

# **Martin County Library System Materials Selection Policy**

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of the Martin County Library System Materials Selection Policy is to guide the Library staff and to inform the Board and the public about the principles upon which selection is based.

The primary goal of materials selection at the Martin County Library System is to provide library materials for the educational, recreational, and informational needs of the people in its service area. As a member of a regional library system, a secondary goal is the acquisition of materials that may be shared with other libraries. The primary objective of materials selection is to collect materials of current interest and significance and those of permanent value.

All print and non-print media are potential library materials. These include, but are not limited to: books, periodicals, pamphlets, audio cassettes and discs, video cassettes and discs, computer software including CD Rom discs, on-line computer data and services, and works by visual artists.

## **RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELECTION OF MATERIAL**

The Library Board vests authority for selection of library materials in the Director who may delegate authority to other members of the staff. Selections made within the guidelines of this policy shall be considered Board selections.

## **BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MATERIALS SELECTION**

The following general criteria are used when selecting library material:

1. Basic reviewing sources, standard selection tools, user demand, and staff suggestions form the primary basis for selection decisions. Suggestions from library users are encouraged, and serious consideration is given such recommendations insofar as they conform to the guidelines of this materials selection policy. (A list of standard selection tools and a sample selection recommendation form is included in Appendix A and B.)
2. Although the demands of current users of the library receive first attention, there is also a provision for potential users in the selection of materials. In some cases majority demand must be sacrificed in order that a larger variety of tastes may be satisfied.
3. The selection of materials is guided by standards of factual accuracy, significance, responsibility of opinion, and creative skill. The quality of materials purchased in a particular subject area or genre depends upon the demand for the materials and their importance to the overall collection. The best materials available are sought in each area.
4. Materials are selected that reflect the diversity of opinion available in today's society to enable each library user to reach his or her own conclusions.

Materials that challenge and stimulate the user as well as those which provide the comfort of the familiar are selected. Controversial items are included in the collection.

5. Those involved in selecting materials need to be aware that selection can sometimes be a tool of censorship and that objectivity requires being aware of one's biases. Also, it should be noted that the pressures of conformity are always present in selecting controversial materials, so that a positive attitude is essential. Materials should be selected because they fill a need, not because they do not offend.
6. Materials are selected for all ages, and for various education and comprehension levels.
7. Careful consideration is required in selecting materials such as textbooks or other materials directly related to school curricula. The question of how much support will be offered for schools from public library collections needs to be addressed, in addition to weighing the value of these materials for non-school users.
8. Materials for the special needs of groups organized for the pursuit and preservation of specialized subject matter (e.g., genealogy, local history) are purchased in proportion to their value for all library users.
9. Library materials will be replaced or discarded using standards of continuing usefulness and obsolescence. Badly worn materials that are no longer in demand or of continuing importance will be discarded without replacement. A program of regular review and weeding of the collection will be maintained.

## NON-PRINT MATERIALS

The Martin County Library System acquires non-print items for a variety of purposes, including group instruction as well as family and individual entertainment. Audio and video discs and cassettes, computer software, visual representations, and multi-media kits are selected according to the general principles outlined in this policy. Popular productions of music and drama in audio and video format are selected according to standards that may also apply to popular print materials. Video movies have much in common with popular novels. Compact disc and cassette recordings of music, both classical and popular, have as much place in the public library collection as the books that describe their performance and their creators. The quantity of such non-print materials needed to meet demand may exceed what a tax-supported budget will allow. Our selection goal is a collection offering samplings of the currently popular and representative selections of those things of enduring quality and continuing demand.

The Motion Picture Association of American (MPAA) ratings often applied to feature films on video and the more recent "parental advisories" attached to some music items are considered to be informational only. This information lacks any legal status. MCLS neither adds rating information to non-print packaging or annotations nor specifically removes it where it already exists. Such ratings and advisories are not considered as criteria in making selection decisions.

## GIFTS AND DONATIONS

The Library Board authorizes the acceptance by staff of unconditional gifts and donations. Gifts with conditions or special stipulations require approval by the Board following a recommendation from the Director.

The same standards for selection apply to gift materials as to regular acquisitions. Gifts that do not meet these standards may be disposed of according to current practices.

