Policy 209    Freedom to Read (ALA)

Purpose  To state the ALA’s position on patrons’ freedom to read

1. It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest
diversity of views and expressions, including those which are unorthodox or unpopular
with the majority.

2. Publishers, librarians and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation
they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their
own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what books should
be published or circulated.

3. It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on
the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.

4. There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults
to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers
to achieve artistic expression.

5. It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept with any book the prejudgment of
a label characterizing the book or the author as subversive or dangerous.

6. It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to
read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to
impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the
government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.

7. It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to
read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression.
By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to
a “bad” book is a good one, the answer to a “bad” idea is a good one.

Revision History
Endorsed April 14, 1998 by the Board of Trustees, to the extent that the Freedom to Read
tenets do not conflict with any approved policy of the Highland Park Public Library.
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