

## **Harlan Community Library**

### **Materials Selection Policy**

*(Updated by the library board of trustees on 02/13/2023)*

#### Objectives

The purpose of the Harlan Community Library is to provide all individuals in the community with carefully selected books and other materials to aid the individual in the pursuit of education, information, research, pleasure, and the creative use of leisure time. Because of the volume of publishing, as well as the limitations of budget and space, the library must have a selection policy with which to meet community interests and needs.

The materials selection/collection development policy is used by the library staff in the selection of materials and also serves to acquaint the general public with the principles of selection. The Library Bill of Rights and The Freedom to Read Statement have been endorsed by the Harlan Community Library Board of Trustees and are integral parts of the policy.

#### Responsibility for Selection

Ultimate responsibility for good selection rests with the Director, or designee, who will operate within the framework of policies determined by the Board of Trustees. Selection guides used include the ALA Booklist, Library Journal, New York Times Book Review, and the reviews in current magazines and newspapers. The library encourages suggestions for purchase from the general public and will attempt to obtain these materials either by purchase or through interlibrary loan.

#### General Principles

As guidelines for materials selection, the Harlan Community Library uses the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement which have been adopted by the Council of the American Library Association. One or more of the following standards will be applied in selecting the material best suited for the Harlan Community Library:

1. Importance of subject matter to collection
2. Permanent or timely value
3. Purpose or intent of the book
4. Historical value
5. Scarcity of material on the subject
6. Reputation and significance of author
7. Reputation and significance of the illustrator
8. Popular appeal
9. Reputation and professional standing of publisher
10. Price

Selection must meet not just the needs of those who use the library regularly, but also anticipate the needs of non-users. The library collection should contain opposing views on controversial topics of interest and should represent an honest presentation of both sides of public questions.

#### Selection of Specific Types of Materials

- **Adult Fiction**

The selection of fiction involves choosing from a large variety of types of novels to meet the educational and recreational needs of the community. The Harlan Community Library attempts to satisfy a public who vary greatly in education, interests, taste and reading ability. The basic collection includes classic and historical novels as well as the novels of outstanding contemporary writers. This type of novel is purchased without reference to demand. Fiction of substance will be retained over a long period of time whether or not it is in frequent demand. The public's desire for current fiction requires that a large

percentage of the fiction purchased be new publications. Because of the high demand, best sellers, mysteries, westerns, science fiction and romances are purchased even though their literary quality may not meet the library's general standards.

- **Adult Non-Fiction**

While most non-fiction materials are selected for their utility, others are acquired for their capacity to enrich and entertain. Balance is a consideration and controversial materials are selected covering various aspects of both sides of an issue if available. Medical and law materials are selected to be suitable for the layperson.

- **Youth/Young Adult Materials**

The Library provides a browsing collection, in various formats, of high-interest, high demand fiction and non-fiction materials. Since these readers vary widely in maturity, ability and background, the materials selected vary to reflect a range of subjects and reading levels.

The library's objective in selecting books for young people is to make available a collection that meets the recreational, informational, and cultural needs of young people from infancy through high school. The selection of books for young people is based on elements of creativeness, clarity and style of writing, excellence of illustrations, harmony between text and illustrations, outstanding design and format, and appropriateness of subject. The contribution of the book to the balance of the total collection is also considered.

To satisfy the needs of children and young people, uses of adult library materials is not restricted by staff according to the patron's age. Limitation is considered a parental responsibility and not a function of the library.

- **Reference**

The Reference collection includes timely, accurate and useful information in many formats in selected areas of interest to community residents and businesses. The library strives to provide a comprehensive local genealogical collection. Inclusion in the Reference Collection is determined by factors such as cost, complexity, format, authoritativeness, frequency of use and indexing.

- **Newspapers**

The library makes available the Harlan News Advertiser, Harlan Tribune, Des Moines Register and the Omaha World Herald.

- **Periodicals**

Periodicals are purchased or accepted as gifts for one or more of the following reasons: to keep the library's collection up-to date with current thinking in various fields; to provide material not available in books; to supplement the book collection; to serve the staff as book selection aids and professional reading. Periodicals are retained in the collection according to their value for reference information and available space. Gifts of periodical subscriptions are accepted, but are not necessarily retained in the library files, nor does the library assume responsibility for replacing missing issues or renewing such subscriptions when they expire.

- **Audio-Video and Electronic Resources**

The library provides audio-visual and electronic materials/access to meet the entertainment and informational needs of the community. Physical or digital formats may be added to the collection as they become generally available and public demand warrants.

