

W.H. Walters Free Public Library

Public Library Collection Development Policy

LIBRARY MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the W.H. Walters Free Public Library to put books and information into the hands of people whose lives will be enriched and whose purposes furthered thereby. The W.H. Walters Free Public Library is the child's gateway to learning, the institution where individuals may seek self-development on their own terms, and the means whereby all people may refresh old insights and gain new knowledge of the world around them. The Board of Trustees adheres to the philosophy expressed in the ALA Bill of Rights, Freedom to View and Freedom to Read statements.

POLICY STATEMENT

The W.H. Walters Free Public Library is committed to providing a collection that supports voluntary inquiry, free expression, lifelong learning, personal enrichment, and access to a broad range of information and ideas.

The Library's collection is developed and maintained in accordance with the Library's mission, professional collection-development practices, available resources, community needs, and applicable New Jersey law, including the **New Jersey Freedom to Read Act, N.J.S.A. 18A:73-33a through 18A:73-33e**.

New Jersey's Freedom to Read Act protects the right of individuals to engage in free inquiry and form their own opinions. The Act recognizes the professional role of librarians in developing and curating library collections and establishes protections relating to the selection, maintenance, and review of library material.

The governing body of a public library, in consultation with staff members of a public library, including a librarian employed by the public library, has discretion in selecting, purchasing, or acquiring library material for inclusion in the public library. Nothing in this policy or applicable law shall be construed to require the Library to purchase or otherwise acquire any particular library material.

The Library recognizes and acknowledges that:

- Public libraries serve as centers for voluntary inquiry and the dissemination of information and ideas.
- Prohibiting censorship of library material promotes free expression and free access to ideas.

- Library materials shall not be removed from a public library because of the origin, background, or views of the library materials or those contributing to its creation.
- Library materials should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people and should present diverse points of view in the collection as a whole.
- Residents should have access to diverse and inclusive library material.
- Library staff are responsible for developing and maintaining collection using professional collection-development practices and established selection criteria.
- The Library shall maintain procedures for ongoing review of library material and for formal requests for reconsideration or removal of material.

The Library shall conduct ongoing and periodic reviews of its collection. Reviews may focus on high-use and high-demand categories, materials requiring replacement or updating, and areas where space or budget limitations require evaluation. Periodicals, audiovisual materials, and digital materials may be reviewed periodically based on demand, condition, relevance, usage, and available resources.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The primary goal of collection development is to provide the best possible collection with the financial resources available. Library material is selected based on factors such as anticipated demand and interest, reputation of the publisher and author, historical significance, cost, and the item's contribution to the diversity or depth of the collection, including differing viewpoints.

Materials are selected by the Library Director within the framework of Board-approved policy and budget, with consideration given to the following criteria:

- **Relevance:** How the materials align with the library's mission and the needs and interests of its users.
- **Quality:** Literary merit, technical quality, accuracy, qualifications, and reputation of the author, creator, publisher, or producer, as applicable.
- **Audience Considerations:** The intended audience, age range, reading level, and developmental considerations when appropriate.
- **Format:** The format of material, including print, audiovisual, digital, or other available formats, as well as accessibility and usability.
- **Cost:** The quality and anticipated value of the material in relation to its cost and available budget.
- **Timeliness:** Whether the content is current and whether newer materials are available on the same subject.
- **Availability:** Whether similar materials or complementary materials are available elsewhere, including through interlibrary loan.
- **Community Needs:** Current and anticipated community needs, interests, and requests.
- **Space Constraints:** Available physical space and the effect of space limitation on the scope and depth of the collection.

Additional Criteria for Digital Resources

Digital resources may also be evaluated based on:

- Ease of Use.
- Licensing and system requirements, including hardware, software, networking, and storage requirements.
- Content quality and cost in comparison with other available formats.
- Accessibility.
- Anticipated use and demand.
- Terms and conditions governing access and use.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

Fiction

The Library's collection includes bestsellers and high-demand popular titles based on anticipated demand and community interest. The Library also maintains a representative selection of significant modern literary and experimental works, including works with limited readership when appropriate to the collection. The Library strives to maintain a core collection of standard novels and classic works of world literature in attractive and durable conditions.

Children's Materials

Selection criteria for children's and young adult materials mirror those for adult materials, with additional consideration given to intended age range, developmental consideration, vocabulary, subject matter, reading level, and the quality of illustration or other visual elements, when applicable.

