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Collection Development Policy

I. General Statement of Philosophy

Purpose

The purpose of the Carroll County Public Library Collection Development Policy is to guide librarians and to inform the public about the principles of collection development.

The Collection Development Policy supports the mission of the Carroll County Public Library which is:

“to provide adults and children of Carroll County with information and resources that support lifelong learning and lifelong enjoyment.” CCPL Strategic Marketing Plan, 1995-96.

A policy cannot replace the judgment of librarians, but stating goals and indicating boundaries will assist them in choosing from a vast array of available materials.

Definitions

The word “materials” is used for all forms of media and has the widest possible inclusion. Examples are: books, (hardbound and paperback), pamphlets, maps, magazines and journals, newspapers, broadsides, manuscripts, photographs, films, filmstrips, video tapes, compact discs, sound recordings, audiocassettes, slides, posters, art work, electronic data bases, CD-ROM products.

“Selection” refers to the decision that must be made to add a given item to the collection. It does not refer to assisting a library user.

“Collection Development” refers to an ongoing process of assessing the materials available for purchase or licensing, and in making the decisions, first, on their inclusion, and, second, on their retention if they are added.

Objectives

The objective of collection development is to provide quality library service by making available a well-selected, well-maintained collection. The collection will include library materials in adequate numbers and in a variety of formats, based on patterns of use and anticipated demand.

II. Responsibility for Materials Selection

In the Carroll County Public Library all titles new to the collections are selected by staff in the Materials Management Department. They are aided by advisory committees of librarians from branches who channel information between the library users and selectors. Input is also sought from other Headquarters staff with knowledge of and experience in using technology for sources of information.

Final responsibility for materials 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 assist in applying this policy. Unusual problems will be referred to the Director and in exceptional cases he/she will present comprehensive information to the Board.

III. Criteria for Selection

No item in a library collection can be indisputably accepted or rejected by any established given 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 allows the selection of material in various formats and across all subject interests.

For noncirculating 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, whether they be in print or electronic format. 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 of 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 collection. 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.

The relationship of print to electronic sources will shift as more electronic products become available and offer enhancements unobtainable in print sources. The shift began, and will continue primarily, in reference and information material.

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

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

IV. Use of Library Materials

The library recognizes that many materials are controversial and that any given item may offend some library user. Selection will not be made on the basis of any anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the merits of the work in relation to collection building and to serving the interests of Carroll countians.

In keeping with the tradition of access to ideas through public libraries, Internet access is available through Library-offered remote access subscriptions and in libraries at the public catalog stations. Internet is not governed by any entity, so there are not limits or checks on the kinds of information therein. Only a user can decide on the accuracy, completeness and currency of the contents.

Selection of materials in any format and access to the Internet will not be inhibited by the possibility that materials may inadvertently come into the possession of or seen by children.

Filtering software will be used on *all* in-library Internet access stations to the extent necessary to block access to sites which may violate obscenity statutes. *Immediately upon request from an adult, the filter will be removed from the computer to be used by the adult. Internet access stations in children's areas of library branches will use broader filters.*

Selection designates neither Library approval nor Library disapproval of the contents. No item will be sequestered except for the express purpose of protecting it from injury or theft.

The use of rare and scarce items of great value may be controlled to the extent required to preserve them from harm, but no further.

V. Guidelines for Selection

A. General Guidelines

1. The Library recognizes the purposes and resources of other libraries in the metropolitan Baltimore area and shall not needlessly duplicate functions and materials. Through cooperative agreements with the Division of Library Development and Services, State Department of Education, and neighboring public and academic libraries, the resources of these libraries may be available to Carroll County readers.
2. In selecting materials for the collections in any particular agency, the Library will pay due regard to the special commercial, industrial, and civic enterprises of the community.

B. Guidelines for Selection According to Type of Reader

1. Because the Library serves a public which includes a wide range of ages, educational backgrounds, and reading abilities, it will seek to select materials of varying complexity.
2. The Library is particularly aware of the needs of preschool children who are unserved in a formal way for their collection interests except by the public library. Meeting their needs constitutes an educational preparation before their years in school.

C. Guidelines for Selection According to Form or Nature of Material

1. The Library acknowledges the purposes of educational programs for all students of all ages provided by the educational institutions in the area. Textbooks and curriculum related materials for these programs are provided where the materials also serve the general public or where they provide information not otherwise available.
2. Retellings of the anonymous folk stories and retold versions of epic tales which were written in the ancient forms of English or foreign languages are bought when they adhere to the style and content of the originals and evoke the period in which they were created.

