

City of Swan Libraries' Freedom to Read Statement

Introduction

In an era where information access is crucial for personal empowerment and community engagement, it is essential for public libraries to reaffirm our commitment to the fundamental right to read. This memo outlines our 'Freedom to Read' statement, informed by principles from the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), the United Nations (UN), and the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA).

Freedom to Read Statement

Public libraries affirm the right of every individual to read freely and without restriction. We are committed to:

1. **Equitable Access:** Ensuring all community members have access to diverse materials and resources, regardless of age, background, or ability. This aligns with the IFLA's commitment to "access to information" as a fundamental human right, echoing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 27) which states that everyone has the right to participate in the cultural life of the community.
2. **Intellectual Freedom:** Upholding the principles of intellectual freedom and resisting censorship. The IFLA's "Internet Manifesto" emphasizes the importance of freedom of expression and the right to seek information, which is foundational to a democratic society. We advocate for policies that protect these rights in our library operations.
3. **Diversity of Perspectives:** Curating collections that reflect a variety of viewpoints, experiences, and cultures. The UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 highlights the importance of quality education and promoting the understanding of diverse perspectives, which is integral to our mission as libraries.
4. **Privacy and Confidentiality:** Protecting the privacy of our patrons in their reading choices. ALIA's "Statement on Free Access to Information" underscores the importance of privacy in fostering a safe environment for individuals to explore information freely. We are committed to maintaining the confidentiality of library records and advocating for strong privacy protections.
5. **Community Engagement:** Actively promoting literacy and reading programs that encourage lifelong learning and foster a love for reading among all ages. ALIA emphasizes the role of libraries in promoting literacy as essential for social inclusion and engagement.
6. **Advocacy:** Collaborating with local and national organizations to advocate for policies supporting the right to read and the importance of libraries in our democratic society. We align with the IFLA's "Global Vision" initiative, which calls for libraries to be champions of inclusion and social equity.

Conclusion

This 'Freedom to Read' statement serves as a guiding principle for our library's policies, programs, and practices. By championing this right, we strengthen our role as a vital community resource and a beacon of knowledge and learning.