

For Immediate Release – 3/28/2023

Waunakee Public Library

Official Statement Regarding Misinformation About Children's Collection

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The Waunakee Public Library is committed to serve community members with materials, technologies, facilities, and programming that all can enjoy. We provide the same quality of service to all regardless of age, race, gender, religion, ethnicity, educational background, physical limitations, or any other criteria.

Patrons are served by a team of 30 dedicated employees, including both full- and part-timers. They are guided by policies set forth by the Library Board of Directors and led by Library Director Erick Plumb and highly credentialed and experienced department managers.

Every member of the library staff team takes their job seriously and personally. For them the work is more than a job, but a passionate form of service to deliver the sacred free-to-all gift of accessible information and knowledge.

Because of this, the Waunakee Public Library is concerned and disappointed about recent misrepresentations of its policies and staff, as put forth by contributors to various local social media/blog outlets. Specifically, assertions have been made that the library is "grooming children", and that sexually explicit materials are currently available in the Library's children's section. Further, the claim was made, and then repeated by others, that the library's Youth Services Manager said the words "the library isn't meant to be a safe space for all". The Waunakee Public Library categorically denies these claims.

To offer greater factual context, in June 2022 the library had a display featuring LGBTQ pride literature in conjunction with the Village of Waunakee's recognition of Pride Month. A patron objected to the display contents, correctly noting that one book in particular was mistakenly displayed in the incorrect location. That item was relocated immediately to the proper display and the patron was thanked for bringing it to our attention. The library's Youth Services Manager followed up with a 30+ minute phone conversation with that patron. After the shelving error was acknowledged, the patron also expressed objection to the library displaying any items featuring LGBTQ themes or topics. The librarian correctly stated that the library cannot guarantee that patrons would not find materials on library shelves that they may find

personally objectionable, regardless of location or intended audience. The librarian further explained that the library is obligated to build a collection that represents all who make up our community. At no time did the Youth Services Manager imply that the library was somehow not a safe space for children and people of all ages and backgrounds. What the patron chose to do with their version of the conversation is unknown, however a blog post was written by an anonymous author months after the original phone conversation had taken place.

As adopted by the Library Board, our staff diligently follow the Materials Selection & Collection Development Policy. The full policy is attached to this release.

According to the policy, the Waunakee Public Library "...supports the individual's right to have access to ideas and information representing all points of view. The Board of Trustees of the Waunakee Public Library has adopted the American Library Association's 'Library Bill Of Rights'..."

A copy of the ALA's Library Bill of Rights is also attached to this release. In particular, the Bill reads (**emphasis added**):

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

*I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. **Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.***

*II. 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.***

The Waunakee Public Library's Materials Selection & Collection Development Policy echoes the ALA's Bill of Right by stating the library, "...recognizes the choice of library materials by library users is an individual matter, and some materials may be deemed inappropriate or offensive by patrons. While an individual may reject materials for [themselves], [they] cannot exercise censorship to restrict access to the materials by others."

The policy goes on to explain the responsibility of parents or legal guardians in regards to their child's reading choices. The policy states, "Responsibility for the reading of children rests with their parents or legal guardians. At no time will the library staff act *in loco parentis*. Selection of library materials will not be inhibited by the possibility that materials may come into the possession of children."

Library staff remain diligent in the proper placement of materials. Items are shelved in age-appropriate collections as determined by the publishers and producers of those materials. The Waunakee Public Library stands by selections as per the Library's Collection Development & Materials Selection Policy. Should any item be found to be placed incorrectly for any reason, quick action is taken to relocate the item to the proper location, as was done in the initial interaction in June 2022.

Library staff, and the Youth Services Manager in particular, have been unfairly and inappropriately criticized as a result of the misinformation that has been shared. Phone calls and emails, many of which have been anonymous, have been intentionally hurtful, with several questioning if our staff are "safe" to be around children.

Fortunately and thankfully, many in the Waunakee community have communicated their support to the library staff. Those who have come to know the library team are quick to appreciate their caring hearts and minds. These dedicated public servants will continue to do what they do best... show great dedication to the Waunakee community and all who patronize your public library.

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MATERIALS SELECTION & COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Introduction

The Board of Trustees of the Waunakee Public Library has adopted the following materials selection policy to guide librarians and to inform the public of the principles upon which the selections are made.

The Mission Statement of the Waunakee Public Library guides the selection of materials as it does the development of services and the allocation of resources.

The mission of the Waunakee Public Library is to make high-interest, high-demand materials readily available, as well as to actively support the lifelong learning and information needs of community residents of all ages and abilities. Special emphasis is placed on stimulating children's interests and appreciation for reading and learning, on integrating new technology with traditional library resources, and expanding access and services beyond the library's physical walls.

The Library supports the individual's right to have access to ideas and information representing all points of view. The Board of Trustees of the Waunakee Public Library has adopted the American Library Association's "Library Bill Of Rights," "The Freedom to Read," and "Freedom to View" statements, attached herewith.

Objectives

The Waunakee Public Library acquires and makes available materials which inform, educate, entertain, and enrich persons as individuals and members of society. 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. Included are works of enduring value as well as timely materials on current issues. In general, scholarly, highly specialized, or archival materials are beyond the scope of the Library's budget.

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 materials selection/collection development policy, like all other policies, will be reviewed and/or revised as the need arises.

Responsibility for Selection

The ultimate responsibility for selection of library materials rests with the library director who operates within the framework of the policies determined by the Waunakee Public Library Board of Trustees. This responsibility may be shared with other members of the library staff; however, because the director must be available to answer to the library board and the general public for actual selections

made, the director has the authority to reject or select any item contrary to the recommendations of the staff.

