

February 8, 2023



Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing in response to your Request for Further Consideration of Library Materials form. In the form, you requested that the book *Gender Queer: a Memoir* by Maia Kobabe be removed from the shelves.

Caro Area District Library's Collection Development Policy, page 10¹, states "Materials will be selected based on positive reviews in professional journals or actual examination and evaluation of materials. Instead of reviews, popular demand (bestsellers, school bibliographies, local interest) may be used as criterion for selection of materials. Items that must be updated every year may be placed on a standing order list to ensure timely delivery. Suggestions from the community for items to be considered for purchase are strongly encouraged, but materials must meet selection criteria." In researching my response to your request, I started by looking at professional reviews of the material again. Booklist is a publication made for libraries who are looking to purchase materials for their collection. They gave *Gender Queer* a starred review and noted that it is a Booklist Editors' Choice: Books for Youth 2022 award winner. They recommend the book for grades 9-12.² In professional library journals, starred reviews mean the highest recommendation.

The next source that I checked was *School Library Journal*. This is also a professional journal used for choosing library materials. *School Library Journal* also gave *Gender Queer* a starred review. The last paragraph of the review reads: "VERDICT: A book to be savored rather than devoured, this memoir will resonate with teens, especially fans of Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* and Mason Deaver's *I Wish You All the Best*. It's also a great resource for those who identify as nonbinary or asexual as well as for those who know someone who identifies that way and wish to better understand."³

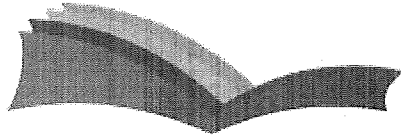
While not a professional journal, we often recommend the website Common Sense Media to parents who are looking for a source to decide whether a certain item is age appropriate for their child. I checked what they had to say about *Gender Queer*. The site itself gave the book 4 stars (out of 5) and an age rating of 16+. There are portions of this website that allow both parents and children to rate items and the site aggregates that data. The parents gave the book 5 stars and an age rating of 15+. The kids had not rated it yet.⁴

¹ <https://www.carolibrary.org/site-assets/files/cadlpolicymanual-1.pdf>

² <https://www.booklistonline.com/Gender-Queer-A-Memoir-Deluxe-Edition-Maia-Kobabe/pid=9764725#:~:text=741.5.,and%20valuing%20yourself%20can%20be.>

³ <https://www.slj.com/review/gender-queer-a-memoir>

⁴ <https://www.common sense media.org/book-reviews/gender-queer-a-memoir>



As a public library, we uphold the Library Bill of Rights:

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.

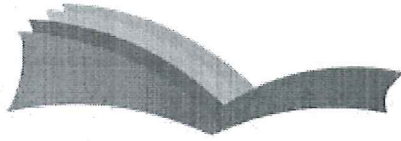
Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.⁵

As the removal of this book from our shelves would be an act of censorship, a violation of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution⁶ and a violation of the library's Collection Development policy⁷, I am denying your request.

⁵ <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>

⁶ <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/censorship/faq>

⁷ <https://www.carolibrary.org/site-assets/files/cadlpolicymanual-1.pdf>



**Caro Area
District Library**
Cultivate Curiosity 

840 W. Frank Street
Caro, MI 48723
(989) 673-4329
www.carolibrary.org

The library fully supports your right as a citizen to choose what you read and your right as a parent to choose what your minor children read. Our recommendation would be that you use the library with your children so as to guide them to materials that you feel are appropriate. The problem with your request is that by having us remove this book from the shelves, you would also be choosing what other people may read, violating their right to information, and choosing what their minor children may read, violating their rights as parents.

The library does strive to place materials in a collection that has an age appropriate audience. In many libraries, this title is in the Young Adult collection. In our library, it is in the Adult collection. While the content may be of use to young adults, I chose the Adult collection as I thought this audience best for our community. It is in the Graphic Novel collection, as that is the format the book is created in. In the library world, the term 'graphic' does not mean explicit, it means that something is created in a visual manner, much like a comic book. We have graphic novel collections in our children's area, our teen area, and our adult area. In these collections, we put graphic novels that are aimed towards each of those age levels.

As is our procedure, all new materials spend 6 months on the new book rack for each collection before they are shelved on the main collection shelves. Patrons enjoy seeing what is new and browsing this way. If Gender Queer was checked in, it would currently be sitting on the New Adult Non-fiction shelves, as it is a memoir.

We are happy to help you find materials that you find more appropriate for your children. We have a large collection of children's materials in the Lower Level. If these materials are not to your liking, we have access to three different interlibrary loan networks and would be happy to bring in books from other libraries for you.

If you disagree with my determination, you may appeal my decision within 10 days by writing to the Library Board of Trustees. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

Erin N. Schmandt
Director