

MATERIALS SELECTION POLICY

1. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE COLLECTION:

Final authority for the determination of the policies in this document are vested in the Library's Board of Trustees. They have delegated the responsibility for implementing this policy to the Library Director. The Library Director may delegate to specific staff members the responsibility for selection of materials in special areas, but recommendations of these staff members are always subject to review by the Director.

It is the function of librarians to select and to withdraw library materials, and to advise on their use. They are qualified through training and experience, however they must of necessity work within limitations of space and budget. Recognizing that sensitivity to the needs and interests of the community is essential to the development of library collections, the Athenaeum welcomes advice and suggestions from patrons, trustees and authorities in various fields. Librarians, however, are responsible for judging the needs of their collection and their community, and they must make the final choices.

2. THE SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION:

The Berkshire Athenaeum is a member of the Western Massachusetts Regional Library System (WMRLS), a consortium of over two hundred public, private, college and school libraries west of Worcester County, and Central and Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing (C/W MARS), a network of over one hundred public, academic and special libraries in central and western Massachusetts. The Library recognizes the collections and resources of neighboring libraries, WMRLS libraries, and C/W MARS participants, and will not needlessly duplicate services or materials. Pittsfield's participation in these networks provides our residents access to the collections of other participating libraries on a reciprocating basis. Every effort is made to locate and borrow from other libraries through *C/W MARS* or the regional interlibrary loan network those specialized materials that are beyond the scope of the Athenaeum collections.

The Library's collection is predominantly targeted to an English speaking audience and includes books, large print books, periodicals and newspapers in print and microform formats, paperback books, cassette and CD recordings of music and books, CD ROM computer software, video cassette and DVD recordings, adult literacy support materials and teaching kits. The Athenaeum also provides access to special Internet-based reference services (i.e. *Infotrac*, *Novelist*, *Access Science* and *Encarta*).

The Berkshire Athenaeum seeks to provide a broad range of materials to meet the varied needs of its patrons. Library materials and services will routinely support more than one library goal. To meet the informational needs of users, the library continually updates materials in the areas of business, law, government, medicine, health, technology, science and current events. To fill the need for information about popular culture and social trends the library buys popular non-fiction, general mass circulation periodicals, fiction, musical recordings on compact disc, video cassettes and DVD.

Area school and college libraries serve the curriculum needs of students. Without duplicating these resources or attempting to follow all the changes in the curriculum, the Berkshire Athenaeum does recognize the need to provide a wide variety of cultural and recreational reading matter for students and to provide basic class related materials for students seeking to complete assignments outside of school hours. Textbooks are not ordinarily purchased by the library except in those subject areas where material in another form is not conveniently available.

Local history and genealogical materials relating to Pittsfield and the surrounding area are particularly sought for the Local History Department. Histories, local newspapers, vital records, town reports, pamphlets about Berkshire County, area maps and photographs, books by local authors, and books about this area are all collected. *The Berkshire Eagle* and *The Pittsfield Gazette* are microfilmed at library expense for permanent preservation and research.

3. ORGANIZATION OF THE COLLECTION:

The non-fiction collections at the Berkshire Athenaeum are organized by the Dewey Decimal System. The fiction and biography collections are arranged alphabetically by author and subject respectively. Music collections are classified by the ANSCR (Alpha-Numeric System for the Classification of Music) method, and music scores are sorted thematically. Bibliographical control is achieved through the maintenance of C/W MARS computer files. In adding material to the collection, the temptation to form separate pockets of books arranged outside the main numerical sequence should be resisted. Fragmenting the collection usually makes properly caring for the collection more complex.

The Library Director should make it clear to potential donors the method of organizing material in the library collections. Should a donor nevertheless insist upon physical separation of a gift from the rest of the collection, the gift may still be accepted, however specifics of its organization and content should be approved by the Board of Trustees, recorded in their official minutes and incorporated into an updated Collection Development Policy statement.

4. REVIEW PROCESS:

The selection of library materials to be acquired is generally made by library staff based on the following:

- 4.1. Library's mission statement and its accepted goals and priorities.
- 4.2. Staff judgement and expertise.
- 4.3. Published reviews from general mass-audience periodicals and from specialized library review sources (see SELECTION BIBLIOGRAPHIES AND REVIEW SOURCES appended).
- 4.4. Recommendations from library users and general public.

- 4.5. Local relevance.
- 4.6. Use analysis of specific titles, authors and subject areas.
- 4.7. Availability at other libraries, most notably those in WMRLS and C/W MARS.
- 4.8. Availability in alternative formats, including on-line access, CD ROM or other electronic storage, cassette and compact disc recordings, video cassette and DVD recordings.
- 4.9. Availability of similar material already in the collection.
- 4.10. Cost/benefit analysis.

