Medicine Hat Public Library
Category: Library Collection

Policy: LC.5
Title: Implementation of Provincially Mandated Censorship
Date Approved: 2026 10 07

Purpose: To ensure the library complies with the Government of Alberta's legally required restrictions on library materials as defined in the Libraries Regulation.

1. Definitions
   - 1.1. Censorship: the suppression or prohibition of speech, public communication, or other information deemed objectionable, harmful, or inconvenient by a governing authority, private institution, or individual, enacted by restricting access to ideas or removing materials from public domains like libraries.
   - 1.2. Integrated Library System (ILS): the computer system and related technology that store patron data and collection data and track materials checked out to patrons
   - 1.3. Restricted content: Images within library materials which are restricted as per the Alberta Libraries Regulation.
   - 1.4. Restricted materials: Collection materials that contain restricted content.

2. Compliance
   - 2.1. To ensure compliance with the Government of Alberta's legally required restrictions, this policy shall supersede all other policies when those other policies are in conflict, e.g. policy LC.4's adoption of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries.
   - 2.2. When this policy is in conflict with other library policies, the library shall comply with the Government of Alberta's legal restrictions in ways that least compromise the other policies; the Library's mission and values; and the principle of intellectual freedom.

3. Issuance of library cards to under 16 youth
   - 3.1. The Library will require a birthdate for the issuance of a library card after December 31, 2026 to any individual who appears to be under the age of 20. 3.1.1. Birthdates will be stored with other patron information in the Library's ILS.
   - 3.2. In the absence of provincial or other photo ID that universally and definitively captures the ages of all minors, the Library will determine the birthdates of patrons as follows:
     - 3.2.1. A birthdate that is included in patron information entered in the Library's Integrated Library System as of December 31, 2026, or
     - 3.2.2. A birthdate from an ID issued by a municipal, provincial or federal government agency, or
     - 3.2.3. A birthdate provided by a person who attests to legal guardianship over the youth.
       - 3.2.3.1. If, due to life circumstances such as poverty or recent immigration, a patron does not have the means to demonstrate their birthdate via the means above, they can personally attest to their birthdate or age.
   - 3.3. The Library's ILS shall be configured such that youth under 16 can be determined from date of birth information.
   - 3.4. When a person who appears to be under 20 does not have a library card and wishes to physically access restricted materials, areas or services, the Library shall require them to provide proof of age via the methods defined in 3.2.
   - 3.5. Legal guardians of youth under 16 can correct a birthdate incorrectly entered in the ILS by attesting to their legal guardianship and providing a correct birth date.

3.6. Legal guardians of youth under 16 shall have the option to allow their wards to access all library materials. This choice will be recorded in the youth's patron record in the ILS.

4. Access to restricted library materials
   4.1. The Library ILS shall be configured to prohibit library accounts of youth under 16 from signing out and borrowing material identified as restricted, unless authorization by a legal guardian has been provided.
      4.1.1. If a person attests to being a youth under 16's legal guardian, and approves access to all materials, that youth shall have access equivalent to a person 16 or older.
      4.1.2. In the event that multiple people attest to being the legal guardian of a youth under 16, and they disagree on the youth's access, the legal status of their guardianship shall be verified. Any verified legal guardian's approval shall be sufficient to allow full access to all collections as per 4.1.1.
   4.2. Library materials identified as restricted shall be separated from non-restricted materials and stored where access is controlled.
      4.2.1. Restricted print materials shall be stored in areas that youth under 16 are prohibited from entering unless accompanied by a library employee who will prevent the youth from physically accessing restricted materials.
         4.2.1.1. If restricted print materials are stored in areas that are limited to those 16 and older, anyone who appears to be under the age of 20 shall be required to verify their age via the means defined in section 3.
         4.2.1.2. If specific collections such as adult graphic novels contain a relatively high percentage of restricted materials, the entire collection may be stored separate from other collections in an area inaccessible to youth under 16, as per 4.2.1. Borrowing restrictions will only apply to restricted materials within such collections.
      4.2.2. Physical access to explicit content in restricted materials that are not human readable and that require technology to access (e.g. DVDs and video games) shall be controlled by either:
         4.2.2.1. Prohibiting their use on library computers, players or consoles; or on patron hardware; or
         4.2.2.2. Storing materials in areas inaccessible to youth under 16.

5. Identification of restricted materials
   5.1. Library staff who discover potentially restricted content within library materials will report such content to their supervisor.
   5.2. Community members who wish to report potentially restricted content within library materials may do so via the Request to Censor form which is an Appendix to this policy.
   5.3. All materials identified per 5.1 and 5.2 shall be reviewed by the Library to determine if they contain restricted content.
   5.4. Materials found to contain restricted content shall be designated as restricted materials; or restricted content or materials shall be removed from the collection.

6. Access to Internet
   6.1. Youth under 16 shall have access to the Internet as defined in Board policy LS.6, Public Computers and Network Access.

7. Holds shelf
   7.1. Youth under 16 are prohibited from accessing material on the holds shelf that has not been reserved for them on their own library card.