Materials Selection Policy

Principles

Certain principles shape the nature and use of the Library collection. These include the principle that the collection contains original, critical, and unorthodox ideas necessary for the functioning of a democratic society and therefore public opinion is not the sole guidance for the selection of material. It is the library’s position that society is at a greater risk through the suppression or censorship of information and ideas than from their free and open discussion.

The principle of free and open use for all—Individual choice is paramount and protected. Materials are arranged in a way to facilitate access to the information. They are not marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of contents. No restriction is placed on their use except for the purpose of protecting them from injury or theft.

The principle that the collection covers interests and views of all ages—Selection of materials for adults is not restricted by the possibility that children or adolescents may obtain materials some consider inappropriate. The New Berlin Public Library supports the American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read, and the Freedom to View Statements which reaffirms these principles. (See LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS—Appendix A; the FREEDOM TO READ—Appendix B; the FREEDOM TO VIEWS STATEMENTS—Appendix C.)

Note: “Materials” has the broadest possible meaning. It includes but is not limited to print, audiovisual, and electronic formats.

Selection, Responsibility and Criteria

Selection—Selection refers to the decision to retain as well as to add to the collection. It is based upon awareness of the diverse needs and interests of the individuals in this community, balanced against evaluation of material and knowledge of the collection’s strengths and weaknesses. The selection policy is also shaped by the budget, space considerations and accessibility of alternative information sources, such as the Bridges Library System in which the New Berlin Public Library is a participant.

Responsibility—The Library Board has the legal authority to establish and amend policy. The ultimate responsibility for selection of materials rests with the Library Director who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Library Board.
This responsibility is shared by other members of the professional staff, however, because the Director must be able to answer to the Library Board and the public for actual selections made by the staff, he/she has the authority to reject or select any item contrary to the recommendations of the staff.

Criteria—Materials are measured by objective guidelines. The entire work rather than individual parts is evaluated. It is the overall contribution of the work that is critical for acceptance or rejection. No single criterion can be applied to all materials. All acquisitions, whether purchased or donated (see GIFT POLICY), are considered in terms of one or more of the following criteria:

- Contemporary significance, permanent value, or popular interest
- Accuracy and reliability
- Public recognition of author, editor, illustrator, film maker, or source vis a vis media, critic, etc.
- Relation to existing collection
- Price and availability
- Format, durability and ease of use
- Scarcity of information on subject
- New Berlin author or local references

One exception to the selection policy is digital materials which are provided through a state or system-wide buying pool to which the New Berlin Public Library contributes funds. These materials include audio, video, and electronic books, and are selected through the Wisconsin Public Library Consortium, which includes representatives from the Bridges Library System. The New Berlin Public Library has no direct control over this selection other than to recommend titles. Relevant selection committee and collection development policies are set through the appropriate organizations.

Addition or Reconsideration of Library Materials

The public has a right to request additions to the collection and to question material currently in the collection.

Reconsideration of Materials

The New Berlin Public Library recognizes that many materials are controversial and that any given item may offend some clients. Selection of materials will not be made on the basis of anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the basis of the principles stated in this collection 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.

Responsibility for what children read or view rests with their parents or legal guardians. Selection of library material will not be inhibited by the possibility that these items may come into possession of children.

Customers requesting that material be withdrawn from the collection must complete a “Material Selection Inquiry.” The inquiry will be reviewed by the staff and the Director, and will be placed on the agenda of the next regular meeting of the New Berlin Public Library Board of Trustees. Their decision will be final.

During the process of reconsideration, questioned materials remain in the active collection until an official decision is made.

(MATERIAL SELECTION INQUIRY form—Appendix D)

**Collection Development Objective**

*Definition of Collection Levels*—The following terms are used to define both the extent of the existing collection in given subject areas (collection density) and the extent of current collection activity in the area (collection intensity).

- **BASIC**—A small number of current titles indicative of a specific area of knowledge.
- **STANDARD**—A selective group of standard titles emphasizing current materials which form the basis of a collection in specific areas of knowledge.
- **REPRESENTATIVE**—A balanced collection, at a size slightly above the standard that covers most aspects of a subject field without going into great depth.
- **CLASSIC**—Items of recognized and permanent value and/or enduring interesting and appeal; and/or definitive, reliable, authoritative.
- **POPULAR**—Items geared to the understanding and taste of the general public, requiring no special knowledge or training to appreciate, as opposed to scholarly works for use by advanced researchers.
- **MASTER**—A work of immense authority or greatness in the field.
- **CORE**—The most essential materials available in a subject area.
- **ACCEPTED**—Those materials which are considered to be the standard works in a general or specific subject area.
Materials are selected with the primary purpose of being useful to the general public. The Library is a supplementary source for student use and generally does not collect textbooks or highly technical and scholarly works.

This selection process relies upon the expertise and knowledge of the professional staff. Selection of specific items is based on knowledge of the existing collection, budgetary constraints, and community needs and interests. The process involves checking reviews in professional journals and popular book review sources. Judgments are based on the following:

A. BOOKS

Non-Fiction

The non-fiction collection emphasizes timely, accurate, and useful informational materials to support individual, business, government and community interests. It also emphasizes materials that are current and high-demand. Materials are available for all ages and reading levels and in a variety of formats.

