

## **MATERIALS SELECTION AND USAGE POLICY**

### **1. Responsibility for the Collection**

Final authority for the approval of the policies in this document is vested in the Library's Board of Trustees. They have delegated the responsibility for implementing this policy to the Library Director. The Library Director may delegate to specific staff members the responsibility for selection of materials in special areas, but recommendations of these staff members are always subject to review by the Director.

It is the function of library staff to select and to withdraw library materials, and to advise on their use. The collection is developed within limitations of space and budget. Recognizing that sensitivity to the needs and interests of the community is essential to the development of library collections, the Merrick Public Library welcomes advice and suggestions from patrons, trustees, and authorities in various fields. Library staff, however, are responsible for judging the needs of their collection and their community, and they will make the final choices.

### **2. Scope of the Collection**

The Merrick Public Library is an online affiliate member of the Central and Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing (C/W MARS), a network of over one hundred public, academic, and special libraries in central and western Massachusetts. Brookfield's participation in this network provides our residents with access to the collections of other participating libraries, on a reciprocating basis, as long as state certification is met. Every effort is made to locate and borrow from other libraries through C/W MARS, or the regional interlibrary loan network, those specialized materials that are beyond the scope of the Merrick Public Library's collections.

The Merrick Public Library seeks to provide a broad range of materials to meet the varied needs of its patrons. Library materials and services will routinely support more than one library goal. To meet the informational needs of users, the library continually updates materials in the areas of business, law, government, history, medicine, health, technology, science, and current events. To fill the need for information about popular culture and social trends, the library buys popular non-fiction, general mass circulation periodicals, fiction, musical recordings on compact disc, DVDs, and a variety of museum passes. Local history and genealogical materials relating to Brookfield and the surrounding area are particularly sought for the Local History and Special Collections. Histories, local newspapers, vital records, town reports, books by local authors, and books about this area are all collected.

### **3. Organization of the Collection**

The non-fiction collections at the Merrick Public Library are organized by the Dewey Decimal System. The fiction and biography collections are arranged alphabetically by author and subject, respectively. Audio-visual collections are arranged alphabetically by title, or a specified order adapted from the Dewey Decimal System.

#### **4. Selection Criteria**

The Library shall attempt to recognize patron demand (direct requests and proven popularity of similar material types and genres) in the selection of materials, and will seek out materials that are pertinent and timely. A high priority shall be given to materials that have current significance, and special effort shall be made to obtain materials representing all sides of controversial issues. Because of limited resources, the relevance of the material to our collection is especially considered. Material that receives positive reviews may not be purchased if it duplicates material already owned. Materials that are too technical or so limited in scope so as to appeal to only a few of our patrons shall be passed over. Librarians will choose between media formats taking into account such considerations as anticipated shelf life or long-term appeal, anticipated public demand, timeliness of the content, and the necessity of multiple copies. The acquisition of library materials is generally made by library staff based on (but not limited to) the following criteria:

- Library's mission statement and its accepted goals and priorities;
- Staff judgment and expertise;
- Published reviews from general mass-audience periodicals and from specialized library review sources;
- Recommendations from library users and the general public;
- Local relevance;
- Use analysis of specific titles, authors and subject areas;
- Availability at other libraries, most notably those in C/W MARS;
- Availability in alternative formats, including on-line access, or other electronic storage, cassette and compact disc recordings, and DVD recordings;
- Availability of similar material already in the collection;
- Cost/benefit analysis.

#### **5. Collection Types**

5.1. Adult Non-Fiction: Its principal role is to ensure the availability of information and materials for independent and self-directed learning. Library staff shall consider appropriateness to the level of user, and potential usefulness to the library's collection in the selection of non-fiction materials. Staff members will look to see that authors present material accurately, fairly, clearly, and in a readable manner, however, special consideration is given to those books which deal with topics about which very little else is available.

