



Charlotte Mecklenburg Library
VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



Volunteer Information

Welcome

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Library has a long-standing tradition in the community of excellence in providing access to books, technology, programs, and lifelong learning. Our volunteers are essential to our ability to provide excellent service. We welcome you and appreciate your willingness to give of your time to our Library system and to the community.

About the Library

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library began more than a century ago as a treasured repository of knowledge. Although humankind has evolved to read, explore and acquire knowledge in many new ways since then, one important feature has endured: Our services remain free to all who come to us with a desire to research, learn and experience.

Today, libraries must remain nimble and responsive to the changing needs of our customers. Through the evolution of communication technology, there has never been more information available to more people in human history. We act as a guide through that universe of information, providing access for those who don't have it, and collaboration for those who do. We also provide the building blocks for understanding that information, through the development of literacy, skills for success, and community connections.

Since our founding in 1903, our role as a provider of lifelong education in this community has never been more relevant and timely. We strive to build a highly literate and educated community; to contribute to its economic health, cultural and social capital; and to be highly accessed and cherished. As stewards of the community's trust and resources, we work hard every day to provide valuable experiences. Our customers, staff and supporters inspire us each day to be America's best public library.

Volunteer Management

The Volunteer Office, located at the Main Library, oversees the volunteer program for the library system. Each library location is responsible for recruiting, interviewing, training and supervising their volunteers. All volunteers must undergo a criminal history check.

Special Event Volunteer Opportunities

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library has several special events that require a large number of volunteers. Some of those events include the Annual Book Sale, Summer Reading Kick-Off, and beautification projects.

Other branches may contact individuals when they need additional volunteers. Volunteers will be notified by e-mail or telephone when opportunities are available.

Inform your volunteer supervisor if you are interested in helping with any of the events listed above.

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers complete a variety of tasks in all branches of the library. Some examples are assisting with programs or volunteers, shelving materials, shifting materials, repairing books, helping with displays and decorations, greeting patrons, assisting patrons in the computer areas, and assisting staff with programs.

Teen Summer Volunteers

Some branches accept additional youth volunteers (ages 13-18) in June, July and August. A special application is needed for this opportunity and can be accessed April 1-25 through <http://libraryloft.org>. **Teen Summer Volunteers are limited to a maximum of 4 hours per day to volunteer.**

Once accepted, the teen volunteer, their parents, and Library staff must agree on the days and number of hours to be worked. They will sign a separate Teen Summer Youth Agreement form, which clearly states the agreed schedule. Teen Summer Volunteers should follow the same policies as regular volunteers.

Court Assigned Community Service

All court assigned volunteers should contact the Library Volunteer Coordinator for more information at 704.416.0711 or by email at cwall@cmlibrary.org.

Age

The preferred minimum age for volunteers is 14. Some locations may limit the volunteer force to adults (age 18 and older).

Personal Appearance

Volunteers should dress neatly in clean and presentable clothing. **Please do not wear jeans or shorts** unless it is appropriate to the event or activity that you are assigned to. T-shirts with inappropriate messages, short skirts, low cut tops and other revealing garments are not allowed. Volunteers, just like library staff, must present a professional appearance to the public.

Because of the nature of the work we do it is important to wear comfortable, closed toe shoes. Flip flops are not safe to wear in the library environment where there are heavy books or carts that can fall on your toes.

Attendance

Each library location will establish each volunteer's schedule that will be agreeable to the library and individual.

Volunteers are expected to meet their schedule and to call if they cannot meet their scheduled time to volunteer. Habitual absenteeism may result in dismissal from the volunteer program.

There are times when a library may be closed due to inclement weather or other emergency. The volunteer should call the library for which they are volunteering if there is any question about the open hours of the building. The inclement weather line is 704.416.0191. The number for general information is 704.416.0100.

Smoking

Smoking is not allowed inside any library building. Library staff can direct you to designated smoking areas outside the building.

Beverages or food

Those volunteers who require a snack break should discuss options with their volunteer supervisor.

Behavior

As a volunteer, you are representing Charlotte Mecklenburg Library to the public. All volunteers are expected to behave in a professional manner, especially when addressing a library customer.

Drug and Alcohol Use

Any Charlotte Mecklenburg Library volunteer who is discovered possessing, using, selling, or transferring alcohol or illegal drugs will be immediately dismissed. Appropriate authorities will be notified.

Criminal Activity

Any Charlotte Mecklenburg Library volunteer committing a criminal activity, which includes but not limited to theft, vandalism, drug abuse, assault, making threatening statements, or carrying a concealed weapon on library property while on or off duty will be dismissed. Appropriate authorities will be notified.

Refusal and Dismissal

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library staff has the right to refuse or dismiss any person as a volunteer, whether they are from the community or serving court assigned community service hours. Active volunteers who violate any Charlotte Mecklenburg Library policy or do not competently fulfill their volunteer duties after a reasonable amount of training and supervision will be dismissed.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Chauna Wall the Library Volunteer Coordinator for more information at 704.416.0711 or by email at cwall@cmlibrary.org.



Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

Mission

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is

Expanding minds
Empowering individuals
Enriching our community

Vision

In aspiring to be America's best public library, we create:

Opportunities for personal success in reading and learning for everyone
Relevant, vibrant, and customer focused services
Facilities and web sites that are preferred destinations
Opportunities for staff to find value in their contributions to our mission

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library's Core Values

Service Excellence:

We are customer focused and deliver positive experiences. Our employees are knowledgeable and seek to understand our users' needs and points of view. We demonstrate friendliness, reliability, provide convenient and timely service, and are proactive in offering options and solutions to the public and each other. We are committed to accessibility.