5. **SELECTION CRITERIA:**

- 5.1. General Considerations: The Library shall attempt to recognize patron demand (direct requests and proven popularity of similar material types and genres) in the selection of materials and will seek out materials that are pertinent and timely. A high priority shall be given to materials that have current significance, and special effort shall be made to obtain materials representing all sides of controversial issues.

Because of limited resources, the relevance of the material to our collection is especially considered. Material that receives positive reviews may not be purchased if it duplicates material already owned. Materials that are too technical or so limited in scope so as to appeal to only a few of our patrons shall be passed over.

New titles are often available simultaneously in print hardbound, large print, mass-market paperback, recorded on tape, and recorded on CD editions. Librarians will choose between these media formats taking into account such considerations as anticipated shelf life or long-term appeal, anticipated public demand, timeliness of the content, and the necessity of multiple copies.

- 5.2. Adult Non-Fiction: Recognizing its principle role is to ensure the availability of information and materials for independent, self directed learning, library staff shall consider the author's competency, overall excellence of the material (artistic, literacy, etc.), superiority in treatment of controversial issues, ability to stimulate further intellectual and social development, appropriateness to the level of user, and potential usefulness to the library's collection in the selection of non-fiction materials. Staff members will look to see that authors present material accurately, fairly, clearly, and in a readable manner, however special consideration is given to those books which deal with topics about which very little else is available.
- 5.3. Adult Fiction: The Library attempts to purchase a wide variety of fiction to satisfy the needs of all our borrowers. As some of the language and incidents in contemporary novels will offend some tastes, individual borrowers will need to be selective when

choosing materials. Library staff choose titles on the basis of reviews that consider, among other things, the appeal of a book for a specific audience, the artistic skill evident in its rendering, and the literary reputation of the author.

- 5.4. Large Print Collection: Supporting the library's role of providing popular materials for the community, the Athenaeum maintains a collection of large print books targeted to senior citizens and in general those with visual problems. The large print collection located at the top of the stairs on the balcony level duplicates a portion of the library's recreational reading collection and consists of a variety of popular, best-seller, mystery/espionage, and romance fiction, and some general non-fiction.
- 5.5. Mass Market Paperbacks: Paperbacks selected serve three main purposes. They must meet the demand for popular, easily portable, inexpensive reading materials. They may duplicate copies of popular hardcover titles to meet heavy demand, and may also duplicate copies of titles on school reading lists purchased to make them readily available as they are needed. Because mass-market paperback books are inexpensive relative to hardcover books, and because they are easily damaged, their cataloging and processing are kept to a minimum. Specific titles are not always sought, and books are frequently weeded. These considerations result in a paperback collection that is constantly changing and useful mainly for browsing.
- 5.6. Children's Materials: The Children's collection is targeted to pre-schoolers through sixth grade and must meet similar criteria as all other materials selected for the Library's collections. Special effort is made to continually update the collection and to weed worn and outdated materials. In recommending books for the children's collection, careful consideration is given to each new title, and every new edition is treated as new. Duplicates of popular juvenile fiction, easy readers, and picture books are planned as part of our collection development. Literary quality, good design and format, and illustration are important criteria in this evaluation as are accuracy, relevance, and appropriateness for the intended audience. Books should exhibit non-stereotypical attitudes, although new editions of classics and some titles which reflect the beliefs of other times or other cultures may be acceptable. While the Library has some series books, such as "Goosebumps" and "The Baby Sitters Club," it is not the policy of the Library to purchase these or any books that are poorly written or carelessly produced. Classroom textbooks and readers (e.g. "Dick and Jane") are not considered appropriate for the collection and are not generally purchased. The Library does attempt to provide supplementary materials to enrich the resources available to students and teachers.

The Children's collection strives to provide children with the library materials necessary to aid their personal and educational development. Some items may be included that are not considered appropriate by all adults for all children. While some materials may be too mature for one child, other children may be ready for them. Only the child and his or her parents can decide what materials shall be used by that child, and neither the Library staff nor other Library users shall make these decisions for other people's children.

- 5.7. Young Adult Materials: The Young Adult Department, a subsidiary of the Children's Library, has a collection targeted to the informational and recreational reading needs of young people between the ages of twelve to eighteen, typically students from grade six through twelve. The main purpose of this collection is to serve the educational, developmental and recreational needs of this population while serving as a stepping stone from the Children's Library to the adult collections. The bulk of the collection consists of hardcover and paperback fiction and non-fiction that have been recommended for purchase in one or more of the standard reviewing media, have been included in prepared booklists from the American Library Association, or suggested for purchase at professional meetings. There is also a sizeable collection of mass-market paperback books targeted to young adults selected using the same criteria in place in the adult paperback collection. While the department serves as a homework center during the academic year, a large percentage of the material for school-related demands and other informational needs are to be found in the regular adult and children's collections.
- 5.8. Periodicals: Recognizing the need to provide timely information on a wide variety of subject areas requires the library to offer an extensive collection of newspapers, magazines and journals. This commitment represents just over ten percent of the library's total materials budget.

