

WAUKESHA PUBLIC LIBRARY

POLICY: **MATERIALS SELECTION POLICY**

Approved by Library Board: 10/12/23

Number: D-1

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The Board of Trustees of the Waukesha Public Library has adopted the following materials selection policy to guide librarians and to inform the public about the principles upon which the selections are made.

The Vision and Mission Statements of the Waukesha Public Library guide the selection of materials as it does the development of services and the allocation of resources.

VISION: The heart of a thriving city, the library connects and inspires the community to transform lives.

MISSION: Waukesha Public Library champions the power of reading and learning to enrich, empower and engage all in our community.

The Library supports the individual's right to have access to ideas and information representing all points of view. The Board of Trustees of the Waukesha Public Library has adopted the American Library Association's LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS and THE FREEDOM TO READ statements, attached herewith.

OBJECTIVES

The Waukesha Public Library acquires and makes available materials which inform, educate, entertain, and enrich persons as individuals and members of society. Since it is not possible for any library to acquire all materials, it is necessary for every library to employ a policy of selectivity in acquisitions. The Library provides, within its financial limitations, a general collection of reliable materials embracing broad areas of knowledge. Included are works of enduring value as well as timely materials on current issues. Within the framework of these broad objectives, selection is based on community needs, both those expressed and those inferred from study of community demographics and evidence of areas of interest.

New formats shall be considered for the collection when, by industry report, and evidence from local requests, a significant portion of the community population has the necessary technology to make use of the format. Availability of items in the format, the cost per item, and the Library's ability to acquire and handle the items will also be factors in determining when a new format will be collected. Similar considerations will influence the decision to delete a format from the Library's collections.

Impartiality and judicious selection shall be exercised in all materials acquisition practices. Allocation of the materials budget and the number of items purchased for

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each area of the collection will be determined by indicators of use, the average cost per item, and objectives for development of the collection. The Library will be aware of the resources available in surrounding libraries and will develop its collection with this in mind. In general, scholarly, highly specialized, or archival materials are beyond the scope of the Library's collections. The Library strives to acquire items that enhance its position as a resource for local history.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELECTION

Ultimate responsibility for the selection of library materials rests with the Library Director who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Library Board of Trustees. Those staff members who are qualified by reason of education, training, or experience share this responsibility. The Materials Collection Manager oversees the selection process and ensures that selectors' choices reflect the Materials Selection Policy of the Waukesha Public Library. The manager makes appropriate selection tools available and tracks the materials budget to ensure a flow of new materials throughout the year, according to budget allocation. Suggestions from staff members who are not directly involved with selection are encouraged and given serious consideration in the selection process.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

Selection is a discerning and interpretive process, involving a general knowledge of the subject and its important literature, a familiarity with the materials in the collection, an awareness of the bibliographies on the subject, and recognition of the needs of the community.

To build a well-balanced collection of merit and significance, materials in all forms must be measured by objective guidelines. Since the library does not promote particular beliefs or views, the collection will contain various positions on important questions, including unpopular or unorthodox positions. The Library actively strives to ensure that materials representing many differing views and a broad diversity of human thought and creativity are represented in its collection. A balanced collection reflects a diversity of materials, not necessarily an equality of numbers.

Selection of materials will not be made on the basis of anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the basis of the principles stated in this policy. Responsibility for choosing what an individual will read rests with the individual. Responsibility for the use of library materials by children and young adults rests with their parents or legal

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guardians.

All acquisitions, whether purchased or donated, are considered in terms of the following standards. An item need not meet all of the criteria in order to be acceptable. Several standards and combinations of standards may be used, as some materials may be judged primarily on artistic merit, while others are considered because of scholarship, value as human documents, or ability to satisfy the recreational and entertainment needs of the community.

- (1) General criteria:
 - Existing collection needs
 - Relevance to community needs
 - Customer demand
 - Significant or reputable author or publisher
 - Attention of critics and reviewers
 - Important human or social insight
 - Representation of current ideas, events, or mores
- (2) Criteria for non-fiction works:
 - Accurate, clear, and logical presentation
 - Comprehensive and complete treatment
 - Author's qualifications
 - Of lasting value or current need
 - Original point of view
- (3) Criteria for fiction works:
 - Vitality and originality
 - Artistic presentation or experimentation
 - Well developed plot and characterization
 - Authentic setting
 - Representation of important genre or trend
- (4) Criteria for non-print works (in addition to the criteria for fiction or non-fiction)
 - Good technical production
 - Good sound/image quality
 - Good performance quality
 - Provides a presentation that is effectively delivered by the specific format

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Licensing/copyright compatibility with library use

- (5) Selection may also be limited by the following factors:
 - Physical limitations of the building
 - Price and format
 - Availability of low-demand materials in other library collections
- (6) Selection of library materials will not be influenced by:
 - The possibility that they may come into the possession of children or young adults
 - The liability of materials to theft or mutilation

While the Library does not attempt to provide all curriculum materials needed by educational institutions, it recognizes that many customers' information requests result from their status as students. The Library strives to acquire materials that meet their information needs, as well as materials that meet the information needs of the general public.