Innovation:

We pursue innovation as a means to keep our services and technology contemporary and vibrant.

Lifelong Learning:

We play a unique role in our community so that learning can thrive. We offer comprehensive services and programs that encourage intellectual and professional development of individuals throughout their lives. The Library supports reading and lifelong learning within its walls and by taking services out into the community. We

provide services for learners of all ages and especially for early literacy development. Our employees are knowledgeable about the different ways people of all ages learn.

Freedom to Know:

We provide free and equal access to library resources and facilities. We support the open exchange of information and of ideas that represent multiple points of view. We value the benefits of diversity. Our employees handle requests for information in a manner that protects and respects every user's right to know and right to read.

Integrity & Trust:

We serve the residents of Mecklenburg County with financial integrity. Our employees operate the library system efficiently and effectively.

Staff Appreciation:

We recognize that the Library's employees are our most valuable resource. Therefore, we treat each other with respect. We value team work. We encourage staff to pursue their personal and professional goals. We maintain open and honest communication. We attract, celebrate, and retain outstanding staff members.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

Materials Selection Policy

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library will select and preserve, without bias or limitation on the right to know, a comprehensive collection of print, non-print and electronically accessed materials to meet the informational, educational, recreational, and cultural needs of all citizens of Mecklenburg County. Further, the Library will offer wide-ranging collections to meet the various ages, interests, educational and reading levels, and cultural backgrounds of its citizens. The Library will provide collections through which an individual may explore all points of view and issues of interest. The Library will be responsive to public demand for materials of contemporary significance and interest, while balancing this with the need to collect and preserve materials of permanent value.

Responsibility for the Selection of Materials

The ultimate responsibility for selecting materials for the Library rests with the Executive Director, who in turn, delegates selection responsibilities to appropriate professional staff members. Suggestions from the general public are encouraged and are evaluated by the staff based on the Library's criteria for selection.

Selectors first evaluate or judge the intrinsic merits and quality of the materials available for selection using rigorous evaluative criteria. They select from the available options those items that best meet the needs of the community and that are consistent with the Library's goals and mission, while weighing fiscal and spatial limitations with the availability of the material elsewhere in the community.

Nature of Materials

The types of materials in the Library's collections include print, non-print and electronically accessed components, so that citizens may:

- educate themselves throughout their lives both independently and as a supplement to their formal study;
- meet their general and job-related informational needs with timely, reliable, accurate, and useful information;
- develop and discover their creative capacities and form an appreciation of arts and letters;
- stimulate thoughtful participation in the affairs of the community, the nation, and the world;
- encourage freedom of expression and develop or possess inquiring attitudes toward public issues;
- enrich their personal lives;
- use their leisure time in the enjoyment of reading.

Open Access to Ideas

As ours is a free society, the Library will provide access to information in all fields and from all points of view. The Library, in collecting and acquiring publications and related materials representing the widest diversity of views, will include items which reflect controversial, unorthodox, or even unpopular ideas. The Library, the Library Board, and Library personnel will not, either directly or indirectly, ban or censor any material. The presence of an item in the Library does not indicate any endorsement of its content by the Library.

The Library subscribes to and has adopted the American Library Association's Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read Statement and Freedom to View Statement. These are included in this Policy.

Reconsideration of Materials

Should a member of the community question the place of a book or other material in the collection, he or she may submit a *Statement of Concern About Library Resources Form* to the Executive Director. This form is available in all Library locations. Library staff will reevaluate the item to see if it meets the Library's stated evaluative criteria, and review the selection decision to see if the item falls within the Selection Policy. The patron will receive a written response.

American Library Association Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 18, 1948, by the ALA Council; amended February 2, 1961; amended June 28, 1967; amended January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 24, 1996.

American Library Association Freedom to Read Statement

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

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

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

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 should be published or circulated.*

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

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.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

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.*

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

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

The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

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.*

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

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.*

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.



Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

As a volunteer for the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library I, _____,
pledge to:

- Advance the mission, vision and core values of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.
- Arrive on time.
- Do my best with the tasks assigned to me.
- Accept supervision graciously.
- Keep confidential any information entrusted to me concerning library records of customers of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, whether I acquire it directly or indirectly.
- Obey the library's code of conduct.
- Conduct myself in a manner befitting a representative of the public library.
- Do my part to uphold the high standards of library service.

I have read and understand the responsibilities of being a volunteer as outlined in the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Volunteer Handbook.

I agree to abide by the following guidelines for confidentiality:

- I will not discuss a customer's library account. If I have a concern or question, I will bring it directly to the volunteer point person or another library staff member.
- Should a library customer voice a complaint, describe a conflict, or begin to discuss a problem with me, I will encourage that customer to discuss the issue with the library staff and/or library administration. I understand that as a volunteer, I am neither asked, nor expected to, address customers' individual concerns.
- With participating in a library work environment, or during conversations with library staff, I may learn confidential information about the library's customers (such as problems with accounts, lost items, overdue fines, borrowing habits, etc.). Regardless of the nature, I will treat all information as confidential. I will not discuss it with other customers.
- I agree to maintain the highest level of discretion in regard to confidential information, files or personal data on library customers. At no time will I discuss confidential information, files or personal data with other volunteers or customers.

Volunteer Signature Date

Volunteer Point Person Signature Date