3. Adaptations of material in print formats may be purchased based on anticipated short term demand. In general, print adaptations are added to the collection as ephemeral, uncataloged material.

Abridgements are purchased in book-on-cassette format only, and only in response to anticipated demand.

4. The illustrations in a picture book form an integral part of determining the book's acceptability.

D. Guidelines for Selection According to Subject

1. Legal and medical works will be acquired only to the extent that they are useful to the layperson.
2. The Library acknowledges a particular interest in local and state history; therefore it will seek to acquire state and county public documents, and it will take a broad view of works by and about Maryland authors as well as general works relating to the state of Maryland. However, the Library is not under any obligation to add to its collections everything about Maryland or everything produced by authors, printers or publishers with Maryland connections.
3. The Library will serve as an electronic information center for local government information to meet most frequently asked inquires about county services, programs, meetings, etc. Arrangements have been made for county staff to transfer information in electronic format to "Maryland Free," CCPL's home page on the Internet.
4. The Library collection contains materials on different peoples and faiths. Bible stories, lives of saints, biographies of religious figures as well as materials of general spiritual content and those on diverse customs and traditions must meet the general standards of selection.
5. The Library provides information on sex designed for all age levels of readers. Materials for varying levels of education and differing social and religious customs are provided using the guidelines for selection. The Library carefully examines children's materials that deal with this subject, selecting those that present the information with clarity and scientific accuracy.
6. Principles governing the selection of materials as stated in this collection development policy are also applicable to the selection of children's materials with additional consideration given to appropriate content and vocabulary for the intended reader.

VI. Gifts

The Library accepts gifts of materials, but reserves the right to evaluate and dispose of them in accordance with the criteria applied to purchased materials. Gifts which do not accord with the Library's objectives and policies will be refused. Bookplates showing the donor's name and the name of the honored person if a memorial gift may be provided for gifts. No other conditions may be imposed relating to any gift either before or after its acceptance by the library.

VII. Maintaining the Collection

Selection is only one aspect of collection development. Rigorous attention must be given to assessing needs for adding or discarding materials in every branch collection. These responsibilities are a part of all librarians' duties in the branches.

Multiple copies will be added as determined by demand.

Material which is no longer useful or accurate may be withdrawn from the collection. Material may also be discarded if it is irreparably damaged or if its appearance is such that the public will not use it.

Withdrawn items will be replaced based on the same criteria which were used in determining their original purchase.

VIII. Reconsideration of Library Material

A. Support of the Right to Read

The Library does not operate in a vacuum, but in a community representing all shades of opinion. It is the very essence of a democracy that its people have the right of free inquiry and the equally important right of forming their own opinions. Therefore, the Library should stand firm in the face of any segment of the community which might seek to impress its special viewpoint through censorship. It should not withdraw a book at the request of any individual or group since to do so would be to limit the rights of other individuals and groups and to place the Library's book selection policy in the hands of shifting public opinion.

If patrons wish to discover the worth of certain publications for themselves, they should be given the opportunity to do so. Furthermore, history shows that many books that have been most controversial or objectionable to some persons or groups have, in due course, been recognized to be among those books which most, rather than least, belong in public libraries. If an idea is truly dangerous or evil, the best protection against it is a public which has been exposed to it and has rejected it; the worst protection is a public which has been shielded from exposure to it by official or self-appointed guardians.

Therefore, in the event that anyone in or out of the community should object to the Library's acquisition or retention of a certain publication on moral, political, religious, or philosophical grounds, the objection should be recognized as an indication that the publication in question may well be of more than routine interest and may be likely to be requested by members of the community who wish to judge its merits and demerits for themselves.

B. Reconsideration Procedures

Once an item has been accepted as qualifying under the selection criteria, it will not be removed unless it can be shown to be in violation of the criteria.

A procedure has been established whereby patrons may request reconsideration of material in the collection. Upon receipt of the completed and signed form: "Collection Complaint Form", library staff will review the material and send a written reply to the patron.

IX. Endorsements of National and State Policies

The Carroll County Public Library Board of Trustees supports the following statements from the Maryland State Board of Education, the American Library Association, and the Educational Film Library Association:

State Bylaw, Public Libraries Book Selection Policy – Maryland State Board of Education

Library Bill of Rights – American Library Association

Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights

1. Statement on Labeling
2. Evaluating Library Collections
3. Diversity in Collection Development
4. Expurgation of Library Materials
5. Challenged Materials
6. Library Initiated Programs as a Resource

Freedom to Read Statement – American Library Association

Freedom to View – Educational Film Library Association

X. Revision of Policy

This policy will be revised as times and circumstances require.

