

Collection Development Policy

Pearl River County Library System

Objectives

Historically, the American public library was developed as an agency for free, informal education of individuals. As such, its stated objectives were the enrichment of personal life and the promotion of enlightened citizenry. Today, American libraries have adapted to provide access to broad collections of materials and resources in varied formats that inform, educate, entertain, and enrich the lives of patrons of their community by balancing the needs and desires of the patrons within the limitations of the budget and available space.

The Collection Development Policy exists to support the Pearl River County Library System's mission and serves to inform staff about the collection and the methods and principles governing its development. By providing written guidelines for collection development activities, the library ensures consistency in the selection, acquisition, maintenance, evaluation, and deselection of resources despite any changes in funding or personnel. Transparency and trust are important for the relationship between public libraries and the communities they serve. This policy additionally serves to provide the Board of Trustees and library patrons with information about how and why collection development decisions are made.

Resources in the library collection are intended for a diverse community with varying needs and interests. A diverse collection should contain content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences. Materials should not be excluded from a collection solely because the content or its creator may be considered offensive or controversial by some, as the needs and interests of the whole community must be considered. This policy provides information and guidance for staff and the public regarding how to handle concerns, complaints, or challenges to library materials and information resources.

It is the policy of Pearl River County Library System to select books and materials that provide a general circulation and reference service to adults, young adults, and children.

Responsibility

Ultimate responsibility for the collection, as for all library materials, rests with the Library Director, who operates within the framework of policies approved by the Board of Trustees. Designated staff members, particularly branch librarians, are to be consulted on the needs of their communities and are encouraged to make suggestions for book selection. Requests from readers will also be considered.

Selection Principles

The following materials selection statement is intended to guide librarians and inform the public about the principles upon which selections are made. The library supports an individual's freedom to access ideas and information representing all points of view. The library neither encourages nor discourages any viewpoint, and the selection of materials does not imply endorsement. The library holds that the ultimate choice of reading, listening, and viewing materials is an individual and private matter, and the library's goal is to provide free and open access to all types of materials.

Selectors should work systematically to ensure balanced coverage of different subjects, viewpoints, genres, and media. Selections should be made based on demand, while also ensuring the availability of literary classics and educational resources. Budget and space limitations require a focus on materials that appeal to a broad range of users, rather than academic and highly technical works that do not meet the general public's needs.

There is no single standard that can be applied to evaluate all the materials included in the library's collections. Each type of material will be evaluated in terms of its own qualities and merits. An item does not have to meet all criteria to be selected, but general criteria used in selection should include the following:

- Selection of materials that meet high standards of quality in content, expression, and format that are related to the basic standards of selection, purpose, and need.
- Selection of materials that inform, educate, entertain, and enrich the development of life, with emphasis on authoritativeness, factual accuracy, effective expression, significance of subject, sincerity of the author's purpose, authority and reputation of the author, and responsibility of the author's opinions.
- Selection and purchase of items for both present and potential readers. Considerations of the selectors should include the current makeup of the area and communities served, and the anticipated needs of the community, as well as the necessity for breadth, depth, and diversity in the collection.
- Selection of materials that will enable the library to meet individualized information and entertainment needs for every person who visits or otherwise makes use of the library.
- Selection of materials that will enable each citizen to form his own opinions. Books and materials on controversial subjects will be judged on their factual

authority and competence in presenting their viewpoint. Since the public library serves all the people of the community, it is necessary for multiple sides of an issue to be presented.