Criteria for Selection

To build a well-balanced collection of merit and significance, materials in all forms must be measured by objective guidelines. Since the library does not promote particular beliefs or views, the collection will contain various positions on important questions, including unpopular or unorthodox positions. The Library actively strives to ensure that materials representing many differing views and a broad diversity of human thought and creativity are represented in its collection. A balanced collection reflects a diversity of materials, not necessarily an equality of numbers.

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 policy. Responsibility for choosing what an individual will read rests with the individual. Responsibility for the use of library materials by children and young adults rests with their parents or legal guardians.

All acquisitions, whether purchased or donated, are considered in terms of the following standards. An item need not meet all of the criteria in order to be acceptable. Several standards and combinations of standards may be used, as some materials may be judged primarily on artistic merit, while others are considered because of scholarship, value as human documents, or ability to satisfy the recreational and entertainment needs of the community

1. The main points considered in the selection of materials are:
 - individual merit of each item
 - popular appeal/demand
 - suitability of material for the clientele
 - existing library holdings
 - budget
 - relevance to community needs
2. Selection may be limited by the following factors:
 - Physical limitations of the building
 - Price and format
 - Availability of low-demand materials in other library collections
3. The lack of a review or an unfavorable review shall not be the sole reason for rejecting a title which is in demand. Consideration is, therefore, given to requests from library patrons and books discussed on public media. Materials are judged on the basis of the work as a whole, not on a part taken out of context.
4. Selection of library materials will not be influenced by:
 - The possibility that they may come into the possession of children or young adults
 - The liability of materials to theft or mutilation
 - The curriculum needs of area educational programs. Textbooks and other materials designed solely for use in educational settings are generally not acquired.

Interlibrary Loan

Because of limited budget and space, the library cannot provide all materials that are requested. Therefore, interlibrary loan is used to obtain from other libraries those materials that are beyond the scope of this library's collection.

In return for utilizing interlibrary loan to satisfy the needs of our patrons, the Waunakee Public Library agrees to lend its materials to other libraries through the same interlibrary loan network, and to make an effort to have its current holdings listed in a tool that is accessible by other libraries throughout the state.

Gifts and Donations

In general, the library will decline to accept gifts and donations of items for our circulating collections. The library may accept gifts of books and other materials with the understanding that they will be added to the collection only if appropriate and needed, as determined by the library director on a case by case basis. If they are not needed because of duplication, condition, or dated information the director can dispose of them as he/she sees fit. The same criteria of selection which are applied to purchased materials are applied to gifts. Memorial gifts of books or money may also be accepted with suitable bookplates placed in the book. Specific memorial books can be ordered for the library on request of a patron if the request meets the criteria established by the Board. It is desirable for gifts of or for specific titles to be offered after consultation with the library director. Book selection will be made by the director if no specific book is requested. In all cases, the Waunakee Public Library director will make the final determination of all titles or items that are to be added to the collection.

By law, the library is not allowed to appraise the value of donated materials, though it can provide an acknowledgment of receipt of the items if requested by the donor.

Withdrawal of Materials

An up-to-date, attractive and useful collection is maintained through a continual withdrawal and replacement process. Replacement of worn volumes is dependent upon current demand, usefulness, more recent acquisitions, and availability of newer editions. This ongoing process of weeding is the responsibility of the library director and is authorized by the Board of Trustees. Withdrawn materials may be sold in the library book sale or disposed of by other means. Individual items that are being withdrawn may not be saved for specific individuals.

Requests for Reconsideration

The Waunakee Public Library recognizes the choice of library materials by library users is an individual matter, and some materials may be deemed inappropriate or offensive by patrons. While an individual may reject materials for himself/herself, he/she 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. 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 policy.

Responsibility for the reading of children rests with their parents or legal guardians. *At no time will the library staff act in loco parentis.* Selection of library materials will not be inhibited by the possibility that materials may come into the possession of children.

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 damage or theft.

Procedure for Requests for Reconsideration

Any individual expressing an objection to or concern about library material should receive respectful attention from the staff member first approached. This staff member should use his or her own best judgment in attempting to answer the concerns or clarify the situation. If the individual is not satisfied with the explanation received, the staff member should offer the options of speaking with a supervisor or filling out a "Request for Reconsideration" form. He/she may ask for a reconsideration in the following manner:

- 1) A "Request for Reconsideration" form must be completed and returned to a staff member at the appropriate service desk. The form will be given to the head of that department, who will forward a copy of the form to the Library Director. Patrons must reside in a South Central Library System county (Dane, Adams, Columbia, Green, Portage, Sauk, and Wood Counties) to have their request considered and only one request per patron will be considered at a time.
- 2) The request for reconsideration will be acknowledged in writing by the Library Director within (10) ten days. The Library Director will assign a panel of staff members to evaluate the item in question. This will be completed in no more than (30) thirty business days of the initial request for reconsideration. The panel's recommendations will be considered, and the Library Director's final decision will be mailed to the patron. Once a title has been considered, it will not be reviewed again for a period of 2 years.
- 3) Patrons may appeal the decision of the Library Director to the Waunakee Public Library Board of Trustees. An appeal must be made in writing and delivered to the Library Director. Upon receipt of the written appeal, discussion of the appeal will be scheduled on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Library Board of Trustees. The decision of the Board regarding the item will be final.

- Adopted December 2021
- Revised June 2022

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.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. 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.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. 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.

VII. 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.