## AGE CONSIDERATIONS IN THE SELECTION AND USE OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

The Martin County Library System selects material for people of all ages. In doing this it recognizes that people of the same chronological age may differ markedly in their levels of social and intellectual maturity. Age recommendations for materials are considered general guidelines at best. Neither the selection of materials nor their use is restricted based on their perceived appropriateness for persons of a particular age. Any restrictions on the use of library materials by a minor are the sole right and responsibility of the minor's parent(s) or legal guardian. Parents are encouraged to be knowledgeable about the library materials their children use and to discuss these with them.

### **Deaccession, Retention, and Duplication**

The library follows a systematic weeding procedure. Its purpose is to maintain an active, useful and current collection. Items of limited use are eliminated to make room for more useful materials. On a regular, rotating basis, librarians and staff review the different assigned areas of the collection. Basic criteria to consider when reviewing an item for withdrawal are:

Use:	Items that have not circulated during a specified number of years may be considered for withdrawal.
Subject coverage:	The relation of the item to others in the same subject.
Superseded editions:	Older editions will not be retained unless they have unique value to the collection.
Duplicate copies:	Duplicates are retained when demand calls for them.
Value to the library:	An item that is dated and obsolete, of low priority, or readily available elsewhere may be considered for withdrawal.
Availability: last	Consideration will be given as to whether an item is the copy available in the library or in the library system.
Well-rounded collection:	Retention is considered for items representing subjects of new or renewed interest and classics or items of historical value significant to the library and to the community. Particularly careful consideration will be given to materials in literature, history and the arts.
Condition:	Materials in poor condition are considered for repair, replacement, or withdrawal.

Once an item has been withdrawn from the collection, it will continue to remain property of the library and will go through the following removal steps:

- Step 1 If of possible need, the item may be offered to other county departments (such as the Sheriff's Dept. for use in the jail).
- Step 2 The item may be sold by the library in order to fund other projects or purchases.
- Step 3 The item may be donated to a local library support group, local school or a non-profit group not affiliated with the library.
- Step 4 Once an item has gone through the above procedure and is determined to no longer have any value, it will be recycled.

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

The Martin County Library Board supports the principle that the freedom to read, hear and view is the right of each individual in our free society, and is therefore determined to defend this right by adhering to and supporting the Library Bill of Rights printed below and various interpretations of this document as may be approved by the Board from time to time and appended to this selection policy. Please see Appendix D and E for statements of Freedom to View and Labeling.

## *Library Bill of Rights*

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
- V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 18, 1948.  
Amended February 2, 1961, and January 23, 1980,  
inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996,  
by the ALA Council

## CHALLENGES TO MATERIALS

The Library Board respects the right of persons to express their opinions and will provide to the concerned citizen the right to challenge library materials for reconsideration. However, no library materials will be removed from the shelf until the challenge is acted upon and a decision is reached.

A user expressing concern over materials will first be invited to discuss his or her concern with the Director or other administrative staff. If this information conversation does not satisfy the concerned user, or if the complainant wishes to bypass this step, the formal procedures outlined below can be instituted. Justification of library acquisitions is not the responsibility of Library staff members even though they may be the first point of contact.

Procedure for reconsideration of library materials:

1. The library user will request the form "Statement of Concern About Library Materials" (TDS form #20) from a library staff member. (Appendix C)
2. The library user must fill out the form completely, sign it, and return it along with the library material in question to the Library Director.
3. The Library Director will review the material(s) and notify the library user of his/her decision in writing within 30 days.
4. If the library user questions the decision of the Director, he/she may meet with the Director to discuss the matter. If the library user wishes to further discuss the matter with the Library Board, the matter will be included on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled Library Board meeting. The Library Board may appoint a committee made up of Board and staff members to study the recommendation and report to the Board. Action taken by the Board will be final.

## CONCLUSION

The Library Board realizes that any library that purchases only those materials acceptable to everyone would have very few items indeed. The Board further recognizes the right and privilege of each person to select those materials he or she wishes from the Library collection, and that no one is obliged to read, hear, or view that which he or she does not like.

The Library Board respects the right of persons to express their opinions, negative as well as positive, with respect to materials purchased by the Library. However, negative attitudes of persons or groups toward any material shall not mean its removal from the library collection.

The Library Board expresses its support of the staff responsible for the selection of library materials, and delegates to such staff the authority to purchase those books and other library materials that are considered essential, useful and within the scope of this selection policy.

