

~~LABELS AND RATING SYSTEMS~~

Labeling and Rating Systems

An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

Libraries do not advocate the ideas found in their collections or in resources accessible through the library. -The presence of books and other resources in a library does not indicate endorsement of their contents by the library. Likewise, ~~the ability for library users to providing~~ access ~~electronic to digital~~ information ~~using library computers~~ does not indicate endorsement or approval of that information by the library. Labeling and rating systems present distinct challenges to these intellectual freedom principles.

Labels

Labels on library materials may be viewpoint-neutral directional aids ~~that designed to~~ save the time of users, or they may be attempts to prejudice or discourage users or restrict their access to materials.- When labeling is an attempt to prejudice attitudes, it is a ~~sensor's~~ sensor's tool.- The American Library Association opposes labeling as a means of predisposing ~~people's~~ people's attitudes toward library materials.

Prejudicial labels are designed to restrict access, based on a value judgment that the content, language, or themes of the material, or the background or views of the creator(s) of the material, render it inappropriate or offensive for all or certain groups of users. The prejudicial label is used to warn, discourage or prohibit users or certain groups of users from accessing the material. -Such labels may be used to ~~remove~~ place materials ~~from open shelves to in~~ restricted locations where access depends on staff intervention.

Viewpoint-neutral directional aids facilitate access by making it easier for users to locate materials. -The materials are housed on open shelves and are equally accessible to all users, who may choose to consult or ignore the directional aids at their own discretion.

Directional aids can have the effect of prejudicial labels when their implementation becomes proscriptive rather than descriptive. -When directional aids are used to forbid access or to suggest moral or doctrinal endorsement, the effect is the same as prejudicial labeling.

Rating Systems

~~A variety of~~ Many organizations ~~promulgate~~ use rating systems as a means of advising either their members or the general public ~~concerning their~~ regarding the organizations' opinions of the contents and suitability or appropriate age for use of certain books, films, recordings, Web sites, games, or other materials.- The adoption, enforcement, or endorsement of any of these rating systems by ~~the~~ a library violates the ~~Library Bill of Rights.~~ Library Bill of Rights.

Adopting such systems into law or library policy may be unconstitutional.- If ~~such legislation is passed~~ labeling or rating systems are mandated by law, the library should seek legal advice regarding the ~~law's~~ law's applicability to library operations.

~~Publishers, industry groups, and distributors sometimes add~~ Libraries acquire resources that include ratings ~~to material or include them~~ as part of their packaging. Librarians should not endorse ~~such practices.~~ However ~~the inclusion of such rating systems; however~~, removing or destroying ~~such~~ the ratings—if placed there by, or with permission of, the copyright holder—could constitute expurgation (see ~~Expurgation of Library Materials: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights).~~ Expurgation of Library Materials: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights).

~~Some find it easy and even proper, according to their ethics, to establish criteria for judging materials as objectionable. However, injustice and ignorance, rather than justice and enlightenment, result from such practices. The American Library Association opposes any efforts that result in closing any path to knowledge.~~

Prejudicial labeling and ratings presuppose the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. They presuppose that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read or view.

Adopted July 13, 1951, by the ALA Council; amended June 25, 1971; July 1, 1981; June 26, 1990; January 19, 2005.