- Selection of materials to provide a quality collection with local or regional significance, including those on local and state history and by local and state authors.
- Selection of materials should also include a wider cultural significance or relevance to current events.
- Considerations of the selectors should include popular demand, timeliness and/or permanence of work. There should be a concentration on a collection of books that will grow in value over the years rather than on a large number of books for temporary use, without abandoning other stated principles of selection. Award-winning, bestselling, and classic titles are considered for selection. On a limited budget, duplication of titles is a luxury that a library cannot often afford. The demand for popular fiction can be served primarily through a library lending agency (Interlibrary Loan).
- Selection and purchase of textbooks or school curriculum materials only when the information needed cannot be secured in other books.
- Considerations of the selectors should include the relation of new materials for possible selection to existing collections.
- Considerations of the selectors should include evaluation of materials in reputable critical and/or professional review sources.
- Selection of serious works that present an honest aspect of life or of some human problem for their positive values. All materials will be judged as a whole rather than on isolated parts or passages. Works will not be excluded because of frankness of expression, or because it may be controversial. Books and materials selected for children and young adults will have the additional criteria of guiding, developing, and encouraging interest in reading and learning.
- Considerations of the selectors should include suitability of the format for library use and the availability of space to store collections.
- Considerations of the selectors should include price and availability of funds.
- Considerations of the selectors should include community interests and other selection criteria as listed in response to patron requests for materials to be added to the library collection. Unsolicited gifts and donations will be also considered on the same principles as purchased materials.

Collection Maintenance

The library strives to meet the needs of its patrons and community as efficiently as possible with a collection that is current, easy to use, and fits the available space. Evaluation and assessment of materials in the collection are vital to maintaining an updated and relevant collection. Continuous evaluation is necessary as an assessment of the library's continuing realization of its mission. Assessment can identify strengths

and weaknesses of the collection, including scope and depth, and provide the library with data for other aspects of collection management, including acquisition, deselection, and budgetary allocations. Circulation statistics, holds ratios and wait times, interlibrary loan data, patron requests, and related sources of information will enable the library to prioritize popular subjects and materials among the branches and online, and to identify needs for additional development.

Deselection (weeding) is the process of removing items from the collection to ensure it remains up to date, accurate, and useful, and that it meets the needs and interests of the community served. Items in low demand, excessive wear, inaccurate or outdated information, or materials that no longer meet the needs of the public will be withdrawn from the collection. In addition to weeding of print materials, the discontinuation of purchasing and/or housing of older media formats will be considered when demand and availability indicate they are no longer appropriate for the collection. Staff may regularly discard materials to maintain a current, accurate, and appealing collection, with the guidance of the Library Director and Technical Services staff. In the case of worn or damaged items, the decision to replace withdrawn items is at the discretion of the staff responsible for selecting new materials.

Intellectual Freedom

The library respects the freedom of information for its users and upholds the principles of intellectual freedom outlined in the American Library Association's *Freedom to Read* and *Freedom to View Statements*, and *Library Bill of Rights*. Every member of the community has the right to access information, and while not every item in the library's collection will appeal to everyone, the library provides a varied, balanced collection to meet the needs of its diverse community. The library provides a wide variety of perspectives and opinions on all subjects without preference to any perspective. Inclusion in the collection does not imply library approval or disapproval of the contents.

All patrons are free to reject any materials of which they do not approve for their use. The choice of library materials for personal use is an individual matter. The library holds that no one person has the right to exercise censorship to restrict the freedom of use and/or access of others. Parents/guardians have the final responsibility for what their children choose to borrow from library collections.

Reconsideration of Library Materials

Any patron or community member who is eligible to be a residential patron who finds fault with an item in the Pearl River County Library System collection may request such items be reconsidered for appropriateness within the library collection. Library staff will provide information about the library's selection criteria and the *Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials Form*. The patron or community member should make a copy of the completed and signed form for their own records and submit the original to the Library Director or the branch librarian. Challenged materials may remain in the collection during the review process.

The Library Director will evaluate the Request for Reconsideration and/or submit it to the Board of Trustees for review at its next scheduled meeting. If the Board of Trustees is not scheduled to meet shortly after the challenge is submitted, it may be reviewed by a Challenge Committee comprised of PRCLS library management to make a preliminary determination that will then be presented to the Board of Trustees at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The Board of Trustees will review the challenge and the item in question to determine whether it meets the guidelines as outlined in the Library's Collection Development Policy. Once the Board of Trustees has reached a decision, the Library Director or another appointed library staff member will contact the patron or community member with the outcome. All documentation of the challenge will be retained by the library for a period of five years.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on December 5, 2023.