The Library Board will periodically review this materials selection policy.

This policy was amended in November 2003.

## APPENDIX A: SELECTION TOOLS

In selecting materials, the Martin County Library System staff members are guided by, but not restricted to, a number of reviewing aids such as:

- Booklist
- Library Journal and School Library Journal
- Publishers Weekly
- Newspaper and regional reviews
- Video Review Guide for Libraries
- CD Review
- Leonard Matlin's TV Movies and Video Guide
- Video Hound's Golden Movie Retriever
- Specialized bibliographies
- Standard Catalogs
- Patron suggestions

APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDATION FOR PURCHASE

Martin County Library System  
110 N. Park St.  
Fairmont, MN 56031  
(507) 238-4207

Recommended for Purchase

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Title Recommended\_\_\_\_\_

Author/Performer\_\_\_\_\_

Publisher\_\_\_\_\_ Price\_\_\_\_\_

Recommended item is: (Circle One)

Book Magazine DVD Audiobook Other

\_\_\_\_\_

Please identify any reviews of this item that you know about:\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Your name (optional)\_\_\_\_\_

Your Library Branch\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C: STATEMENT OF CONCERN

Martin County Library System  
110 N. Park St.  
Fairmont, MN 56031  
(507) 238-4207

STATEMENT OF CONCERN ABOUT LIBRARY RESOURCES

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

1. Material on which you are commenting:

_____ Book	_____ Audiocassette or recording
_____ Magazine	_____ Library Program
_____ Video	_____ Other

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Author/Producer \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the nature of your concern, and what brought it to your attention?

3. Please comment on the resource as a whole as well as being specific on those matters that concern you. (Use other side as needed).

4. What resource would you recommend in place of this material?

## APPENDIX D: FREEDOM TO VIEW

Martin County Library System  
110 N. Park St.  
Fairmont, MN 56031  
(507) 238-4207

### Freedom to View Statement

The **FREEDOM TO VIEW**, along with the freedom to speak, to hear, and to read, is protected by the [First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States](#). In a free society, there is no place for censorship of any medium of expression. Therefore these principles are affirmed:

1. To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

This statement was originally drafted by the Freedom to View Committee of the American Film and Video Association (formerly the Educational Film Library Association) and was adopted by the AFVA Board of Directors in February 1979. This statement was updated and approved by the AFVA Board of Directors in 1989.

**Endorsed by the ALA Council January 10, 1990**

## APPENDIX E: LABELING STATEMENT

Martin County Library System  
110 N. Park St.  
Fairmont, MN 56031  
(507) 238-4207

### Labeling Statement

Labeling is the practice of describing or designating materials by affixing a prejudicial label and/or segregating them by a prejudicial system. The American Library Association opposes these means of predisposing people's attitudes toward library materials for the following reasons:

1. Labeling is an attempt to prejudice attitudes and as such, it is a censor's tool.
2. Some find it easy and even proper, according to their ethics, to establish criteria for judging publications as objectionable. However, injustice and ignorance rather than justice and enlightenment result from such practices, and the American Library Association opposes the establishment of such criteria.
3. Libraries do not advocate the ideas found in their collections. The presence of books and other resources in a library does not indicate endorsement of their contents by the library.

A variety of private organizations promulgate rating systems and/or review materials as a means of advising either their members or the general public concerning their opinions of the contents and suitability or appropriate age for use of certain books, films, recordings, or other materials. For the library to adopt or enforce any of these private systems, to attach such ratings to library materials, to include them in bibliographic records, library catalogs, or other finding aids, or otherwise to endorse them would violate the *Library Bill of Rights*.

While some attempts have been made to adopt these systems into law, the constitutionality of such measures is extremely questionable. If such legislation is passed which applies within a library's jurisdiction, the library should seek competent legal advice concerning its applicability to library operations.

Publishers, industry groups, and distributors sometimes add ratings to material or include them as part of their packaging. Librarians should not endorse such practices. However, removing or obliterating such ratings—if placed there by or with permission of the copyright holder—could constitute expurgation, which is also unacceptable.

The American Library Association opposes efforts which aim at closing any path to knowledge. This statement, however, does not exclude the adoption of organizational schemes designed as directional aids or to facilitate access to materials.

Adopted July 13, 1951. Amended June 25, 1971; July 1, 1981; June 26, 1990, by the ALA Council.