5.2. Adult Fiction: The Library attempts to purchase a wide variety of fiction to satisfy the needs of all our borrowers. As some of the language and incidents in contemporary novels will offend some tastes, individual borrowers will need to be selective when choosing materials. Library staff choose titles on the basis of reviews that consider, among other things, the appeal of a book for a specific audience, the artistic skill evident in its rendering, and the literary reputation of the author.

5.3. Large Print Collection: Supporting the library's role of providing popular materials for the community, the Merrick Public Library maintains a collection of large print books to help those who

are vision impaired read successfully. The large print consists of a variety of popular, best-seller, mystery/espionage, and romance fiction, and some general non-fiction.

5.4. Mass Market Paperbacks: Paperbacks that are popular, easily portable, and inexpensive. They may duplicate copies of popular hardcover titles, and may also duplicate copies of titles on school reading lists, purchased to make them readily available as they are needed. Specific titles are not always sought, and books are frequently weeded. These considerations result in a paperback collection that is constantly changing and useful mainly for browsing.

5.5. Young Adult Materials: This collection is targeted to the informational and recreational reading needs of young people between the ages of twelve to eighteen, typically students from grade six through twelve. The main purpose of this collection is to serve the educational, developmental and recreational needs of this population while serving as a stepping stone from the children's collection to the adult collection. The bulk of the collection consists of hardcover and paperback fiction and non-fiction that have been chosen based on the above selection criteria. A large percentage of the material for school-related demands and other informational needs may be found in the regular adult and children's collections. Some items may be included that are not considered appropriate by all adults for all young adults. While some materials may be too mature for one, other individuals may be ready for them. Only the individual and his or her parents can decide what materials shall be used, and neither the Library staff nor other Library users shall make these decisions for other people.

5.6. Children's Materials: The Children's collection is targeted to preschoolers through sixth grade. Special effort is made to continually update the collection and to weed worn and outdated materials. Duplicates of popular juvenile fiction, Easy Read titles, and picture books are planned as part of our collection development. Selections are also based on literary quality, design and format, illustrations, accuracy, relevance, and appropriateness for the intended audience. Classroom textbooks are not considered appropriate for the collection and are not generally purchased. The Library does attempt to provide supplementary materials to enrich the resources available to students and teachers. The Children's collection strives to provide children with the library materials necessary to aid their personal and educational development. Some items may be included that are not considered appropriate by all adults for all children. While some materials may be too mature for one child, other children may be ready for them. Only the child and his or her parents can decide what materials shall be used by that child, and neither the Library staff nor other Library users shall make these decisions for other people's children.

5.7. Periodicals: The library offers a collection of magazines and newspapers. Magazine and newspaper subscriptions are chosen in accordance with relevant criteria outlined in the selection criteria section above.

5.8. Audio-Visual Materials: The Library purchases audio-visual materials targeted to all age groups as part of its collection development. The circulating collections contain general interest DVD titles of both a recreational and informational nature. Selections of adult DVDs concentrate on current popular materials, TV shows, classic films, foreign films, and documentaries. Selection of children's DVDs concentrate on current popular materials, productions of children's books made into video, and titles which also focus on lesser known works that stimulate the imagination and enhance learning.

5.9. Music CDs: The library maintains a small, but diverse, selection of music including classical, jazz, rock, country, pop, folk, and more. At this point, the library holds music CDs but rarely buys any new items due to their decline. When circulation statistics dramatically decrease, the music CD collection will be eliminated.

5.10. Computer Software: Computers are available at the library for public use on the main floor. Patrons age 12 and older may check out a laptop to use anywhere in the library building. Non-circulating software provided for all focuses on standard office applications of word processing, spreadsheet, database management and desktop publishing.

5.11. Local History Department: Because of the very specialized nature of this collection, it is dealt with separately in the Local History Department: Collection Development Statement.

## **6. Requests for Purchase**

The Library welcomes requests for purchase of materials, however, it is to be understood that such requests will be subject to the same criteria for selection as other considered materials.