- **Rare Books**  
No attempt shall be made by the library to acquire single titles or collections of rare books, manuscripts, or private papers.
- **Local History**  
The library will attempt to collect, organize, and make available all items of any type which may be of interest in the future and may be significant to the history of the community.

#### Donations as Gifts and Memorials

The Harlan Community Library welcomes donations as outright gifts or memorials. Over the years many generous donations from individuals, clubs and civic organizations have helped the library bring new services to Harlan and to improve existing ones. The library reserves the right to refuse and discard gifts it feels are inappropriate or due to content or physical condition. Items donated to the Harlan Community Library are covered specifically by the Gifts and Memorials Policy.

#### Duplication

The duplication of items will be held to a minimum at all times. It is expected that interlibrary loan and digital materials will help meet the needs of our patrons.

#### Weeding

The library's collection should be evaluated on a continuing basis for retention, replacement, or withdrawal in order to improve the accessibility of the remaining materials, enhance the appearance of the collection and help improve the overall circulation and turnover rates of materials. The library's Collection Maintenance Policy covers all aspects of weeding.

#### Controversial Materials

Because of the rich diversity of human experience and opinion, it is inevitable that some materials in the library's collections will be objectionable to some people in the community. However, the library belongs to the whole community, to the minority as well as the majority. It has a responsibility to serve all members of the community. A great effort is made to provide a balanced collection. The library attempts to represent all sides of an issue and does not take an official stand on any public question. The function of the library is to provide information, not to advocate specific points of view.

#### Procedure for Handling Materials Related Complaints or Challenges

The procedure below shall apply to all complaints about materials represented in the collection or not represented in the collection. The Board of Trustees recommends this procedure so that the complainant can be assured that his complaint receives fair hearing.

All complaints will be directed to the library director or designee. The Board of Trustees supports the Director in his/her exercise of the selection responsibility. It will hear complaints only if the complainant feels that the policy statement does not support the Director's decision, and then only if they feel it necessary to study the decision more closely.

#### Instructions to the Staff

Should a patron question the placement of any material in our collection or question why we have haven't placed certain material in the collection, you are asked to comply with the following procedure:

1. **DO NOT** try to defend the item or the action. React in a manner which indicates your understanding of this person's concern (even though you may disagree with the complaint). The responsibility for selection of materials for the library has been vested in the Director. Let him/her provide for its defense.
2. Provide the patron with a copy of the form, Request for Reconsideration of Material. Ask that it be completed and signed. Inform the patron that the complaint will be given to the Director or designee and that the patron will receive a response from the Director or designee within one week.

### Instructions to the Director

1. Upon receipt of the Request for Reconsideration of Material, examine the complaint, the material in question, the circumstances involved in the complaint, and submit to the patron no later than one week after receipt, a response based on your reasons for the selection of the material, the policies of the library, etc.
2. Provide complainant with a copy of the library's selection policy. Inform patron of his/her right to an additional hearing in front of a committee of board members should he/she feel that the response of the Director is not supported by the policy statement or is otherwise unsatisfactory.
3. Inform board president of the complaint, complainant's dissatisfaction with the procedures thus far, and board president's obligation to appoint committee (Personnel and Collection Committee) to review complaint, conduct hearing with complainant, and make recommendations to board.
4. Schedule committee hearing and inform complainant of right to attend committee hearing.
5. Attend and assist board and committee with all stages of the complaint process.

### Instructions to the Board of Trustees

Should the patron feel that the Director's response is not supported by the Materials Selection Policy or is otherwise unsatisfied with the prior action of the Director, it is reasoned that either the policy statement or the Director's interpretation of it are in question; therefore, it becomes the board's obligation to review the matter.

1. Upon receipt of a request for additional review or a hearing from the complainant and upon being informed by the Director of entire situation, the board president shall appoint a committee to review the complaint.
2. The Board president, as an ex officio member of the complaint selection committee, shall conduct the committee meeting as soon as possible. The committee shall hear the complainant in an informal hearing. Upon hearing from the complainant, the committee shall decide upon a recommendation to the board as a whole.
3. If the board is satisfied with recommendation of committee, it shall adopt by formal vote the recommendation of the committee and direct the Director to implement said recommendation.
4. If the board is for any reason dissatisfied with recommendation of the committee and desires to hear the complaint, the Director is to make arrangements with the complainant to be present for another hearing in front of the entire board. The board will direct the Director concerning its decision after hearing the complaint. Above all the board has as its concern the fairness of such a hearing, so as to protect the rights of all persons involved.

Should it be necessary, the board can ask the Director to inform the Intellectual Freedom Committee of ILA, the Intellectual Freedom Committee of ALA, the state librarian, and other concerned persons or groups of the situation, requesting either their opinion, recommendations, or involvement.