

Materials Selection Policy

Purpose

The purpose of the materials selection policy of Normal Public Library is to guide the librarians and to inform the public about the principles upon which selections are made. A policy cannot replace the judgment of librarians but stating goals and indicating general boundaries will assist them in choosing from a vast array of available materials.

The responsibility of the library is to serve the community, not to promote – and above all not to censor – any particular political, moral, philosophical, or religious conviction or opinion. No one, least of all a public library, has the right to judge what another may or may not read, hear or view.

We recognize that censorship is a purely individual matter and hold that while people are free to reject – for themselves and for those for whom they are legally responsible – materials of which they do not approve, they cannot exercise this right of censorship to restrict for others the freedom to read, hear or view. History shows that many books, which have been most controversial or objectionable to some persons or groups at one time, have eventually come to be recognized among those most, rather than least, deserving of a place 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 subsequently rejected it. The Board of Trustees of Normal Public Library, therefore, adopts the [Library Bill of Rights](#), the [Freedom to Read](#), and the [Freedom to View](#) statements as the foundations for its materials selection policy. The library does not label or censor materials. Normal Public Library shall protect the intellectual freedom of the library user, and shall prevent censorship of its library materials, ensuring items are not withdrawn from its library collection merely because individuals or groups object to the material.

Objectives

The primary objectives of selection shall be to collect physical and digital materials of contemporary significance and of permanent value. The library also recognizes an obligation to make available materials for enlightenment and recreation, even though such materials may not have an enduring interest or value. The library does not consider it necessary or desirable to acquire all materials on any subject if these items tend to duplicate each other. The library does not attempt to develop a complete research collection. Requests for scholarly materials or any materials currently unavailable may be requested via interlibrary loan.

Guidelines

Points considered in selection are literary, education, information, artistic, and recreational value; authority and effectiveness of presentation; qualities conducive to critical thought and understanding; relations to existing collection and other materials on the subject; attention of critics, reviewers and public; number and nature of requests from the public; appropriate physical or digital formats; and available funds and space. Titles are selected on the basis of generally accepted criteria. Contemporary and popular authors are included as well as those who have demonstrated their enduring worth. There is no single set of criteria that can be applied to all items because of the great diversity of materials.

The library acquires, makes available, and encourages the use of physical and digital video and audio formats to serve the general information or recreation needs within a diverse community. Materials selection is guided by a general design to collect both recreational and informational content representing a wide variety of general subjects and genres. Feature films will be acquired to serve differing tastes and interests. An effort will be made to include all popular genres including comedy, mystery, classics, musicals, award winners, and romances as well as other broad-based genres. Nonfiction video content is acquired when the presentation is most appropriate, effective, or unique to that format. The collection does not include material obtained specifically for school or college curriculum use.

Because the library aims to be impartial in materials selection, in the case of controversial issues, variety and balance of opinion are sought whenever available. No particular opinions or special interests are favored. The library does not attempt to obtain textbooks or other curriculum related materials except as such materials serve the general public. Legal and medical works will not be purchased except as they are useful to the layperson.

In the selection of materials for the collection, particular attention is given to items of a special interest to the community. An effort is made to include those subjects that have a bearing upon community life. Works by local authors must meet the standards for acquisition required of other collection materials.

Staff members participating in book selection are expected to be familiar not only with the general character of the community, but also with its unique characteristics, interests, and activities.

As an indication of current need, the library relies upon the requests received in the service departments, patrons' suggestions of materials for acquisition, special subject bibliographies, and reading/listening/viewing trends as reported in the library literature. Since the library is concerned with stimulating use and with providing for varied reading interests, various forms of publicity, displays, and physical organization of its materials are constantly employed.

The library's objective in providing printed materials for children is to guide the child toward the enjoyment of reading and the appreciation of reading materials. In the selection of all items for children, the library tries to anticipate and meet the diverse interests, needs, and skills of children of all ages, from the beginner to the child ready for adult books. As with the adult collection, appropriate non-print materials will be purchased when they complement the collection. Feature films, learning videos, and a wide variety of other videos will be selected for children ranging from preschool through high school as well as their families.

Responsibility for the selection of library materials

Ultimate responsibility for materials selection, as for all library activities, rests with the director who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Board of Trustees. The director determines allocation of materials funds among subject areas. No specific rules govern the distribution of those funds although consideration is given to collection strengths and balance in the collection as well as to changing community needs.

Databases and downloadable and streaming media play an important role in the library's collection. In addition to standard criteria used in selecting other formats, special criteria for electronic formats include ease of use, technology requirements, and availability of remote access. Certain electronic products feature content that is leased or purchased as a whole, while other platforms allow for staff to select specific titles.

Responsibility for materials, regardless of format, used by children rests with their parents and legal guardians. Selection will not be inhibited by the possibility that materials may inadvertently come into possession of children.

Book selection aids

Selection aids used by the library are recommended basic lists, special bibliographies for reference books, particular subject materials, and book reviewing journals. No one publication is relied upon exclusively; furthermore, the critical opinions of reviewers are checked against each other.

De-selection of library materials

Materials that are obsolete or outmoded or worn are withdrawn on a regular basis from the active collection. Records of the local community, however, are an exception. Materials relating to Normal, Bloomington, and McLean County are either retained in-house or offered to the McLean County Museum of History for their collection.

Materials as gifts

Materials will be accepted as gifts on the condition that librarians have the authority to make whatever disposition they deem advisable. Gift materials added to the library must meet the standards required of other acquired materials.

The library will not accept special collections of books to be kept together as a separate physical entity. Patrons or organizations who wish to give gifts of any consequence to the library are referred to the director. Gift collections may be accepted only by the director with the understanding that they may or may not be integrated into the general collection, the only form of donor identification being a bookplate.

Reconsideration

Requests for Reconsideration of Library Materials will only be considered if the requester holds a Normal Public Library card. Upon receipt of a Request for Reconsideration of Library Material form, the Library Director will appoint a committee to review the material. After review, the Library Director or a committee member will reply to the card holder in writing as soon as is practical. No material is automatically removed from the collection because of an objection and will remain available to patrons until a decision is made.

Patrons who do not accept the Library Director's decision may appeal to the Board of Trustees.

When an appeal is received, the president of the Board of Trustees will appoint a committee of librarians and library trustees. Committee members review the Request for Reconsideration and

then read the item in question, meet and discuss the material, and render a decision as to the disposition of the item in question.

Request for Reconsideration of Library Material

All Requests for Reconsideration are taken seriously by Normal Public Library. Requests will not be considered if the requester does not hold a Normal Public Library card.

Date _____

Author _____ Publisher _____

Title _____

Request initiated by _____ Library Card # _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Complainant represents

_____ Individual

_____ Group or organization: _____

1. Did you read/examine the entire item? If not, what parts did you examine?
2. Why do you object to this item?
3. Specifically, what do you find objectionable in this item?
4. What potential consequences may occur as a result of reading or viewing this material
5. Is there any age group for whom you would recommend this item? If so, what age group(s)?
6. What value is there in this item?
7. What do you believe is the theme of this item?
8. Have you seen reviews of this item?
 - a. By whom?

- b. Where?
- c. What was their position?

9. What would you like Normal Public Library to do about this item?

10. In its place, what item of equal value would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of a society or a set of values?

Adopted by the Normal Public Library Board of Trustees, June 22, 2005; amended July 27, 2005. Readopted June 20, 2007; amended September 30, 2009; amended December 15, 2021; amended December 20, 2023; amended January 21, 2026.