

### III. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY (*Last reviewed 2/5/26*)

#### A. Mission Statement

Washington Free Public Library believes in the freedom to read and learn, and the freedom to compare and express ideas. WFPL strives to provide educational, cultural and social enrichment for all residents of the city of Washington and surrounding areas.

#### B. Purpose

Collection development refers to the decision to add materials to the collection, retain materials already in the collection, withdraw materials from the collection and overall efforts to evaluate the quality and quantity of the collection. This policy is a guide for Library staff in their selection decisions and a source of information for the public about how materials are selected and how the collection is developed and maintained.

#### C. Responsibility

1. The Library Board of Trustees supports the principles expressed in the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*, *Freedom to Read*, and *Freedom to View* statements (see Resources).
2. Community and individual participation in collection development are encouraged and given serious consideration.
3. Selecting materials, according to the Board's policy, is the responsibility of the Director. The Director authorizes staff members qualified by training and experience to apply the policy to day-to-day decisions.
4. Questions about the policy or its execution should be referred to the Director.

#### D. Selection Criteria

1. Selection of library materials, whether purchased or donated, is based upon the informational, educational, and recreational needs of the community but is limited by factors such as materials budgets, space, and content of existing collections.
2. Each potential acquisition must be considered in terms of its own excellence and the audience for whom it is intended. There is no single standard that can be applied in all acquisition decisions. Some materials may be judged primarily in terms of artistic merit, scholarship, or value as human documents; others are selected to satisfy the recreational or informational needs of the community.
3. Materials are purchased in the most appropriate format(s) for library use. New formats are considered for the collection when need and interest from the community has been established, budget support is available, and the format can be successfully adapted for library circulation or use. Material formats may be discontinued when interests wane and the physical space and budget utilized by the format does not provide sufficient benefit to the community.

4. The Library seeks to balance its collection of materials and resources so that the collection is broadly inclusive rather than exclusive of ideas. In a democratic society, individuals are free to form and express their own opinions. The library does not take sides on issues, but takes seriously its role to provide information on opposing sides of issues, even when they may be controversial.
5. Selection of materials will not be inhibited by the possibility that an item may come into the possession of a child. Responsibility for material accessed by children rests solely with their parents or legal guardians.
6. Expanding areas of knowledge, changing social values, technological advances, and cultural differences require flexibility, open-mindedness, and responsiveness in the evaluation and re-evaluation of all Library materials.
7. In order to build collections of merit, all acquisitions, whether purchased or donated, will be considered according to the following general and specific criteria listed below. All criteria are measured by the professional judgment, knowledge and experience of the Washington Public Library staff and include use of the professional review resources such as Library Journal, Booklist, School Library Journal, Publishers Weekly and VOYA.
8. Digital materials may be provided by a content aggregator or another organization such as the State of Iowa's Bridges Consortium. The inclusion or exclusion of materials in these collections is made by the vendor/organization and may not conform with the Library's collection development statement. The Library will not accept Reconsideration Requests for materials in the Bridges collection. Information on the Bridges collection development policy and process for reconsideration may be found online here:  
<https://www.statelibraryofiowa.gov/index.php/libraries/resources/online-resources-libraries/bridges/collection-dev>
9. General Criteria for the Evaluation of Library Materials:
  - a. Attention of critics, reviews, and the public
  - b. Present and potential relevance to community needs
  - c. Relevant prizes, awards, or honors received
  - d. Relation to existing collection and other material on subject
  - e. Reputation and/or significance of author, producer, artist, etc.
  - f. Suitability of format for Library use
  - g. Suitability of subject and style for intended audience
  - h. Enduring value
  - i. Value of resource in relation to its cost
10. Specific Criteria for the Evaluation of Works of Non-Fiction:
  - a. Authority of author, producer, artist, etc.
  - b. Clarity, accuracy, and logic of presentation
  - c. Comprehensiveness and depth of treatment