The Library's collection development is constrained by available financial resources. Efforts to increase funding through grants, fundraising, and community support are ongoing to expand the collection's diversity and accessibility.

SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION

The Library collects popular materials intended for the general public, as well as materials appropriate to the age ranges served by the Library. Scholarly or highly specialized materials typically found in academic or specialized libraries are generally not collected.

Textbooks and curriculum materials are generally considered the responsibility of educational institutions. However, textbooks may be added to the collection when they provide the best or only available information on the topic or otherwise meet the Library's selection criteria.

The Library may participate in regional, statewide, or other cooperative library services to provide access to resources not contained within the Library's own collection. The Library may also collaborate with local organizations, schools, and institutions to share relevant resources.

With the exception of local history resources, the Library does not maintain archival collections.

Materials and equipment for patrons with visual impairments, such as large-print books, and audiobooks – are purchased according to demand and available resources. Patrons with special

needs are also encouraged to use the resources of the New Jersey State Library Talking Book & Braille Center.

SELECTION METHODS

The primary sources for selection are professional reviews in established media, including but not limited to *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Publisher's Weekly*, *School Library Journal*, *VOYA*, *The Horn Book*, and *The Bulletin for Children's Books*. Additional reviews from reputable radio, online, or general-interest publications may also be considered.

Publishers' catalogs are reviewed as supplementary sources.

Sales representatives and vendors may be considered as supplementary sources, but selection decisions should be supported by credible professional reviews and the selection criteria established in this policy.

The Library may also participate in a book rental program to meet demand for popular titles. The same selection criteria apply to both leased and purchased materials.

Multiple Copies

Multiple copies may be purchased for high-demand titles when supported by patron requests, holds, anticipated demand, and available funds. The number of copies purchased shall be determined at the Director's discretion within the approved Library budget.

PATRON RECOMMENDATIONS

Patron suggestions for purchases are welcomed and are subject to the same selection criteria as all other materials. Requests are evaluated based on factors including community interest and need, relevance to the Library's collection, availability, cost, space, and available budget. Submission of a request does not guarantee that the Library will purchase the requested material(s).

To ensure that purchase requests are distributed fairly among patrons and that the Library has an opportunity to consider requests from a broad range of users, each patron may submit up to three (3) purchase requests per month, with a maximum of twelve (12) requests per calendar year. Requests submitted beyond these limits may be deferred or declined at the Director's discretion.

When a requested item is not added to the collection, Library staff will make every reasonable effort to obtain the item through interlibrary loan or another available cooperative library service, when appropriate.

Patrons may submit a formal Request for Reconsideration/Removal of library material currently in the collection in accordance with the *Request for Reconsideration/Removal of Library Material Policy*. The Library Director shall serve as the initial point of contact and shall forward

eligible formal requests to the Library Board of Trustees for review through the process established by that policy.

Audiovisual Materials

Audiobooks are provided in available physical and digital formats, including CDs and digital formats, as appropriate to community demand, budget, and availability. Due to budget constraints, not all titles may be available in every format or at the same depth as print materials.

Visual media, such as DVDs, are selected to meet the community's recreational and informational needs. The collection may include popular, classic, and foreign films, as well as a limited selection of televised programs and instructional or subject-based videos.

Audiovisual materials may be selected using professional review sources such as *Billboard*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Library Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, and reputable online review sources and aggregators such as *Metacritic*.

Digital Materials

eBooks and eAudiobooks are selected according to the same general standards applied to print materials. Additional consideration is given to access models, licensing terms, usability, accessibility, anticipated demand, and cost.

When feasible, preference may be given to ownership-based models over leased or subscription-based access, depending on cost, licensing terms, anticipated demand, and available resources.

The Library monitors trends in digital content delivery, including podcasts, e-learning, digital educational modules, and emerging technologies, and may integrate relevant resources to meet evolving community needs.

Periodicals

The Library subscribes to a selection of popular magazines that reflect community interests. The Library does not generally maintain an archival collection of periodicals, and back issues are generally limited to the current year. Older issues may be accessible through electronic databases. Print subscriptions may be supplemented by e-magazines as funding allows.

Local History

The Library actively collects materials documenting the history of the Borough of Alpha, including books, maps, periodicals, and locally published newsletters. These materials may be acquired through purchase or donation.

The Library actively seeks to preserve and protect local history materials, including rare, fragile, and historically significant items. Special care is taken to ensure these materials are accessible to the public in a controlled environment to maintain their integrity.

