



Westport Free Public Library  
408 Old County Road  
Westport, MA 02790



## **Westport Free Public Library**

### **Material Selection Policy**

## **Massachusetts General Laws**

### **Part I Title XII Chapter 78**

#### **Section 33: Policy for selection and use of library materials and facilities**

Section 33. The board of trustees of a free public library in any city or town, or in the absence of such board, the city or town official possessing the appointive powers of such board, shall establish a written policy for the selection of library materials and the use of materials and facilities in accordance with standards adopted by the American Library Association. No employee shall be dismissed for the selection of library materials when the selection is made in good faith and in accordance with the approved policy adopted pursuant to the provisions of this section.

### **PHILOSOPHY**

The Westport Free Public Library subscribes to the principles of intellectual freedom as stated in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution, Part 2 Chapter 5 Section 2 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Freedom to Read statement and its relevant interpretations by the American Library Association Council, and the Library Bill of Rights and its interpretive documents which are appended.

## OBJECTIVES GOVERNING THE SELECTION OF MATERIALS

1. To serve the community as a center of reliable information
2. To provide opportunity for continuous self-education
3. To provide opportunity for recreation and enrichment
4. To promote enlightened citizenship

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SELECTION OF MATERIALS

Responsibility for the selection of materials rests ultimately with the Board of Trustees which formulates the policy. The Board of Trustees delegates the selection of materials and the development of the collection to the Library Director. The professional staff assists in the selection of materials. The general public and other staff may recommend materials for consideration.

## GUIDELINES FOR SELECTION

Selectors use a number of sources including professional review journals, book lists, bibliographies, catalogs and announcements, gifts and public recommendations to select materials. In selecting materials, the staff will pay due regard to the special, commercial, industrial, cultural, and civic enterprises of the community.

The Library may purchase material for the collection that has not been reviewed in a professional publication because of the number of patron requests or community interest.

Books are added to the collection because of their usefulness to some readers even though they may be objectionable to others. The library does not restrict young people from using any part of the collection. The children's and young adult collections may include content too mature for some individuals, but that child's parent or legal guardians are the only responsible party for determining what is appropriate for that child and for monitoring their access to library materials. Neither library staff nor other individuals may make such decisions for other people's children.

An effort will be made to avoid unnecessarily duplicating the functions and collections of area libraries. The library draws upon the collections and resources of neighboring libraries, especially those in automated network databases. The resources of the Massachusetts Library System, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, The Bristol County Law Library, and other special libraries are also relied upon so as to reduce duplication of services and materials.

In working cooperatively with the schools and their libraries, the Library's role is to complement, not supplement, the school curriculum.

The following criteria are considered important in selecting non-fiction materials:

1. Current usefulness or permanent value
2. Authority and competence of the author
3. Clarity and accuracy of presentation
4. Relation to existing collection

The following criteria are considered important in selection fiction materials:

1. Artistic expression
2. Originality and imagination
3. Sustained interest
4. Sympathy and conviction
5. Consistency in characterization

The Library recognizes that popular fiction is essential in a collection which serves a recreational function and therefore provides mysteries, westerns, Science fiction, and romances.

The Board of Trustees considers "obscenity" and "pornography" subjective terms and therefore not suitable criteria for selecting materials. Books will not be rejected solely on the basis of the amount or frankness of sexual content.

## SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION

The following materials are not usually collected by the Library:

foreign language books	pictures
genealogies	prints and art works
manuscripts	rare books
maps	textbooks (unless
microforms	they serve the
music scores	general public)
outlines and study guides	
(with the exception of those	
for equivalency, entrance, or	
civil service examinations)	

Exceptions are made in some instances for items of local interest. For example, pictures and maps of Westport or manuscripts by Westport writers would be considered for inclusion in the collection.

The Library attempts to provide a wide range of current periodicals of general interest as well as a few titles in more specialized areas such as home decoration and gardening. Trade, scholarly, professional, and religious journals are not normally purchased.