- d. Contribution of the work to balance the collection
  - e. Objectivity and integrity
  - f. Collection balance, i.e. ensuring multiple perspectives and points of view
11. Specific Criteria for the Evaluation of Works of Fiction/Creativity
    - a. Artistic expression, presentation, and experimentation
    - b. Effective characterization, plot, setting, or theme
    - c. Representation of important movement, genre, trend, or national culture
    - d. Sustained interest
    - e. Vitality and originality
  12. Gifts: The Library encourages gifts of materials or money to purchase them. Gift materials will be evaluated according to the criteria listed above to determine suitability for inclusion in the Library's collection. Donors are informed that materials not selected for inclusion in the Library's collection will be disposed of at the time of donation. More information can be found under the Library's general Gifts Policy.
  13. Inter-Library Loan: Inter-library loan is used for specialized materials that are beyond the scope of the collection or which may not be currently available for purchase.
  14. Unique Collections: Genealogy, Local, and Family History – The Washington County Genealogical Society, Washington County Historical Society, and Washington DAR all have collections within the Grayson Archives room in the lower level of the Library. These materials are added and removed according to each organizations' policies and are not subject to the Library's Collection Development policy.

## E. Comments and Criticism of the Collection

1. Because of the rich diversity of human experience and opinion, it is inevitable that some materials in the Library's collection will be objectionable to some people in the community. The Library, in a very real sense, belongs to the whole community—to the minority as well as to the majority.
2. The Library staff and the Library Board welcome comments and criticisms of the collection as a whole or of individual items. Persons are welcome to meet with the Director and/or attend Library Board meetings to discuss the statement of purpose, selection policy, Library collection as a whole, and individual items in the collection or available through the Library.
3. Procedure followed to express concern:
  - a. Registered Library cardholders (or parties able to demonstrate eligibility to obtain a library card) may complete a "Reconsideration of Library Materials Request" form and submit it to the Director.
  - b. The Director will research the request and material(s) and will provide a written decision to the requestor and the Library Board within 30 days of submission of the

- form.
- c. If unsatisfied with the Director's decision, the requestor may appeal the decision before the Library Board of Trustees within 60 days following receipt of the Director's response.
  - d. The requestor should inform the Library Board of the appeal in writing within 10 days of the Library Board meeting during which they plan to present their appeal. The appeal will be listed on the Board's agenda and the requestor will have up to 15 minutes to present additional information to the Library Board regarding their appeal. Written information may be submitted in lieu of /in addition to an oral presentation. The Board will render a decision at their next meeting.
  - e. The Library Board has the final decision in resolving Requests for Reconsideration.
  - f. An item may only be reviewed/reconsidered once every 2 years.
  - g. Challenged materials will not be removed from the shelves while awaiting resolution of a Request for Reconsideration.

## F. Access & Collection Arrangement

1. The Library does not restrict access to Library materials except for the express purpose of protecting material from mutilation and theft. Materials are shelved for the convenience of their general audience and according to shelf space. Children, young adults, and adults may use any item in the Library collection.
2. Decisions are made regarding collection placement using the following guidelines:
  - a. Children: The children's collections serve children from birth to age 12, as well as their parents, teachers, caregivers, and other professionals working with children. The children's collections are designed to encourage an interest in reading, provide information, and supplement grade school curriculum. Due to the wide range of ages served by these collections, materials will differ significantly in reading level, maturity level, and age appropriateness.
  - b. Young adult: The young adult collection serves youth from age 13 through 18. The young adult collections are intended to form a bridge between the juvenile and adult collections, providing materials for a wide range of maturity levels and reading interests. The social, emotional and intellectual maturity required to read Young Adult Fiction and Nonfiction makes this collection differ significantly from materials in children's collection.
  - c. Adult: Collections aimed at adults will include material in languages and formats that best meet the needs of the community.
3. Parents or guardians, not the Library or its staff, are responsible for the materials accessed by children, however, Library staff is always available to assist parents in locating material that best meet the particular needs of their child.

## G. Withdrawing Materials

Weeding is an essential and accepted part of Library collection development. Obsolescence, use, damage, and normal wear and tear make the withdrawal of materials a necessary and continuous process. Locally significant materials may be retained despite condition or usage. Accreditation as a Level 3 Public Library in the State of Iowa calls for a library to weed an average of 3% of their collection annually during a measured 3 year period.

The withdrawn materials are sold, traded, destroyed, or disposed of in any way the Director and Library Board deem appropriate.

## H. Resources

"The Freedom to Read Statement", American Library Association, July 26, 06.

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement>

"The Freedom to View Statement", American Library Association, January 10, 1990.

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomviewstatement>

"Library Bill of Rights", American Library Association, June 30, 06.

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>