of children of all ages through reference, reader advisory and programming.

**Core Collection** - refers to excellence in content, writing and lasting quality. Core items are essential to children's collections. They are the foundation upon which collections are built. Anything designated "core" assures one of quality.

**Collection Balance** - collections require balance. New books and other formats need to be added but at the same time, it is essential to maintain a retrospective



(replacement) buying program to replace essential core and supplement high demand items with additional copies.

**Programming** - typically includes-class visits from elementary and middle schools, (babytime, toddlertime, preschool storytime, summer reading club, film/video programs, visits to schools, puppet shows, booktalks, special event programs, outreach programs, programs for parents, programs for YA' s) The purpose of programming is to help children become familiar with the library, to encourage use and to encourage a love of reading and learning.

**Children's Service Specialist** - Ideally this is a children's Librarian with an MLS (MLIS) degree with a specialty in children's services. It is recommended, that where a budget or community size do not justify a children's librarian, that libraries utilize staff trained with a library techniques diploma or at minimum, staff who have completed the Excel certificate programs dealing with children's services, collection and management skills.



# CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Children in Public Libraries have the right to:

1. Intellectual freedom.
2. Equal access to the full range of services and materials available to other users.
3. A full range of materials, services and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their needs.
4. Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use and local community needs.
5. A library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages.
6. Trained and knowledgeable staff specializing in children's services.
7. Welcoming, respectful, supportive service from birth through the transition to adult user.
8. An advocate who will speak on their behalf to the library administration, library board, municipal council and community to make people aware of the goals of children's services.
9. Library policies written to include the needs of the child.

*Adopted at the Ontario Library Association  
Annual General Meeting, November 1998*

