

Collection Development Policy

The Collection Development Policy upholds the mission of the Thayer Memorial Library ("Library"), which brings people, information, and ideas together to enrich lives and build community. The Library respects an individual's freedom of conscience to hold or consider a fact, viewpoint or thought independent of others' views. The Library appreciates the agency of individuals to decide for themselves or their families what is appropriate to read, watch or listen to.

Support for Intellectual Freedom

The Library provides an equitable space in which individuals and their pursuits are brought together with the universe of ideas and information spanning the spectrum of knowledge, beliefs, and opinions. The Board of Trustees of the Thayer Memorial Library ("Trustees") affirms the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to View, and Freedom to Read policy statements in support of acquiring and managing collections.

Objectives

The Library's materials collection is developed and managed to meet the preponderance of the cultural, informational, educational, and recreational needs of Lancaster residents and the citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Library staff builds and maintains a patron-oriented collection by anticipating and responding to needs and expectations. Collection decisions are made in conjunction with strategic initiatives, especially the following:

- Committing to excellence in service to improve effectiveness and remove barriers.
- Developing Library services that incorporate both physical and virtual collections.
- Embracing diversity of ideas.
- Positioning the Library as the preferred partner for lifelong learning.

Responsibility for Selection

Staff contributes to the development of patron-oriented collections by:

- Balancing individual and broader community needs in determining the best allocation of collection budget for acquiring or providing access to materials and information.
- Engaging in open, continuous two-way communication with Library patrons and recognizing that individuals have different ways of expressing their needs based on age, language, economic status, culture, or other characteristics.

- Handling all requests equitably.
- Interacting with patrons with understanding, respect, and responsiveness.
- Recognizing that materials of varying complexities and formats are necessary to satisfy the diverse needs of Library users.
- Reviewing the collection regularly to identify areas of community interest that may need to be strengthened.
- Seeking continuous improvement through ongoing measurement.
- Understanding and responding to rapidly changing demographics, as well as societal and technological changes.

Selection Criteria

The Library represents a broad demographic. With a patron base that can include infants to older adults, selection criteria consider the various interests and needs of Lancaster residents.

The Library provides collections containing various material formats, including print, audio-visual, and electronic.

In selecting materials and developing collections for adults, as well as for children and teens, the Library staff includes materials that represent the broad range of human experience, reflecting the ethnic, religious, racial, and socio-economic diversity not only of the region it serves but also the larger global perspective. The Library's collections will provide a range of opinions on current issues.

Collections contain:

- Classic works that have withstood the test of time.
- Materials of general interest.
- Popular works.

Works are not excluded or included in the collection based solely on the subject matter or political, religious, or ideological grounds.

In building collections, the Library staff is guided by the principle of selection rather than censorship. Furthermore, selecting a title for the Library's collections should not be interpreted as endorsing a particular viewpoint.

To build a collection of merit, materials are evaluated according to one or more of the following standards. An item needs to meet only some of these criteria to be acceptable.

General Criteria:

- Attention by critics and reviewers.
- Cost.
- Importance as a document of the times.
- Potential user appeal.
- Present and potential relevance to community needs.
- Relation to the existing collection and other materials on the subject.
- Requests by Library patrons.
- Suitability of physical form for Library use.
- Suitability of subject and style for the intended audience.

Content Criteria:

- Authority.
- Comprehensiveness and depth of treatment.
- Skill, competence, and purpose of the author.
- Reputation and significance of the author.
- Objectivity.
- Consideration of the work as a whole.
- Clarity.
- Currency.
- Technical quality.
- Representation of diverse points of view.
- Representation of important movements, genres, or trends.
- Vitality and originality.
- Artistic presentation and experimentation.

- Sustained interest.
- Relevance and use of the information.
- Effective characterization.
- The authenticity of history or social setting.

Special Considerations for Electronic Information Sources:

- Availability of the information to multiple simultaneous users.
- Available in full text.
- Ease of use of the product.
- Equipment needed to provide access to the information.
- Technical support and training.

Selection of Materials on Controversial Topics

A balanced collection aspires to represent all sides of controversial issues regarding the availability of materials, space, and budget. Selection is based upon criteria stated in this policy. The race, religion, nationality, or political views of an author or creator; offensive language; depictions or descriptions of violence or sexually explicit activity; controversial content of an item; or endorsement or disapproval by an individual or group in the community does not cause an item automatically to be included or excluded from the Library's collection.

