

Materials Selection and Review Policy, Principles, and Procedures

Approved August 2003

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The Groton Public Library endeavors to maintain a balance in its materials for the community. The Library Trustees and the staff of the library are responsible for providing equal access to library materials and services for all library users. All materials are selected with the diverse needs of the community in mind. Selections are based on need, current content of the collection, recommendations, and professional review sources.

In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 78 Section 33 and the standards adopted by the American Library Association, the Trustees of the Groton Public Library have adopted the following statements regarding materials selection.

General Collection

1. The selection of books and library materials is the responsibility of the Library Director and other qualified staff members and supported by the Library Trustees.
2. Selection of books and/or other library material shall be made on the basis of their value of interest, information and enlightenment of library users. No book and/or library material shall be excluded or included solely because of the race, nationality, religion, political or social views, sexual preference, or any other identifying characteristics of the author, illustrator, publisher, or content.
3. The Library Trustees believe that censorship is a purely individual matter and declares that anyone is free to not select books or other materials that he/she does not approve of. They cannot exercise this right of censorship to restrict the freedom of others to read, listen or view.
4. Any specific concerns regarding library materials should be brought to the Library Director and ultimately the Library Trustees. A "Request for Review of Library Materials" form should be completed and returned to the Library Director. If the form is filled out and submitted, the Library Director will inform the Library Trustees of the request for review by their next scheduled meeting.
5. The Library Trustees defend the principles of the freedom to read (including listen and view) and declares that whenever censorship is involved no book and/or library material shall be removed from the library save under the orders of a court in competent jurisdiction.
6. The Library Trustees adopt and declare that it will adhere to and support the Library Bill of Rights and its interpretations including but not limited to the Freedom to Read and Freedom to View Statements adopted by the American Library Association.
7. In an interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights, entitled "Restricted Access to Library Materials" the American Library Association holds ". . . that it is parents -and only parents - who may restrict their children - and only their children - from access to library materials and services. Parents who would rather their children not have access to certain materials should so advise their children."

The standards and procedures used in the selection policy apply to gifts and donations to the library.

ADDENDUM I

RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS PROCEDURE AT THE GROTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

The choice of library materials by users is an individual matter. While a person may reject materials for themselves, they cannot exercise censorship to restrict access to the materials by others.

Recognizing that a diversity of materials may result in some requests for reconsideration, the following procedures have been developed to assure that objections or complaints are handled in an attentive and consistent manner.

Any Groton resident that has a concern regarding the selection of a specific title is welcome to discuss the interpretation of these principles with the Library Director. A formal review of any title or material is initiated only upon the submittal of a ***Request for Reconsideration*** form.

Upon submittal of this form, professional selectors on the staff will read, review, and comparatively assess the material being reconsidered. A formal written response and assessment will be forthcoming from the Director, along with a copy of the Material Selection and Review Policy and any other appropriate documentation.

Should the patron desire further edification from the governing body of the Library, the resident should then put their concerns in writing to the Board of Trustees. The Board will then study the matter relative to the individual concern and the selection principles as promulgated. If materials meet the criteria of selection, they will not be removed from the collection because of pressure from any individual or group.

Procedures have been developed for the reconsideration of materials to assure that objections or complaints are handled in an attentive and consistent manner. Once an item has been accepted for purchase, based on the Materials Selection Policy of the Library Board of Trustees, it will not be automatically removed upon request.

Sample Letter to Complainant from Director

When an individual expresses an informal or verbal concern about a library resource and is not satisfied with the subsequent discussion with library staff and/or director, they may indicate a desire to formally challenge the resource in question. At that time, the form for reconsideration of the work as well as a copy of the selection and reconsideration policy will be given directly to the complainant or sent to the concerned individual after the conversation.

Public Library Sample Letter to Person Requesting Reconsideration

Dear _____:

We appreciate your concern over the use of _____ in the library. Selecting materials that serve the needs of our community is a vital part of operating a library. The Board of Trustees takes this responsibility very seriously and has established a materials selection policy for selecting resources as well as a detailed reconsideration procedure for requesting reconsideration of particular items. I have enclosed both for your review. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss them further.

If you are still concerned after you review the material public library policies, please complete the Request for Reconsideration of Material form and return it to me. You may be assured of prompt attention to your request. The steps that will be taken are outlined in the Reconsideration procedure. At any point during this process, please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns.

Sincerely, Library Director

Request for Reconsideration Procedure

- Request for Reconsideration conveyed to concerned patron (resident of Groton) by staff member [or downloaded from website]
- Request for Reconsideration Form returned to Library Director, fully filled out
- Library Director acknowledges receipt of RfR Form in formal correspondence to patron and outlines response procedure and anticipated timeline, attaching Collection Development Policy and sharing with the Board of Library Trustees
- Library Director convenes Review Committee of appropriate Library Staff to:
 - Read, view, listen to challenged material/material of concern
 - Research and copy professional reviews on work
 - Record notes to share in meeting of Review Committee
 - Transcribe Review Committee notes for Director's next formal correspondence to patron/resident
 - Identify alternate works/titles which patron might prefer
- Library Director sends correspondence outlining Review Committee's findings and attaching excerpts/copies of professional reviews and reasons selection falls within Collection Development Guidelines
 - Patrons is advised that they may refer their concern upward to elected Board of Library Trustees
 - Work will be discussed with Review Committee findings in posted Open Meeting, with attendance offered to patron
 - Should work be found to fall within approved Collection Development Guidelines, the Board will thank patron for their concern
 - Library Director will send formal correspondence concluding process

Sample Reconsideration Committee Report

Title / Item

Author/Producer

Has every member of the committee read/viewed/listened to the material entirely? If not, why?

Resources consulted: (include policies, articles, reviews etc.)

Reconsideration committee recommends:

Justification and comments: (include majority and minority positions)

Signatures of Reconsideration Committee Members & Date

Note: This report is forwarded to...

Guiding Principles from the American Library Association

Whether during an informal complaint or a formal reconsideration of a library resource, Library Staff and Trustees respond using the guidance of the following principles:

- Libraries have diverse materials reflecting differing points of view, and a library's mission is to provide access to information to all users.
- All library users have a First Amendment right to read, view, and listen to library resources.
- The Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement of the American Library Association can be used as guiding documents.
- Any person has the right to express concerns about library resources and expect to have the objection taken seriously.
- When library resources are reconsidered, the principles of the freedom to read, listen, and view are defended rather than specific materials.
- A questioned item will be considered in its entirety, not judged solely on portions taken out of context.
- Parents or guardians have the right to guide the reading, viewing, and listening of their children but must give the same right to other parents/guardians.
- Questioned items will remain in circulation during the reconsideration process.

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(<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/oif>)