GIFTS AND DONATIONS

The Library reserves the right, at its discretion, to display, retain, sell, donate, recycle, or otherwise dispose of donated materials. Materials that do not meet the Library's objectives or

selection criteria may be refused. If a gift or donation does not meet the Library's needs, it may be sold, donated, recycled, or otherwise discarded.

The Library does not assign a monetary value to donated materials. Upon request, the Library will provide the donor with a receipt for the gift. The Library will not return donated materials to the donor.

The Library does not accept the following:

- Books in poor condition (stained, yellow, moldy, torn, water-damaged, etc.)
- Books missing covers or pages
- Books with excessive highlighting, underlining, or notes
- Books with strong odors (smoke, mildew, perfume, etc.).
- Encyclopedias
- Textbooks
- Reader's Digest Condensed Books
- Outdated Reference Books (such as old dictionaries, atlases, or medical/legal guides)
- Books discarded by other libraries
- Abridged audiobooks or audiobook CDs
- Audio cassettes and VHS tapes
- Music CDs, CD-ROMs, or floppy disks
- Homemade DVDs or burned discs
- Outdated computer software or educational kits
- Digital files or eBooks from individuals (due to licensing restrictions)
- Downloaded or self-published digital media (unless requested or locally relevant)
- Flash drives or hard drives containing digital content
- Loose magazines, pamphlets, or newspapers
- Promotional or corporate publications
- Unsolicited political, religious, or advocacy materials (these are considered solicitations, not donations)
- Incomplete serial runs or single issues of professional journals

The Library may establish or update operational donation procedures consistent with this policy without requiring amendment of the *Collection Development Policy* for each individual change.

WEEDING AND WITHDRAWAL

Weeding Criteria

Weeding refers to the process of removing items from the collection as part of routine collection maintenance and ongoing collection assessment. Weeding shall be conducted regularly, with an annual review and periodic reviews of specific genres or categories based on demand and relevance.

The decision to withdraw items is based on the evaluation of the Library Director and collection staff, if applicable. Criteria for weeding include, but are not limited to:

- Materials that are damaged or worn from use;
- Items that are outdated, no longer relevant, or no longer timely;
- Items that have had little to no circulation for three years or more, when other collection factors also support withdrawal;
- Excess copies of a title that are no longer in demand;
- Availability of newer or more accurate materials;
- Space limitations; and
- The continued relevance and usefulness of the material.

Circulation is not the sole factor in determining whether an item should be removed from the collection, particularly in the case of nonfiction. A high circulation rate of an outdated item does not necessarily mean it should be kept; rather, it may indicate the need for a more up-to-date version.

Classic and popular fiction titles that are in poor condition will be considered for replacement. Nonfiction materials in disrepair will be assessed for repair or replacement, provided the content remains accurate and relevant.

Routine collection maintenance and weeding conducted in accordance with this policy are part of the Library's normal collection-development activities and are not considered formal requests for reconsideration or removal. Formal challenges to materials currently in the collection shall be addressed through the *Request for Reconsideration/Removal of Library Material Policy*.

Routine withdrawal decisions shall not be based solely on the origin, background, views, viewpoint, or subject matter of a library material or those contributing to its creation.

DISPOSITION OF MATERIALS

Materials withdrawn from the collection will be evaluated for potential resale, donation, recycling, or disposal. Items in good condition may be placed on the Library's for-sale shelf or donated to another library or nonprofit organization.

Materials that are significantly damaged, incomplete, outdated, or otherwise unsuitable for reuse may be discarded or recycled.

ONGOING COLLECTION REVIEW

The Library Director shall review library materials on an ongoing basis in accordance with this policy and applicable New Jersey law.

Criteria for ongoing review shall include, but are not limited to:

- Relevance of the library material;
- Condition of the library material;
- Availability of duplicates;
- Availability of more recent material;
- Space limitations; and,
- Continued demand for the library material.

Additional factors may include accuracy, accessibility, format, licensing terms, community needs, budget, and availability through other library resources.

REASON FOR POLICY

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Provide standards for the curation and development of library material;
- Establish criteria for the selection, maintenance, evaluation, and withdrawal of library material;
- Establish criteria for the removal of existing library material or library material selected for inclusion in the public library;
- Provide a framework for responding to patron recommendations;
- Provide a process for formal requests for reconsideration or removal of library material; and
- Provide protection against attempts to censor library material.