The Library contains materials that some patrons may find objectionable. The Library may omit the collection materials that some patrons feel are important. In either case, the Library has procedures that patrons may use in requesting the reconsideration of materials.

Gifts and Donations

Accepting gifts and donations is a valuable way for the Library to benefit from the generosity of the community it serves. Gifts and donations of materials are reviewed using the same criteria as purchases.

The Library reserves the right to dispose of any gifts that are given to the Library. The Library will best incorporate such materials into the existing collections.

Gifts received that are not added to the Library's collection shall be forwarded to the Friends of the Thayer Memorial Library for their disposition at a future sale. Any items unsold by the Friends of the Thayer Library may be donated to another organization or discarded.

Funds may be given to acquiring materials recommended by Library staff as prescribed in this policy or for purchasing specific items suggested by the donor. When the Library receives a cash gift for the purchase of materials, the Library staff shall make the selection with the general selection principles outlined in this policy.

Collection Maintenance and Weeding Policy

The Library continually withdraws items from the collection, based on several factors, including publishing date, circulation frequency, community interest, and availability of newer or more valid materials. Items dealing with local history are an exception, as are absolute classics and award-winning children's books. Fiction that was once popular but is no longer in demand and non-fiction books that are no longer useful may be withdrawn from the collection. Withdrawn books may be donated to the Friends of the Thayer Memorial Library for book sales. Books that are not sold will be disposed of at the discretion of the Friends of the Thayer Memorial Library.

Reconsideration Policy

The Library fully endorses the principles documented in the *Library Bill of Rights* and the *Freedom to Read Statement* of the American Library Association. Materials available in the Library present diverse viewpoints, enabling citizens to make the informed choices necessary in a democracy.

The Library's varied collection is available to all; however, it is expected that only some of the collection will appeal to everyone. The Library also selects a wide variety of materials that satisfy the diverse interests of our community. The Library upholds the right of the individual to secure these resources, even though the content may be controversial, unorthodox, or unacceptable to some.

Patrons who wish to request the withdrawal or reclassification of materials currently owned by the Library are encouraged to discuss their concerns with a Library supervisor or the Director. If the patron is not satisfied with the response to their request, the Library staff will provide the patron with information and a form to request formal reconsideration of the Library resource.

Informal Complaints

The process may begin with staff discussing the complaint with the patron, which will be directed to the Director or their representative. During that interaction, the Director or their representative will discuss the nature of media selection and refer to the Collection Development Policy.

Library staff should, as needed, offer to assist the patron in finding alternate materials that would better meet the needs and interests of the patron and their family members. If the

patron chooses to go forward with the challenge, the complainant should be provided with a request for a formal reconsideration form.

Procedures for Handling Formal Complaints

The following steps will be used when an individual feels that further action is necessary to address concerns about a Library resource. The material in question will remain in circulation in the Library collection for this process.

A concerned patron dissatisfied with earlier informal discussions will be offered a packet of materials that includes the Library's mission statement, selection policy, reconsideration form, and the *Library Bill of Rights*.

Patrons are required to complete and submit a reconsideration form to the Director. They, with appropriate staff, will review the reconsideration form and the material in question to consider whether its selection follows the criteria stated in the collection policy.

Within 30 days, the Director will decide and send a letter to the concerned person who requested reconsideration, stating the reasons for the decision. If the individual is unsatisfied with the decision, a written appeal may be submitted within ten business days to the Trustees. If the Board plans to address the appeal at their Board meeting, the individual will be notified of when and where the meeting will be held.

The Trustees reserve the right to limit the length of public comments. The decision of the Board is final.

Sample Letter to Complainant

Letter to Person Requesting Reconsideration

Dear _____:

We appreciate your concern over the use of _____ in the Library. Selecting materials that serve the needs of our community is a vital part of operating a Library. The Board of Trustees takes this responsibility very seriously and has established a Collection Development Policy for selecting resources and a detailed procedure for requesting reconsideration of particular items. I have enclosed both for your review. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss them further.

If you are still concerned after you review the Collection Development Policy, please complete the Request for Reconsideration of Material form and return it to me. You may be assured of prompt attention to your request. The steps that will be taken are outlined in the Reconsideration procedure. At any point during this process, please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jay D. Munk", with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Library Director

Date

Approved by the Board of Trustees, November 2022