The Library will try to borrow through interlibrary loan from other libraries those materials which are beyond the scope of the Library's collection.

## USE OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

The only titles unavailable on open shelves and restricted from free circulation are those which deal with the history or people of the area (e.g. Hetty Greene, Lizzie Borden) and are in fragile condition and/or no longer in print. These items are generally found in the History Room

Responsibility for the reading of children rests with their parents and legal guardians. Circulation of materials is not restricted by the possibility that children may obtain materials their parents consider inappropriate.

## GIFTS

The Library welcomes gifts of books and other materials with the understanding that they will be evaluated in accordance with the criteria applied to purchased materials. A receipt with a description of the material and the date of the donation will be provided upon request. However, the library does not put a monetary value on donated material. The cost of appraisal for tax deductions remains the responsibility of the donor. Collections of books with restrictions which necessitate special handling or which prevent the integration of the gift into the general collection will not be normally accepted.

The Trustees of the Westport Free Public Library have sole responsibility for library property. The Board reserves the right to refuse, without prejudice, the placement in or on library property of any permanent memorial or commemorative object which may be offered by any group or individual.

## WEEDING

The same criteria will be used in weeding materials from the collection as are used in the acquisition of materials. The Librarian will use their judgment in removing from the collection those materials which are no longer useful or are not in a condition suitable for circulation.

## REQUESTS FOR THE RECONSIDERATION OF MATERIALS

The Library recognizes the right of community members to question library materials inclusion in the collection. Any individual seeking reconsideration of an item in the Library's collection may submit a Request for Reconsideration form to the Library Director.

Upon receipt of the form, the Director will consult with library staff, with the person submitting the request if needed, and with other relevant sources that may provide useful information in considering the request.

In making a decision, the Director will consider the nature and purpose of the item. Other information obtained from the sources described above; the library's mission, goals, and policies; and American Library Association guidelines on intellectual freedom. The Director will make a timely decision regarding the request and will provide a written explanation of the reasons for the decision.

If an individual is not satisfied with the Library Director's decision, they may appeal it in writing to the Board of Trustees. The Trustees will consider the appeal at their next regular meeting, or they may schedule an earlier meeting should circumstances present the need. The decision of the Board of Trustees will be final.

The Director and Trustees may take any of the following factors into account, as appropriate, in reconsidering an item program, or service:

- Accuracy and currency of content
- Reputation, qualifications, and/or significance of the author, creator, presenter, etc. including their local importance if applicable
- Popular demand
- Relevance to the community's information and recreational needs and interests
- Availability of other materials that cover similar information or meet a similar need or interest in the library's current collection
- Representation of diverse points of view
- Artistic, literary, and/or technical merits
- Quality of treatment of controversial issues

- Reviews from authoritative sources (professional journals, individuals experienced with the relevant subject area, other librarians, etc.); critical reception
- Relevance to the library's mission and goals; relationship with other library materials

Factors that will not, in and of themselves, be considered appropriate reasons to remove an item from the collection include:

- An individual's personal disagreement or feelings of offense with the content or its presentation on the basis of their own particular opinions or beliefs (political, religious, or otherwise)
- The origin, personal history, and/or views of the author, creator, presenter, etc.
- The mere fact that the contents could be considered controversial, graphic, explicit, or includes profane language or sexual content
- A rating or "explicit content" warning

Evaluation of an item will be based on consideration of the item as a whole, not on selected individual sections. The library will not alter or expurgate any individual section or sections of a work.

No item is to be removed from the shelf or to be placed in a restricted-access status during the reconsideration process. No item in the collection is to be removed or restricted because of a complaint except in accordance with this procedure. Items that have become missing or lost but are deemed to still be appropriate for the library collection will be replaced. Any person who knowingly removes a book or item from the library for the purpose of preventing others from accessing it will be referred to the Westport Police and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law as provided for under Massachusetts General Law Part IV Title I Chapter 266 Section 99A.

Adopted by the Westport Board of Library Trustees

5-5-22