

Putnam Public Library

Collection Development and Maintenance Policy

Purpose/Scope of Collection

The Putnam Public Library strives to serve the needs of the community by providing free access to a diversity of ideas, information and experiences with the goal of promoting the love of reading, the joy of lifelong learning and engagement with the arts, sciences and humanities. Library materials should be provided for the interest, information and enlightenment of all residents, and represent a wide range of varied and diverging viewpoints in the collection as a whole. It is very important that the public library is a place for voluntary inquiry, the dissemination of information and ideas, and promotion of free expression and free access to ideas by residents. All library materials are evaluated and made accessible in accordance with the protections against discrimination set forth in section 46a-64 of the CT General Statutes. Special emphasis is placed on supporting students at all academic levels and on stimulating young children's interests and appreciation for reading and learning. Selection of materials is based on the individual merit of the work, relation to the collection, and fulfillment of patron needs.

The Putnam Public Library adheres to the principles of intellectual freedom adopted by the American Library Association as expressed in its *Library Bill of Rights*, *The Freedom to Read Statement*, and *Freedom to View* statements.

CT Public Act No. 23-101 No principal public library shall be eligible to receive a state grant if such principal public library does not maintain and adheres to collection development, collection management and collection reconsideration policies that have been approved by the governing body of such library. Such collection reconsideration policy shall offer residents a clear process to request a reconsideration of library materials. In the instance of a material challenge, these policies shall govern. The completion of the Request for Reconsideration form does not guarantee either accession to the collection or removal from the collection but does ensure the attention of library staff to user opinion, interests and concerns. The library limits consideration of requests to reconsider materials, displays or programs to residents of Putnam. The Library Material and Reconsideration Policy is available on the library website.

The library provides access to information in a wide variety of print and non-print formats. The library serves a diverse community and must include materials that represent a broad range of viewpoints. Presently the library collects books, newspapers, magazines, DVDs, audio books on CD, downloadable books/audiobooks/magazines, digital collections/databases and STEAM kits. The library's collection is intended to meet the educational, cultural, informational and recreational needs of all ages and to reflect the diversity of the population it serves.

Responsibility of Selecting Library Materials

Responsibility for the selection of library materials falls under the jurisdiction of the Library Director, who operates within the framework of the policies determined by the Library Board. Responsibility for materials selection may also be delegated by the Library Director to staff members who are qualified for this activity by reason of training and/or experience. Librarians are professionally trained to curate and develop a collection that provides access to the widest array of library and educational materials. Suggestions for purchase from the public are welcome and will be given serious consideration within the limits of these policies.

Selection Criteria

The selection of books and other library materials, whether acquired by purchase or gift, will be based on the following criteria:

- Reputation and significance of an author or artist
- Authoritativeness and accuracy
- Literary style or artistic excellence
- Relevance to present or anticipated needs and interest of the community
- Permanent value as a resource material
- Timeliness, reflecting new areas of knowledge or changing conditions of the contemporary scene
- Contribution of the material toward strengthening the existing collection and/or expanding its scope
- Value of the material based on literary or scholarly excellence without regard to demand
- Local interest
- Budgetary limitations

Reviews in professional journals are a primary source for materials selection. Standard bibliographies and booklists by recognized authorities in specific subject areas also will be used. Library staff reviews library and educational material within a public library using professionally accepted standards: material relevance, physical condition, availability of duplicates, availability of age appropriate or grade-level material and continued demand of material.

Digital items are those materials created in a digital format. They are distinct from analog items that are subsequently digitized, such as paper manuscripts or photographs. In order to accept born digital items, the Library addresses:

1. Copyright and licensing
2. Redaction of personally identifiable information
3. Any restrictions on use or circulation
4. Maintenance and evolution of accepted formats

Gifts/Donations

The library accepts gifts of materials without commitment as to final disposition. In determining whether a gift item is to be added to the collection, the same standards are applied as those outlined above for the selection of items for purchase. The library assumes unconditional ownership of all materials donated. Gift materials will not be accepted with restrictions or conditions that necessitate special housing, processing or treatment. The library cannot give a dollar value for gifts of materials, but it will provide the donor, upon request, with a statement verifying the number and type of materials donated.

Digital Collections/Databases

Digital resources and databases refer to those materials or services that require a computer or another device for access including, but not limited to, numerical, graphical and textual files, electronic journals, ebooks, digital media, bibliographic or full-text databases and Internet resources. Some of these resources, such as ebooks/eaudiobooks picked directly by the staff will observe the same collection policies as print materials.

Resources provided by the Connecticut State Library as well as vendors that provide base collections

of their own for their resources will have items selected by the organization's individual collection development policies. These collections are subject to vendors and publisher collection development policies and licenses. Issues concerning technology, access, maintenance, vendor support as well as licensing terms are additionally considered for resources.

Controversial Materials

The library recognizes that some materials may not be considered appropriate by all patrons. Selections will not be made based upon anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the merits of the work in relation to the building of the collection and to serving the interests of the overall library patron community.

Responsibility for the reading, listening and viewing habits of children rests with their parents or legal guardians. The library maintains several age-appropriate collections for children and teens. Selection of adult material will not be inhibited by the possibility that books may inadvertently come into the possession of children. The removal, exclusion or censoring of any book on the sole basis that an individual finds such book offensive is prohibited.

Library materials will not be marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of the contents, and no catalogued book or other item will be removed from the open shelves except for the express purpose of protecting it from damage or theft.

The decision by an author, publisher or other content creator to withdraw their work from the market and stop selling or publishing it will not be considered sufficient reason alone for the library to withdraw it from the collection.

Intellectual Freedom and Censorship

The library recognizes that not all users will greet all materials with the same degree of enthusiasm and regard. Therefore, some materials selected for the collections may seem controversial and even distasteful to some library users. It is the right of the individual not to read, view or hear materials that the individual considers objectionable. It is never the right of any library user or users to deny access to library materials to others. The freedom to choose from a broad range of informational and artistic materials will not be abridged. When evaluating library materials the Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read, and Freedom to View statements from the American Library Association are used as guiding documents.

Section 6. Weeding

Weeding is a term used by libraries to describe the removal of materials from their collections. An up-to-date, appealing and reliable collection can be maintained only by purchasing, retaining, and replacing useful materials. Items that are in poor condition, contain outdated or inaccurate information, no longer in demand or of little historical significance will be removed on a systematic and continuous basis to keep the collection vital and inviting. Standard titles of lasting value and materials of special local interest will not be discarded. Weeded materials may be sold, donated or disposed of however the library deems appropriate.

This policy is on the library website at putnamlibrary.org

Approved by the PPL Board of Directors on November 24, 2008

Approved by the PPL Board of Trustees on November 27, 2017

Approved by the PPL Board of Trustees on October 28, 2019

Approved by the PPL Board of Trustees on June 27, 2022

Approved by the PPL Board of Trustees on September 25, 2023

Approved by the PPL Board of Trustees on September 22, 2025

The Freedom to Read Statement

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 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 guarantee 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 January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council