DEFINITIONS

Censorship. Means to block, suppress, or remove library material based on disagreement with a viewpoint, idea, or concept, or solely because an individual finds certain content offensive. Censorship does not include limiting or restricting access to library material deemed developmentally inappropriate for certain age groups.

Diverse and Inclusive Material. Means material that reflects any protected class as enumerated in the *New Jersey Law Against Discrimination, P.L. 1945, c. 169 (c.10:5-1 et seq)*; material produced by an author who is a member of a protected class as enumerated in that law; and material that contains the author's points of view concerning contemporary problems and issues, whether international, national, or local.

The Library seeks to maintain a collection reflects the diversity of the community it serves, including materials representing different backgrounds, experiences, abilities, and socioeconomic circumstances.

Governing Body. For purpose of this policy, the governing body of the W.H. Walters Free Public Library is the Library Board of Trustees.

The Library Board of Trustees exercises the governing authority assigned to it by applicable New Jersey law and is responsible for establishing and approving Library policy.

Individual with a Vested Interest. Any resident who is served by the W.H. Walters Free Public Library or who resides in the municipality or county in which the Library is situated.

Library Material. Means any material, including but not limited to, nonfiction and fiction books, magazines, reference books, supplementary titles, multimedia and digital material, software, and instructional material, belonging to, on loan to, or otherwise in the custody of a public library.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Library Board of Trustees.

- Establishes, reviews and updates the *Collection Development Policy*;
- Provides governance and oversight of the Library's collection;
- Approves the Library's collection-development policies and procedures;
- Considers formal requests for reconsideration or removal of library materials in accordance with the *Request for Reconsideration/Removal of Library Material Policy*;
- Makes the final determination on formal requests for removal or limitation of library material in accordance with applicable law and the Library's formal reconsideration policy.

Library Director.

Implements the *Collection Development Policy* and is responsible for the selection, acquisition, evaluation, maintenance, and withdrawal of library materials within the framework of Board-approved policy, available budget, community needs, and applicable law.

The Library Director:

- Evaluates patron recommendations;
- Approves purchases within the approved Library budget;
- Coordinates or facilitates interlibrary loan requests when appropriate;
- Conducts ongoing collection review;
- Maintains and evaluates the collection;
- Serves as the initial point of contact for patron questions or concerns regarding collection development; and
- Refers formal requests for reconsideration or removal to the Library Board of Trustees in accordance with the Library's formal reconsideration policy.

Selection Responsibility.

The Library Director is responsible for selecting and evaluating library materials in accordance with this policy, the Library's mission, available budget, community needs, professional collection-development practices, and applicable law.

Selection and collection-management decisions shall not be based on the political, religious, or personal viewpoints of the Library Director, Board members, staff, or other individuals.

The Library Board of Trustees provides policy oversight and approves the *Collection Development Policy* and Library Budget. Within the framework of Board-approved policy, budget, and applicable law, the Library Director is responsible for implementing the policy and making individual selection, acquisition, maintenance, and withdrawal decisions.

FORMAL REQUESTS FOR RECONSIDERATION OR REMOVAL

Formal requests concerning library material currently in the Library's collection shall be handled in accordance with the *Request for Reconsideration/Removal of Library Material Policy* and the accompanying *Request for Reconsideration/Removal of Library Material Form and Procedures*.

The formal reconsideration process shall comply with applicable New Jersey law and the procedures established by the Library, including requirements concerning:

- Eligibility to submit a formal request;
- The request form and identification of specific material and objections;
- Continued availability of challenged material during the review;
- Review of the challenged material as a whole;
- Final determination by the Library Board of Trustees;
- A written statement of reasons for the final determination;
- Limitations on subsequent challenges; and
- The final and binding nature of the Board's determination for the period established by applicable law.

Routine collection-management activities, including selection, replacement, relocation, evaluation, and weeding conducted pursuant to this policy, as separate from the formal reconsideration process.

The Library shall maintain records of formal requests, Board determinations, and related correspondence in accordance with applicable records-retention requirements by law.

PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide standards for the curation and development of library material;
- Establish criteria for the selection, maintenance, evaluation, and withdrawal of library material;
- Establish criteria for the review and removal of existing library material or library material selected for inclusion in the public library;
- Provide a framework for responding to patron recommendations;
- Provide a process for formal requests for reconsideration or removal of library material; and
- Provide protection against attempts to censor library material.

Date Adopted by the Library Board of Trustees: January 12, 2026.

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