

**CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**Board Meeting**

November 17, 2022

**RESOLUTION ON INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM**

WHEREAS, Cleveland Public Library is a politically neutral organization that serves the complex needs of the whole community by developing and providing access to collections that are diverse, equitable, accessible, inclusive, and responsive, and that present an unabridged range of human expression and experience, with special attention paid to the needs of specific populations of people who have historically experienced unequal treatment in society; and

WHEREAS, The United States is experiencing a tumultuous period of political polarization, an aspect of which involves citizen-led efforts to censor materials with which they disagree and that are held by public and school libraries; and

WHEREAS, Censorship efforts across the nation involve a variety of means including attempts to defund libraries, harassment of library staff and board members, threats against library staff and board members, lobbying for the passage of laws to restrict a library's ability to freely select the materials for its collection, theft and mutilation of library materials, and continuous challenges regarding materials held in a library's collection, frequently known as "book banning;" and

WHEREAS, Cleveland Public Library has a long tradition of supporting the First Amendment and the concept of intellectual freedom in its broadest interpretations, a notable example of which is the historical fact that CPL Director Linda Anne Eastman (Director from 1918 to 1938) in 1933 was one of only two prominent Americans – the other being Helen Keller – to condemn the Nazi book burnings of Hitler's Germany; and

WHEREAS, The Library has supported intellectual freedom and the First Amendment through longstanding observance of the American Library Association's *Bill of Rights* (adopted June 19, 1939, revised January 29, 2019) and *Code of Professional Ethics* (adopted 1939, revised on June 29, 2021), which among other things, affirm that equity, diversity, and inclusion are central to

the promotion and practice of intellectual freedom, and stringently and unequivocally maintain that libraries and librarians have an obligation to resist efforts that systematically exclude materials dealing with any subject matter, including sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS, This Board adopted a revised *Collection Development Policy* on November 18, 2021, which provides guidelines for the selection of library service materials for inclusion in the Library's collections based on a variety of carefully considered criteria; and

WHEREAS, This Board, as duly appointed representatives of the Citizens of Cleveland, authorizes the professional staff of the Library to build collections for the whole community according to the *Collection Development Policy*; and

WHEREAS, This Board recognizes the First Amendment right of citizens to object to the inclusion of any work in the Library's collections through the "Reconsideration of Library Service Materials" policy contained within the *Collection Development Policy*, and the Library respectfully evaluates reconsideration requests according to its established policies and procedures; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Library Trustees unequivocally reaffirms its support of the principles of intellectual freedom as codified in the American Library Association's *Bill of Rights* and *Code of Ethics*; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Board of Library Trustees unequivocally supports the staff of the Cleveland Public Library in undertaking the work of building world-class print and digital collections that respond to the needs of the whole community and form the foundation of The People's University; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Board of Library Trustees will emphatically resist any attempt to undermine unfettered public access to the full expression of free speech as embodied in the Library's collections and services.