

Great Barrington Libraries

Collection Development Policy

The Great Barrington Libraries' collections are a principle means by which the libraries fulfill their mission to serve all members of our evolving community in a welcoming manner.

The purpose of the Great Barrington Libraries Collection Development Policy is to guide librarians and to inform the public about the objectives and criteria upon which materials and resource selection and deselection are made.

The Library Director is responsible for the selection of library materials and resources. They shall delegate this responsibility to appropriately trained and skilled staff members, who will be guided by this policy, literary standards, selection tools, the interests of library patrons, and the needs of the community.

The Great Barrington Libraries' collection of books and other materials provides a wide range of literary, cultural, educational, informational, and recreational opportunities for people of all ages in a variety of formats.

The Great Barrington Libraries' objectives in building and maintaining their collection are to provide materials and resources that enrich, entertain, and serve the varied interests of the community; that provide the community with reliable information sources; and that reflect the diverse religious, racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of our community, as well as all ages and gender identities.

CRITERIA

The following criteria are used in selecting materials for the Great Barrington Libraries:

- Attention of critics and reviewers
- Comprehensiveness and depth of treatment; accuracy, authenticity, and clarity; artistic quality and/or literary style as established by reviews in standard selection sources
- Permanence, current relevance, and/or social significance of the content
- Reputation, authority and/or competence of author, creator, or publisher
- Contribution to diversity of viewpoints
- Suitability of the physical format for library use
- Local public demand, interest or need
- Accessibility of materials
- Rarity of materials

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the acquisition of resources desired by library users, patron recommendations are considered for their addition to the collection. Patrons can request that specific items be purchased by filling out a **Recommendation for Addition to the Collection** form (Appendix A)

LOCAL AUTHORS

Mason and Ramsdell Libraries support creative work by local authors. Local authors are considered to be those that reside in Southern Berkshire County for all or part of the year. Due to limited space and resources, however, not all works can be accepted. Whether published or self-published, donated, or sold, works are evaluated using the same criteria as defined above in this Collection Development Policy. The following also apply:

- Local authors may donate items for consideration for addition to the collection. The Library does not provide written acknowledgements for donated books.
- Books dropped off for consideration must be accompanied by a **Local Author Book Submission Form** (Appendix B). Missing information may result in a book not being selected.
- In some cases, Great Barrington Libraries may purchase books submitted by local authors. It is the responsibility of the person submitting the book to indicate the price on the Local Author Book Submission Form.
- Books left, mailed, or otherwise submitted to the library without a Local Author Book Submission Form will be determined to be donated. These may or may not be added to the collection. The Library is under no obligation to return books submitted for review and books not added to the collection will be donated, repurposed, or discarded.
- For books submitted with the proper form but not selected for inclusion in the collection, staff will attempt to contact those authors that have indicated they would like their book returned. However, regardless of whether there is a price listed on the form, if staff have called or emailed twice and the author does not respond within a month, the book will be considered to be donated, and it will be disposed of as above.
- GBL staff will not meet with authors to discuss their work.
- Library staff will decide how to catalog, label, and shelve accepted works.
- Once books have been added to the collection, they are subject to the same criteria for withdrawal as outlined in this Collection Development Policy. Weeded books will not be returned.
- Local authors may submit no more than 3 books in a year.

COLLECTION MAINTENANCE

To maintain the collection, the library regularly withdraws materials. Deselection serves three purposes. First, it keeps the collection useful to library patrons by withdrawing those materials that are too dated or damaged to be useful. Second, it makes it easier for patrons to use the collection by eliminating the necessity of sorting through those items that are no longer of interest or use. Third, it maintains the libraries' collections at sizes appropriate to the libraries' facilities.

Frequency of circulation, condition, community interest and needs, continued relevance, appropriateness, accuracy, and the availability of newer and more useful works are the primary considerations when making decisions to withdraw library materials. It is the responsibility of the staff to assess the need for replacing materials that are damaged, destroyed, or lost. Decommissioned materials may be donated, repurposed, or disposed of.

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

The Great Barrington Libraries recognize that some materials are controversial and that at any given time an item may offend some patrons. Selection of materials will not be made based on approval or disapproval but solely on the principles stated in this Collection Development Policy. Library materials will not be marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of their contents, and no library material will be sequestered except to protect it from injury or theft.