Materials are selected to represent a continuum of opinions and viewpoints when available. Titles with continued value and those of current, accepted authority are part of the library collection. Textbooks are included when they are the only source available on the subject, when useful to those doing independent study, or when they give an overview of a subject, but are not added in support of a specific curriculum. As a new field emerges, the library attempts to respond with timely additions.

When choices exist, selection is based on readability, clarity and appeal. Requests from library users are given high priority. When demand is high, multiple copies may be purchased, subject to budget limitations.

The criteria for selection of non-fiction is as follows: (not listed in priority order)

1. Qualification of the author in the subject
2. Scope and authority of subject matter
3. Quality of writing (style, readability)
4. Appeal
5. Date of publication
6. Reputation of publisher
7. Organization of content (indices, bibliographies, etc)
8. Relationship to the existing collection
9. Physical qualities (binding, print size, illustrations, margins)
10. Price
Fiction

The collection focuses on twentieth and twenty-first century literature including classic and standard titles, diverse genres and special interests. There is not a single standard for inclusion in the fiction collection. Each work is evaluated in comparison with other fiction works or authors of similar type. Because of the large volume of fiction published, it is possible to purchase only a representative selection with emphasis on major authors and the most popular examples of a genre. User requests from materials of this type influence the addition of additional copies.

Genre fiction such as mysteries, romances, horror, thrillers, science fiction, fantasy, and western are purchased at a standard level. An effort is made to ensure access to a variety of titles on school summer reading lists.

Hardcover copies are preferred to paperback because of durability. However, the paperback fiction continues to expand because of public preference and because many titles are available only in this format.

The criteria for the selection of fiction include (not listed in priority order):

1. Style
2. Appeal (popular and limited
3. Characterization (constructive, realistic portrayal of characters)
4. Literary merit
5. Relationship to the collection
6. Reputation of the publisher
7. Price

B. REFERENCE COLLECTION

Many reference standards such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, directories, bibliographies, etc., are available online and via proprietary electronic databases to which the Library subscribes. Print reference materials are included within the non-fiction collection for circulation. Inclusion among these resources is determined by factors such as cost, complexity, format, authoritativeness, and frequency of use. Unique local historical titles may be held in the Reference Collection.
ELECTRONIC DATABASES

Electronic databases, while not developed as part of the collection, are an integral part of the informational services the library provides, and as such, funds are allocated for their use. These databases are notable for their timeliness and efficiency in locating information.

The Library subscribes to a core of electronic databases through the Bridges Library System. Reference materials are selected with the goal of satisfying the majority of the information needs of the community. Questions which fall beyond the limits of the New Berlin Public Library’s collection are referred to sources such as Reflist, the Bridges Library System’s listserv for reference librarians.

The criteria for selecting reference materials: (not listed in priority order)

1. Purpose
2. Authority
3. Scope
4. Timeliness
5. Format (arrangement, indexing, organization, consistency)
6. Suitability

C. OTHER PRINT MATERIALS

MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS

Periodicals are serials that are issued at stated intervals, generally more frequently than annually, and which contain separate articles, stories, and other writings. Periodicals are an important source of ideas and topics before such information is available in book form. In addition, they provide recreational, how-to, and consumer information. Indexing is an important factor in selecting periodicals. While periodicals are originally used for their current value, they become a reference source when indexed. Periodicals represent an ongoing commitment in terms of subscription costs, storage, and binding.

In general, single subscriptions of a title are maintained. Selected titles are retained for one year in hard copy. Many additional periodical titles are available through the BadgerLink statewide network or through Flipster, the periodical database we purchase cooperatively through Bridges Library System. BadgerLink and Flipster greatly enlarge the amount and scope of information available to our customers.

Informational, recreational, and cultural periodicals for children ages 4-12 are purchased for the juvenile collection and are reviewed yearly for additions and deletions.
The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, the Waukesha Freeman, and Waukesha County Now are the priority purchases of newspapers followed by the Wall Street Journal and The New York Times. Copies of newspapers are held for a maximum of two months.

COLLECTIONS FOR SPECIAL CLIENTELE

While the New Berlin Public Library has defined its clients as the residents of New Berlin and Waukesha and Jefferson Counties, the general statements in the collection development plan apply to adult readers of English. Children and young adults are important users of the library and have collections tailored to their needs as enumerated below. The Library will purchase foreign language materials.

YOUTH SERVICES COLLECTION

Materials in the Youth Services collection are selected in response to the needs and interests of young people, recognizing their diverse tastes, backgrounds, abilities and potentials.

In choosing materials for children, age is a determining selection principal. Materials are evaluated for reading level and treatment of the subject for the age of the intended audience.