## **7. Withdrawal of Materials**

Selection of materials for the Library collection is an ongoing process which includes the removal of materials no longer appropriate, and the replacement of lost or worn materials that are still of value for informational or recreational needs. Materials are regularly discarded from the library collections because they are out of date, so badly worn or damaged they cannot be rebound or mended, because it is cheaper to replace them, or because they are once-popular materials that are no longer used. Space, the cost of replacement, and the appearance of the collection are also factors in these decisions.

## **8. Gifts**

Gifts of books and other materials in good condition are welcomed by the library, however, material is accepted with the understanding that they may be used or disposed of as the library sees fit. Donated material will be checked to see if it meets the Library's criteria for selection and if it helps maintain the Library's need for balance on matters of opinion. The Library can utilize only a small proportion of such material. The Library cannot make cash assessments of donations, nor does it assume the responsibility for returning any items to donors not added to the Library collection. Acknowledgement receipts are available for the donor to fill out on their own for tax purposes. Items may be placed in the book sale.

## **9. Freedom to Read, See, and Hear**

9.1. Overview: The Merrick Public Library subscribes to the principles of intellectual freedom as stated in Freedom to Read, Freedom to View, and the Library Bill of Rights (appended) and their interpretations issued by the American Library Association. Included in these statements is the commitment to honor the rights of an individual to use the Library regardless of age, race, religion, national origin, or social or political views. Accordingly, library staff provide equal service to all library users. Children and adults are equally free to use the entire Library and to borrow all materials in the circulating collections. Limitations to be placed upon the reading and viewing materials of young people are left to the discretion of the parents. Well intentioned persons or groups occasionally question the inclusion of items in library collections. Although we understand and appreciate their

fears and doubts about the effects of materials on impressionable persons, the Trustees take the position that the risk of not providing access to information and ideas is greater than the risk of providing it. Sometimes suggestions are made regarding the restriction or removal of certain library materials, and the Board, therefore, wishes to establish the following principles:

9.2. Controversial Materials: In an effort to provide Library patrons with diverse sources of information and the widest possible range of ideas and viewpoints, the Library will acquire some controversial materials. Some of these materials may be offensive to individuals or groups because of perceived profanity, social, economic and political ideas, religious viewpoints, the background of the author, the kinds of information provided, illustrations, or other reasons. Acquisition or use of any item does not imply approval or endorsement of the contents. Indeed, it cannot, since such a variety of ideas is collected. The Trustees believe it is essential to provide such materials if the American ideal of freedom is to be retained.

9.3. Age: Judges, legislators, educators, and others are giving increased recognition to the fact that young people need access to all the information and ideas that are essential to their growth. Therefore, anyone, of any age, who is eligible for a Library card may use any materials in the Library, and is not to have that privilege limited by any staff member. If parents wish to deny their children access to certain materials they must take the responsibility themselves.

9.4. Labeling: It is sometimes suggested that a descriptive label be affixed to library materials indicating a political or social point of view or indicating that such an item is questionable or controversial. Such labeling suggests that Americans are incapable of making up their own minds about controversial subjects, and this practice is contrary to the American idea of the free marketplace of ideas. The Merrick Public Library does not subscribe to this practice, which is not to be confused with the routine genre labeling (i.e. mystery, romance, western, etc.) of library materials which makes no attempt to prejudice the attitude of potential readers about the work in question.

9.5. Special Collections: The use of rare, scholarly, and/or fragile items of great value may be controlled to the extent required to preserve them from harm, but no further action shall be taken to restrict the public's access to the Library's collections.

9.6. Reconsideration: The Library is willing to re-examine its position on any item in the Library's collections. A patron must first complete the Request for the Reconsideration of Library Materials form, which will then be presented to all members of the Library Board of Trustees. The Trustees will consider the request and vote on the issue at the following meeting. No item is to be removed or restricted because of a complaint except in accordance with this procedure.