

WATONWAN COUNTY LIBRARY

MATERIALS SELECTION POLICY

Adopted April 26, 1977; revised September 20, 1994, July 16, 2013, July 19, 2022

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Watonwan County Library materials selection policy is to guide staff at the Watonwan County/St. James Library, Madelia Branch Library, Butterfield Branch Library, Darfur Branch Library, and the Lewisville Branch Library and to inform the public about the principles upon which selections are based.

The goal of materials selection at the Watonwan County Library is to provide library materials for the educational, recreational and informational needs of the people in its service area. 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, CD's, DVD's, computer software, e-media, and works by visual artists.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELECTION OF MATERIAL

The Watonwan County Library Board vests authority for selection of library materials in the Library 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 follow this materials selection policy. (A list of standard selection tools is included in appendix A.)
2. Selection of any library material is made on the basis of its perceived value or interest to those served by the Watonwan County Library.
3. 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 are selected which challenge and stimulate the user as well as those which provide the comfort of the familiar. Controversial items are included in the collections.
4. The library selects materials of varying complexity and format because it has a potential public which embraces a wide range of ages, educational backgrounds, interest, and reading skills.

5. Selection of materials should reflect the linguistic diversity of Watonwan County in proportion to the ability of members of any one language group to make use of the materials available.
6. The quantity 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.
7. As a public library, the Watonwan County Library does not purchase textbooks or other materials directly related to school curricula. Materials for the special needs of other groups (e.g. genealogy, local history) may be purchased in proportion to their usefulness to the collection as a whole.
8. Systematic withdrawal of materials no longer useful is necessary in order to maintain relevant resources. The same criteria will be used in withdrawing materials from the collection as are used in their acquisition. The decision to withdraw library material shall be based on the physical condition, use of the material as determined by the last date of loan or by number of loans in the last five years, age of material as a misinformation factor, especially in the area of sciences, and space available for shelving.

NON-PRINT MATERIAL

The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) ratings often applied to feature films and the more recent “parental advisories” attached to some music items are considered to be informational only. This information lacks any legal status. Watonwan County Library 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

Unconditional gifts, donations, and contributions to the library may be accepted by the Library Director on behalf of the Library Board. No gifts or donations conditionally made shall be accepted without the approval of the Library Board.

Generally, collections of books will not be accepted with restrictions which necessitate special housing or which prevent integration of the gift into the general library collection.

The same standards of selection will govern the acceptance of gifts as govern purchase by the library. If material is useful but not needed, it may be disposed of at the discretion of the Library Director.

AGE CONSIDERATIONS IN THE SELECTION AND USE OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

Watonwan County Library selects materials 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 to

be 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.

Watonswan County Library staff are not authorized to act in *loco parentis* and do not enforce age limitations on the use of print or non-print materials borrowed through interlibrary loan, or for use by library patrons. Any restrictions on the use of library materials by a minor is 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.

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

The Library Board of the Watonswan County Library 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 Library Board from time to time and appended to this selection policy. Please see Appendix C and D 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:

1. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information and enlightenment of all people in the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background or views of those contributing to their creation.
2. 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.
3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background or views.
6. 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.
7. 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.

(Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights adopted by the American Library Association may be obtained from the Watonwan County Library office.)

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 Watonwan County Library materials will first be invited to discuss his or her concern with the Director or permanent library staff member. If this informal conversation does not satisfy the concerned user, or if the complainant wishes to bypass this step, the formal procedures outlined below can be instituted.

Procedure for reconsideration of library materials:

1. The library user will request the form “Statement of Concern About Library Materials” from a public service staff member. (Appendix B)
2. The library user must fill out the form completely, sign it, and return it along with the library materials in question to the Director or to a permanent library staff member.
3. The 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 discuss the matter with the Library Board, the matter will be included on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled Board Meeting. Action taken by the Board will be final.
5. The Watonwan County Library staff and board will only accept one challenge by an individual per calendar year.

CONCLUSION

The Library Board realizes that any library which 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’s 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 materials shall not mean its removal from the library.

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 which are considered essential, useful and within the scope of this selection policy.

APPENDIX A: SELECTION TOOLS

In selecting materials, Watonwan County Library 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

Newspapers, regional reviews, magazine reviews

Video Librarian

Specialized bibliographies

Standard catalogs e.g. Children's Catalog, Fiction Catalog, Public Library Core Collection: Nonfiction, Middle and Junior High School Catalog, Senior High Catalog.

In addition, best seller lists and suggestions from member libraries and members of the public are considered.

APPENDIX B

WATONWAN COUNTY LIBRARY
125 5TH ST. SOUTH
ST. JAMES, MN 56081
(507)375-1278

STATEMENT OF CONCERN ABOUT LIBRARY MATERIALS

Date_____

Your name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____ Phone #_____

Library card number _____

1. Materials on which you are commenting:

_____ Book _____ Audio recording

_____ Magazine _____ Content of Library Program

_____ Film _____ Other

Title_____

Author/Producer_____

2. What brought this title to your attention?
3. Have you read/viewed/listened to this in its entirety?
4. Please comment on the material as a whole as well as being specific on those matters which concern you. (Use other side if needed)
Comment:

APPENDIX C

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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 D

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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.