The Great Barrington Libraries adhere to and support the **Library Bill of Rights** (Appendix C) and the **Freedom to Read Statement** (Appendix D), which state that censorship is purely an individual matter. While anyone is free to reject books and other materials they do not approve of for themselves, an individual cannot exercise this right of censorship and restrict the freedom of other persons to read or use library materials.

While selection criteria for children, teen, and adult materials differ, any patron may access and/or borrow from the entire collection. Responsibility for supervising children's use of the library and library materials rests solely with parents or guardians. At no time will the library staff act in the role of censor for any age level, material type, or subject matter.

When a Great Barrington resident has a question or an objection concerning the presence of a book or other item in the collection, library staff will listen to the question or objection, and inform the patron of the library's Collection Development Policy. If this discussion does not satisfy the patron and the patron would like the inclusion of the item in the library's collection to be reconsidered, the patron will be given the **Request for Reconsideration of Library Material** form (Appendix E). The library will consider no more than 1 challenge to an item in 3 years and no more than 2 challenges from one person in 1 year.

These are the steps in the reconsideration process. During this process, the library material remains in the library collection.

- The form should be completed as fully as possible and returned to the Library Director.
- The Library Director will convene a Materials Evaluation Committee consisting of the manager of the department where the concern originated, the staff person responsible for selection in this area, one other member of the staff, and the Library Director. All members of the Committee will review and evaluate the material in question and how well it meets the selection criteria for collection development.
- Items will be evaluated as whole works, rather than in individual excerpts.
- The Committee will then meet to discuss and evaluate the material, and the Library Director will prepare a report summarizing the Committee's evaluation. A copy of this report will be sent to the patron who submitted the "Request for Reconsideration of Library Material" form no more than thirty (30) business days from the date of the initial written request for

reconsideration. If the evaluation will take more than 30 business days, the person who filed the challenge will be notified of the extended timeline and expected date of completion.

- If unsatisfied with the Materials Evaluation Committee's report, the patron may appeal the decision to the Great Barrington Library Board of Trustees. An appeal must be made in writing and delivered to the Library Director.
- Upon receipt of the written appeal, discussion of the appeal will be scheduled on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Library Board of Trustees. The Trustees' decision, which will be announced at the next scheduled Trustee meeting, will be final.

APPENDIX A
Recommendation for Addition to the Collection

Date _____

Title _____

Author _____

Publisher _____

Date of publication _____

ISBN _____

Format _____

Audience (children, teens, adult) _____

Subject _____

Please explain why you are recommending the above item for inclusion in the collection:

Request initiated by _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Email _____

APPENDIX B
Local Author Book Submission Form

Date of Submission: _____

Author's Legal Name: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Name of Book: _____

Short Description of Content:

Would you like your book returned if it is not selected for the collection? **YES NO**
(Please see Policy on return of books not selected.) <https://gblibraries.org/front-desk/policies/>

Publisher: _____

Date of Publication: _____

ISBN if available: _____

LCCN or PCN if available: _____

My book is a donation: **YES NO**

My book is for sale and the price is: _____

If a determination is made to purchase your book, we will call you for an invoice and W-9. If you do not respond within a month, the book will be considered a donation.

I agree to the Local Author Policy: <https://gblibraries.org/front-desk/policies/> **YES NO**

If you do not agree with the Policy, we can not accept your book.

APPENDIX C

Library Bill of Rights

From the American Library Association*

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.

VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.

Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Although the Articles of the *Library Bill of Rights* are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices. See the documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as [Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights](#).

*American Library Association. "Library Bill of Rights." *American Library Association*, www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill. Accessed 18 April 2025

APPENDIX D

Freedom to Read Statement of the American Library Association*

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that

every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. *It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.*

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.*

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. *There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.*

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. *It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.*

The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.*

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

7. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.*

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The

defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.

*“The Freedom to Read Statement.” *American Library Association*,
www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement. Accessed 18 April 2025.

APPENDIX E
Request for Reconsideration of Library Material

Date _____

Title _____

Author _____

Publisher _____

Format _____

Request initiated by _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

1. Have you read the Library's Collection Development Policy? Yes or No

https://gblibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/GB-Libraries-Collection-Development-Policy_complete-and-final.pdf

2. Have you read or viewed the item in its entirety?

3. How do you believe this item violates the Collection Development Policy? Please point to specific sections of the policy in your response.