MAGAZINE SELECTION PROCEDURES

The magazine collection, in keeping with the objectives stated in the Collection Development Policy, is designed to provide quality library service by making available a well-selected, well-maintained collection which:

1. Serves patrons with diverse viewpoints, a wide range of interests, and different educational levels.
2. Meets the recreational, vocational, and cultural needs of the community.

Final responsibility for magazine selection lies with the Board of Directors. The Board delegates to the Director authority to interpret and guide the application of the Collection Development Policy in making day-to-day selections. Day-to-day decisions concerning the collection are made by the Materials Management Coordinator who is assisted by trained staff members from each branch.

The following factors are considered in the development and maintenance of the magazine collection:

- Available funds

Subscriptions are a yearly expense, and there are many more magazines than can be subscribed to.

Magazine subscriptions are renewed once a year, usually in the late spring. Decisions to renew or drop a subscription are made at that time.

- Indexing

A major factor in magazine selection is the availability of subject access to the information contained in the collection. Priority is given to magazines that are found in the indexing sources in each branch (InfoTrac or Magazine Article Summaries or Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature).

- Requests from library patrons

All patron requests are kept on file. At renewal time, each title suggested is considered for addition to the collection.

- Patterns of use and anticipated demand

The interests of users have a pattern of predictability that allow the selection of material across all subject interests.

Periodic surveys are taken which note the number of times a magazine has circulated, requests for specific magazines made at the information desk, and in-library use.

Most of the titles in the collection have a high level of circulation and in-library use.

- Relationship 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.

- Professional reviews
- Core collection lists published in professional journals
- Comparison of holdings with other branches
- Available shelf space
- Holdings for back issues are decided by each branch and are based on demand and available space
- Magazines which are no longer useful may be withdrawn from the collection. Rigorous attention must be given to assessing needs for adding or dropping magazine subscriptions in every branch collection.

WHEN HANDLING COMPLAINTS ABOUT MATERIALS. . . .

- Stay calm.
- Keep your tone of voice calm, soothing and unemotional.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Let your body language reflect your professionalism.
- Take the complainant off the floor, or away from the desk, if possible. Reduce any distractions you can so that you can give the complainant your full attention.
- Allow the person to vent, or let off steam. Listen quietly, allowing the person to finish.
- Take a moment to think before responding. Use the time to take a deep breath and consider your response!
- Acknowledge the complainant's point of view, but don't argue or agree with it.
- Ask enough probing questions to determine the exact nature of the complaint.
- Paraphrase the complainant's concerns if you need to, in order to be sure you have understood them. Be careful not to jump to conclusions about what the complainant is really asking you to do.
- Respond to the complainant's real concern, if you can determine it. (An example: A patron said she wanted some of our children's material on adoption withdrawn. After some discussion, we determined that she really wanted us to provide some specific recent material on interracial adoption. Once we offered to do that, she withdrew her objection to the books we already owned.)
- If possible, give a concrete example of the value of the material in question if you can do so without seeming to take away from the complainant's values. (An example: A parent who chose to use the *Satanic Bible* to learn specifically what danger signs to look for in her teenager.)
- Demonstrate your knowledge of how specific items fit into the library's collection. It is usually better to give a specific reason why the material is included in the collection if you can, rather than jump right to the library's policy. Often, a complainant will be satisfied to know that an item has been selected for the collection because of demonstrated or anticipated demand.
- Offer alternatives to the complainant. Some complaints can be resolved if the complainant can find useful materials. Librarians can help by suggesting materials which are appropriate for the individual's values, tastes, and needs.
- Know when to pull back from the conversation. Avoid becoming involved in discussions which focus on your values or those of the complainant. Shift the focus of the conversation to the library's purpose in providing a range of material.

- Avoid using jargon, or value-laden terms. Avoid repeating any value-laden terms used by the complainant.
- Know when to stop giving information. It is counterproductive to volunteer information that may add fuel to the complainant's fire. (An example: A staff person who tells a customer that we buy a number of copies of the *Satanic Bible* because they are frequently stolen!)
- Know when to end the interaction. Understand that you won't be able to satisfy every complaint every time, and that you will have to refer people to the next level of supervision.
- Spell out any specific follow-up steps that will be taken.
- Take a few moments to document the interaction, and share your notes with your supervisor. Help other staff members to know when a challenge is brewing.
- Try not to take the complaint personally!