For very young children, sturdy “board books” with bright, clear illustrations are selected. When picture books for preschoolers are considered, aesthetics (illustration, format) and developmental significance (language, vocabulary, theme) are evaluated. Books for beginning readers are included. For more fluent readers, motivational and appealing material is selected. Timeliness and accuracy are additional criteria for non-fiction materials. The collection supplements that of school media centers. In addition, Youth Services also provides materials for parents, supplemental resources for Home School families, and resources for teachers. Though much of the material is for adults, it is selected by Youth Services staff. For convenience it is shelved in the Youth Services area. Textbooks are not purchased unless they contain better subject coverage than that of other books. The resources for the entire library are available to children who wish to go beyond the Youth Services collection.

CHILDREN’S AUDIOVISUAL

Audiovisual materials are selected based on the same criteria as books.

MAGAZINES

Magazines are selected for their recreational and informational content and often reflect popular trends. They circulate and back issues are kept one year.
NEWBERY AND CALDECOTT AWARD BOOKS

Copies of Newbery and Caldecott Award books are purchased.

YOUNG ADULT MATERIALS

The Library makes available materials in a variety of formats that are aimed at addressing the needs and concerns of young adult users. In general, Young Adult Services is geared to the Middle School and High School age, overlapping somewhat with Youth Services at one end of the range and those for adults at the other. There is, however, a wide range of users for these materials and this factor is given consideration when developing this collection.

Needs of young adults differ in kind and intensity from needs of adult users. These users often look to the library for materials and resources to meet academic demands. Young adult materials are selected from the same criteria used in selection of adult materials, but with the focus of the experience, maturity and interests of young people.

FICTION

The themes in young adult fiction generally center on the struggle to develop an identity and set of values and to find a place in the larger community. The young adult fiction collection consists of material written for and/or appealing to this particular age group regardless of genre. Every effort is made to provide teenagers with fiction that deals with their concerns in open, honest ways, and which meets their recreational and academic reading needs. Issues are explored in contemporary young adult novels and in various genre fiction.

NON-FICTION

Teenagers read non-fiction extensively to gain information on topics of concern to them, such as personal appearance, sex education, careers/colleges, crisis and coping information, hobbies, music, school assignments, etc. Young adult non-fiction is selected with the same criteria as the Adult Non-Fiction collection. Titles are also chosen for their timeliness and appeal. The staff makes every effort to purchase books which are clearly written and appealing to this age range.

REFERENCE

The general reference collections include materials for Young Adults. The resources of the entire library are available to users from this age group.
AUDIOVISUAL

Audiovisual materials are selected for Young Adults based on the same criteria as books.

MAGAZINES

Magazines are selected for their recreational and informational content and often reflect popular trends. They circulate and back issues are kept one year.

AUDIOVISUAL COLLECTION

The selection of non-print material will follow the general guidelines outlined. These materials will be selected for public library use and are not purchased for the classroom or for teacher training; this is the responsibility of the schools.

In addition to the general criteria used as guides in selection and maintenance, attention is paid to technical quality, technique, authenticity, effectiveness of presentation, usefulness, durability, artistic merit and artistic reputation of the artist.

RECORDINGS

Currently, a balanced collection of recordings on compact disc is provided to the customers, both adult and children, of the New Berlin Public Library. New recordings in the areas of classical, folk, prose, drama, country and western, rock, jazz, musical comedy, soundtracks, and documentary recordings are purchased based on:

1. The need for materials as determined by public requests and present holding
2. Quality of interpretation and technique
3. Importance of the artist
4. Technical quality of the recording
5. Price

In order to remain responsive to public need, the Library will evaluate new developments in the field of audiovisual formats for possible inclusion in the Library’s collection.

DVDs/BLU-RAY

DVDs and Blu-Ray DVDs are acquired on a selective basis according to demand

- Entertainment DVDs: Entertainment DVDs will be purchased if the film has won a major award (Academy Award, etc.) or if the film is
based on a book. Popular films and TV shows may also be purchased.

- Non-Fiction: Travel, how-to, exercise, self-help, ballets, etc. will be selected for this collection based on the collection policies for book materials.
- Children’s DVDs: Children’s DVDs use the same criteria for selection as books, reference, and other print material.

BOOKS ON CD

Audiobooks are purchased using the same collection policy as books, reference and other print material. The Library prefers unabridged versions. Abridged versions are generally purchased only if no unabridged version is available or for popular titles of short interest.

A note on formats: new formats are considered for the collection when, by industry report or from local requests, a significant portion of the community has the necessary technology to make use of the format. Availability of items in the format, cost per item, and the Library’s ability to acquire and handle the items will also be considered when deciding to add new formats. Similar considerations will influence the decision to delete a format from the Library’s collection.

Gift Policy

Gift materials are added to the library collection on the same basis as that governing original material selection.

Donations of new titles, books on special subjects, or collections of unique value and/or great interest which meet the criteria are processed.

Used books in good condition are evaluated for potential use as duplicates, replacements, or new titles. If they warrant the expense of processing, they are added to the collection.

Gift materials in good condition but not needed may be donated to the Friends of the New Berlin Public Library, Inc., the proceeds of which are used to benefit the Library.

The Library cannot be responsible for the appraisal of gifts for income tax or any other purposes.

No conditions may be imposed to any gift after its acceptance by the Library.