

Washington County Free Library

SUBJECT: **Materials Selection Policy**
 WCO # 1000

TO: All Library Staff

FROM: Mary Baykan
 Library Director

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EFFECTIVE DATE
September 3, 1998

PURPOSE: To establish a materials selection policy which states the general criteria used by the Washington County Free Library System in the selection of library materials for the community it serves.

AUTHORITY The Washington County Free Library; The American Library Association; The American Library Association Library Bill of Rights; The Freedom to Read Statement, Book Selection Policy (Attachment A)

DEFINITIONS: The word "materials" used for the specific forms of media, has the widest possible meaning; it may include books (hardbound and paperbound), pamphlets, maps, magazines and journals, comic books, newspapers, broadsides, manuscripts, films, sound discs, sound tapes, posters, videotapes, games, art reproductions or original art work, and electronic databases.

"Selection" refers to the decision that must be made either to add a given item to the collection or to retain one already in the collection. It does not refer to guidance in assisting a library user.

POLICY: The Washington County Free Library acquires and makes available materials which inform, educate, entertain and enrich persons as individuals and as members of society. Since no library can possibly acquire all print and non-print materials, every library must of necessity 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 and 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. Consideration is given to reference and circulating materials for adults and young people.

The Library's mission is not to underwrite curriculum. Textbooks are acquired if they serve the general public by providing the best source of information on a given subject. However, the Library wishes to partner with local schools in providing sources and information to meet homework needs. In selecting materials for the collection, librarians will consider general educational, commercial, cultural and civic enterprises of individuals and organizations within the community.

These policy statements govern the selection of the Washington County Free Library System's collection of materials. They may be subject to revision as changes occur in the needs of the community, in the emphasis of the Library's objectives or its organization and procedures.

Library materials are selected, organized, and made accessible in order to anticipate and meet the needs of the community the Library serves. The Library recognizes the importance of materials of permanent value and timely materials on current issues. Materials are purchased in whatever format best suits the users' needs. As technology is developed, these formats may change.

Responsibility for the Selection of Library Materials

Final responsibility for selection lies with the Board of Library Trustees. However, the Board delegates to the Director authority to interpret and guide the application of the policy in making day-to-day selections. The Director will authorize other staff to apply this policy in building collections. Unusual problems will be referred to the Director and in exceptional cases the Director will present comprehensive information to the Board.

Criteria for Selection:

No item in a library collection can be indisputably accepted or rejected by any established guide or standard. However, certain basic principles can be applied as guidelines. Every item must meet such of the following criteria as are applicable to its inclusion in the collection.

1. The degree of accomplishment of purpose to meet the most broadly based interests of library users.

The first step in selecting any item is to determine how successfully the goals of the work itself are met. Then, materials are evaluated to determine how effectively they address the known and anticipated needs of library users.

The majority of library materials acquired are for home use, i.e. to be circulated to borrowers. The interests of these users have a pattern of predictability that allow the selection of material in various formats and across all subject interests.

For non-circulating material, i.e., reference, selection will be guided by informational inquiries to staff.

2. Clarity and accuracy of presentation appropriate to the skills of the user.

The library will include materials that represent subjective opinions of their authors. In that context, "accuracy" cannot be objectively established and is a decision to be made by the user. To meet the interests of the users, the library collections will require a variety of materials at differing skill levels, e.g. for children or for newly literate adults.

3. Relative importance in comparison with other materials on the subject.

Because the library cannot acquire all materials on every subject, selection decisions must be made. Collection development is an art, not a science; a judgment factor based on staff knowledge and skills is a necessary part of the selection.

4. Relationships to existing collections.

The library has extensive factual data on the use of its collections. Assessment of the need for materials is based, in a large part, on this ongoing reporting of interest and use in every subject area.

The copy coverage of titles selected will reflect the expected use; but multiple copy buying will not be allowed to the exclusion of subject coverage in areas with lesser demands than the most highly popular titles.

5. Reputation of the publisher or producer; authority and significance of the author, composer, filmmaker, etc.

Staff knowledge and skill are essential factors in the selection process; the library recognizes prominent individuals in some fields or areas of study whose expertise or reputation are contributing factors in selecting some materials.

Video Selection:

The library attempts to have a videotape collection consisting of movie classics, general family entertainment and children's videos, educational and how to videos, and recent videos of major movie award winners, such as Academy Award winners.

The Library is not attempting to make available current popular feature films, which are readily available at video rental stores.

Criteria for selection: Academy Award winners, well reviewed films (Halliwell's or Video Librarian), or video versions of books, such as BBC productions, classic Disney films, videos reviewed in Booklist, Library Journal. Educational videos should have a presenter with recognized credentials (a dog trainer who has written well reviewed books on dog training, or an historian, such as Stephen Ambrose or Shelby Foote presenting an historical subject.)

Guidelines for Selection

Materials are evaluated as a whole and not on the basis of a particular section or sections. A work will not be excluded from the Library's collection because it presents an honest aspect of life or because of frankness of expression.

While a single standard cannot be applied to each potential item for selection, materials are judged by appropriate criteria. In some instances, these criteria include artistic merit, scholarship, or the value of the material to the informational needs of the community. Purchase requests from patrons are given serious consideration.

1. Availability and suitability of format. The closed-captioned format for videocassettes will be selected when this format is available.
2. Suitability of subject, style, and reading/viewing level for the intended audience.
3. Critics' and staff's reviews.
4. Reputation of the publisher or producer; authority and significance of the author, composer, filmmaker, etc.
5. Timeliness or permanence of the material.
6. Quality of writing, design, illustrations, or production.
7. Relevance to community needs.
8. Relative importance in comparison with existing materials in the collection on the same subject.
9. Price.
10. Appearance of title in special bibliographies or indexes.

Standard Selection Tools

The Library uses standard selection tools to review potential additions to the Library's collection. These standard selection tools include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Booklist
2. Horn Book
3. Kirkus Reviews
4. Library Journal
5. Publishers Weekly
6. School Library Journal

Materials Selection Policy

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE WASHINGTON COUNTY FREE LIBRARY, HAGERSTOWN MARYLAND in regular session assembled on this the 6th day of September 1998, that this Board of Trustees does adopt the following materials selection policy.

MATERIALS SELECTION POLICY

The Washington County Free Library provides, on equal terms, free library service to all individuals and groups in the Washington County Free Library System. The general criteria for the selection of books and other library materials purchased with Library Funds are: (1) the author's reputation and significance as a writer; (2) importance of the subject matter to the library's collection; (3) scarcity of material on the subject; (4) timeliness or permanence of the material; (5) appearance of title in special bibliographies or indexes; (6) authoritativeness; (7) reputation and standing of the publisher; (8) price; (9) availability of material elsewhere in the area. It is not the obligation of the County Library to provide primary research material, but it may do so incidentally.

The acceptance of gifts and donations of books and other materials shall be based on the same criteria as those for the selection and purchase of books and other materials. Books and non-book items will not be accepted with restrictions as to housing or use.

Materials selection shall be under the authority of the Library Director. Professional staff members will participate in the selection process, and public demand will be considered to the extent that the budget permits and the demands meet the criteria cited above.

The Washington County Free Library Board endorses as part of the materials selection policy the "Library Bill of Rights" adopted June 18, 1948, and the "Freedom to Read Statement" adopted by the American Library Association Council on June 25, 1953.