



WALTHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

Window to the World

Materials Selection Policy

The Role of the Public Library

The library's policies are guided by the principles of intellectual freedom. These stem from the First Amendment of the Constitution, which affirms a citizen's right to hold beliefs and to express them. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press also apply to its counterpart, the right to unrestricted access to the expressions and beliefs of others.

Public libraries play a unique role in the preservation of democracy by providing an open, non-judgmental institution where individuals can pursue their interests and gain an understanding of diverse opinions. Libraries continue to play an essential role in safeguarding the intellectual liberty of the public.

Responsibility for Materials Selection

The materials selection policy is the responsibility of the Trustees, who have delegated to the Library Director the task of implementing the policy. In practice library materials are selected by the Director and the staff after consulting standard review and reference sources such as ***Booklist***, ***Library Journal***, ***School Library Journal***, ***Internet Movie Database***, the ***New York Times Book Review***, the ***Boston Globe***, ***Ingram iPage***, and ***Amazon.com***. Data on current loan and request patterns are crucial to purchasing decisions. Since the majority of titles are not reviewed, publisher's catalogs are also an important source of information, particularly for non-fiction titles published by reputable companies.

The library's overriding concern is to build the finest collection of materials possible considering the various needs of the community and the funds available. Therefore to be applicable for inclusion in the collection, all library materials must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. Current usefulness or permanent value.
2. Authority and competence in presentation.
3. Widespread public, media and critical attention.
4. Importance as a local historical record.
5. Relevance to the existing collection.
6. Relative importance in comparison with other works on the subject.

All citizens are encouraged to make suggestions on collection development and requests for specific materials which will be given careful consideration in light of overall collection needs and budget constraints.

Censorship

Basic to this Materials Selection Policy are the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement adopted by the American Library Association and endorsed by the Waltham Public Library Trustees.

Essentially what these statements say is that (quoting from the Library Bill of Rights) "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. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment."

Requests for Reconsideration of Materials

Occasionally an individual or group may feel so strongly about a particular item's inclusion or exclusion from the collection that protest may be necessary. Formal requests for acquisition or removal of specific items should be submitted in writing to the Library director, who will refer it with recommendation to the board of trustees. A form for this purpose is available at the Reference Desk.

Materials Selection for Children

The principles affirmed in this selection policy are applicable to the selection of materials for children. The library cooperates with the school libraries so that the services and collections of the two agencies complement each other. The major function of the school library is to furnish curriculum related materials. The public library seeks to provide a more comprehensive collection.

Responsibility for what children read rests with their parents or legal guardians. Selection of materials for the adult collection is not restricted by the possibility that children may obtain materials that their parents consider inappropriate.

Scope of the Collection

The emphasis in selection will be on meeting the needs of the "educated lay person" rather than on acquiring technical works intended for the specialist. Textbooks will not generally be purchased, although exceptions may be made for a high demand topic or if the book offers an excellent overview of the field.

As a member of the Massachusetts Library System, the library has access to the collections and resources of the Boston Public Library and other neighboring libraries and will not needlessly duplicate services and materials. When requests are received for material outside the scope of Waltham's collection, every effort will be made to borrow the material or to refer the patrons to the appropriate neighboring library's reference collection.

Gifts

The library welcomes gifts of books and other materials with the understanding that it will evaluate them in accordance with the same criteria applied to purchased materials.

When the library receives a cash gift for the purchase of memorial books or other material, the selection will be made by the director in consultation with the donor. The name of the donor or person memorialized will be entered on the bookplate.

Please contact the local history specialist to donate local history material or the Library Director for all other items.

Maintaining the Collection

The same criteria will be used in "weeding" or discarding materials from the collection as are used in building the collection. In order to maintain the collection in its most attractive and useful condition, the director and staff will remove those materials that are outdated or in a condition no longer suitable for circulation. Materials in deteriorating condition will be mended or replaced whenever appropriate. Materials no longer useful to the library may be given to appropriate charitable organizations or sold for the benefit of the library.

Approved by the Library Board of Trustees May 8, 2012