Tools used in selection include professional journals, trade journals, subject bibliographies, publishers' promotional materials and reviews from reputable sources. Purchase suggestions from library customers are welcome and are given serious consideration.

DONATIONS AND GIFTS

Donations of materials are gratefully accepted with the understanding that the Library may add them to the collection if they meet established standards for purchased materials, with emphasis on currency, physical condition, and need. All gifts added to the collection must be donated with no restrictions and must be available for public use. Materials not added to the collection will be given to the Friends of the Library for their book sales or disposed of by other means. The library cannot place a monetary value on gifts for tax purposes, but receipts are provided upon request.

Since most publications of fraternal, club, and service organizations are of interest only to members, these will be accepted only if they have a broader appeal to a general audience.

Gifts of funds are always welcome and may be designated as memorials. Gifts of non-

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library items ordinarily will not be accepted. For gifts of art, refer to the Public Art Policy.

WITHDRAWAL OF MATERIALS

An attractive, up-to-date, currently useful collection is maintained through a continual discarding and replacing process. Materials may be withdrawn from the library collection after careful consideration of these factors:

- physical condition
- currency of information
- lack of use
- superseded by a new edition or better work on the same subject

Materials withdrawn from the collection may be given to the Friends of the Library Book Sale or disposed of by other means. Individual items that are being withdrawn may not be saved for specific individuals.

REQUESTS FOR RECONSIDERATION

The choice of library materials by library users is an individual matter. While an individual may reject materials for himself/herself, he/she cannot exercise censorship to restrict access to the materials by others. Recognizing that a diversity of materials may result in some requests for reconsideration, the following procedures have been developed to ensure that objections or complaints are handled in an attentive and consistent manner. Once an item has been approved for purchase, based on the selection policy of the Board of Trustees and the criteria for selection, it will not be automatically removed upon request. (See Addendum 1)

ADDENDUM 1

PROCEDURE REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Any individual expressing an objection to or concern about library material should receive respectful attention from the staff member first approached. This staff member should use his or her own best judgment in attempting to answer the concerns or clarify the situation. If the individual is not satisfied with the explanation received, the staff member should offer the options of speaking with a supervisor or filling out a "Request for Reconsideration" form. He/she may ask for reconsideration in the following manner:

- 1) A "Request for Reconsideration" form, available at library service desks, must be completed and returned to a staff member. The form will be given to the Materials Collection Services Manager who will forward a copy of the form to the Library Director. The Director may respond in writing to the individual, advising him/her that there will be reconsideration of the item and enclosing a copy of the "Materials Selection Policy of the Waukesha Public Library".
- 2) The Director will appoint an ad hoc committee including but not limited to the Assistant Director, Materials Collection Services Manager, and the selector for the subject area to reconsider the item. The Materials Collection Services Manager will send the reviewers copies of the form and any reviews that have been located.
- 3) The reviewers will put their comments in writing to the Materials Collection Services Manager prior to meeting to discuss the title.
- 4) The Materials Collection Services Manager will convene a meeting of the reviewing committee and forward the comments and reviews to the Director, along with a recommendation.
- 5) The Director will then make a decision regarding the disposition of the material. The Director will communicate this decision, along with the reasons for it, in writing to the individual who initiated the request.

If the individual desires further action; he/she may appeal in writing to the Library Board of Trustees, requesting a hearing before the Board. If a hearing is granted, the individual will be notified of when he/she may address the Board. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to limit the length of presentation and number of speakers at the hearing. The Board will determine whether the request for reconsideration has been handled in accordance with stated policies and procedures of the Waukesha Public Library. On the basis of this determination, the Board may vote to uphold or override the decision of the Director.

ADDENDUM 2

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.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgement of free expression and free access to ideas.
5. A person's right to use the library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
6. 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.

Adopted June 18, 1948.

Amended February 2, 1961, June 27, 1967, and January 23, 1980 by the ALA Council.

Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 24, 1996

ADDENDUM 3

THE FREEDOM TO READ

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" "views", to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising his critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion which serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures towards conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the

readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those which are unorthodox or unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until his idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept which challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

2. Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what books should be published or circulated.

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one man can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

3. It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish which draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.

To some, much of modern literature is shocking. But is not much of life shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised which will suit the

demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.

The idea of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that each individual must be directed in making up his mind about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

7. It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principle means of testing its growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

This statement was originally issued in May 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers. Adopted June 25, 1953 by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee. Amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.