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CHAPTER 4: Library
Statements
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Title:	Access for children and young people to videos and other non-print formats, An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights
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Library collections of videos, motion pictures, and other nonprint formats raise a number of intellectual freedom issues, especially regarding minors.

The interests of young people, like those of adults, are not limited by subject, theme, or level of sophistication. Librarians have a responsibility to ensure young people have access to materials and services that reflect diversity sufficient to meet their needs.

To guide librarians and others in resolving these issues, the American Library Association provides the following guidelines.

Article V of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS says, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views."

ALA'S Free Access to Libraries for Minors: An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS states:

The "right to use a library" includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials, and facilities the library has to offer. Every restriction on access to, and use of, library resources, based solely on the chronological age, educational level, or legal emancipation of users violates Article V.

. . .[P]arents - and only parents - have the right and the responsibility to restrict the access of their children - and only their children - to library resources. Parents or legal guardians who do not want their children to have access to certain library services, materials, or facilities, should so advise their children. Librarians and governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child. Librarians and governing bodies have a public and professional obligation to provide equal access to all library resources for all library users.

Policies which set minimum age limits for access to videos and/or other audiovisual materials and equipment, with or without parental permission, abridge library use for minors. Further, age limits based on the cost of the materials are unacceptable. Unless directly and specifically prohibited by law from circulating certain motion pictures and video

productions to minors, librarians should apply the same standards to circulation of these materials as are applied to books and other materials.

Recognizing that libraries cannot act in loco parentis, ALA acknowledges and supports the exercise by parents of their responsibility to guide their own children's reading and viewing.

Published reviews of films and videos and/or reference works which provide information about the content, subject matter, and recommended audiences can be made available in conjunction with nonprint collections to assist parents in guiding their children without implicating the library in censorship. This material may include information provided by video producers and distributors, promotional material on video packaging, and Motion Picture Association of American (MPAA) ratings if they are included on the packaging by the original publisher and/or if they appear in review sources or reference works included in the library's collection. Marking out or removing ratings information from video packages constitutes expurgation or censorship.

MPAA and other rating services are private advisory codes and have no legal standing*. For the library to add such ratings to the materials if they are not already there, to post a list of such ratings with a collection, or to attempt to enforce such ratings through circulation policies or other procedures constitutes labeling, "an attempt to prejudice attitudes" about the material, and is unacceptable. The application of locally generated ratings schemes intended to provide content warnings to library users is also inconsistent with the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS.

*For information on case law, please contact the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom.

See also: "Statement on Labeling and Expurgation of Library Materials, Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights."

Adopted June 28, 1989, by the ALA Council; the quotation from "Free Access to Libraries for Minors" was changed after Council adopted the July 3, 1991, revision of that Interpretation.