Given the amount of time required to bring a book into print, periodicals are often the only non-electronic source for current information on social and political issues, consumer affairs, new developments in science and technology, personal finance, detailed information on hobbies and other special interests. In addition to the criteria outlined in the REVIEW PROCESS section above, library staff also considers whether there is subject access to the information in the periodical through indexes available at the Athenaeum or online.

The library subscribes to several daily newspapers. Current copies are browsable by the public, and back issues are kept on file for reference and research. Newspaper subscriptions are chosen in accordance with relevant criteria outlined in the REVIEW PROCESS section above. Particularly relevant is the popularity and usefulness of a newspaper's classified advertising to the library's users and its coverage of local issues and/or state government issues. The library also selects newspapers of neighboring metropolitan areas. The library may subscribe to multiple copies of the same newspaper in accordance with patron demand. Occasionally a patron will express disappointment that the library does not subscribe to more of the daily newspapers of other U.S. cities. While we understand that at a given time a particular newspaper might be very useful to a particular individual, the Athenaeum does not have the resources or demand to justify the maintenance of a larger daily newspaper collection.

Offers of gift subscriptions to periodicals are considered with attention to the same criteria applied to purchasing decisions. Subscriptions and individual magazine issues received as gifts are generally shelved separately from the subscriptions purchased by the library.

- 5.9. Local Document Repository: In accordance with its goal of providing access to materials that promote an informed citizenry, the Athenaeum acts as a document repository for specialized materials relating to educational, environmental or governmental issues or importance to the local community. These materials may include engineering studies, maps, detailed professional reports, correspondence files and other documents of a highly specialized nature, and are generally available for library use only. Consideration will be given to requests for removal of a large number of documents to a local copy center.
- 5.10. Audio-Visual Materials: The Library purchases audio-visual materials targeted to all age groups as part of its collection development.

Spoken art, such as plays, poetry, fiction, and foreign language materials, are purchased in audio cassette and compact disc formats. Recorded music is purchased in compact disc format, but gifts of music on cassette are also added to the collection.

The circulating collections contain general interest VHS and DVD titles of both a recreational and informational nature. Selections of adult feature length video cassettes and DVD's concentrate on classic films as opposed to current popular materials. In addition to widely promoted mass market productions, selections of children's video cassettes and DVD's concentrate on productions of children's books made into video, and many contain animations of the original picture book illustrations and dramatizations of longer children's fictional and non-fiction works. Children's titles also focus on lesser-known works that stimulate the imagination and enhance the learning process.

The Athenaeum serves a population of growing ethnic diversity and has expanded its film collection to include award-winning and/or notable foreign film titles from countries or origin represented by area immigrants.

In addition to this circulating collection, the Children's Library maintains a collection of videocassettes with public performance rights that do not circulate. These cassettes are intended for public viewing in the Children's Library and for use in children's programming. This collection is comprised primarily of short presentations of animated award winning picture book stories featuring the original illustrations. Other notable children's works are also included.

The same criteria used to purchase other materials apply to audio-visual materials with the additional requirement of clarity of reproduction and performance.

- 5.11. Scores: The Athenaeum's score collection includes classical and modern works for solo and grouped instruments and voice (collections, parts, and study scores); piano-vocal scores for operas and popular musicals; piano, guitar and vocal scores for folk songs, popular and rock standards, holiday, and patriotic songs. Many, if not most, scores are cataloged on the library's electronic database. All new acquisitions are added to that catalog.

The first priority is given to providing a thorough representation of established composers in the classical scores and parts, study scores, operas and musicals for the use of area musicians and music students of all ages. A lesser, but significant priority is given to acquiring popular standards for the same user audience, as well as for those who use the materials for personal enjoyment and special occasion performance.

- 5.12. Computer Software: A personal computer is available at the Athenaeum for public use in both the Reference Department and Children's Library. Non-circulating software provided for adults focuses on standard office applications of word processing, spreadsheet, database management and desktop publishing. The Children's Library computer focuses on software of an educational nature. The library does not acquire software for use in the library whose primary purpose is recreation.

The Athenaeum also offers a small circulating collection of computer software on CD ROM with a non-fiction or instructional focus. While the intent of these programs may be educational, many achieve this with a recreational or fun learning presentation.

- 5.13. Local History Department: Because of the very specialized nature of this collection, it is dealt with separately in the LOCAL HISTORY DEPARTMENT: COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY STATEMENT.

6. REQUESTS FOR PURCHASE:

The Library welcomes requests for purchase of materials, however, it is to be understood that such requests will be subject to the same criteria for selection as other considered materials.

7. WITHDRAWAL OF MATERIALS:

Selection of materials for the Library collection is an ongoing process which includes the removal of materials no longer appropriate, and the replacement of lost or worn materials that are still of value for informational or recreational needs. Materials are regularly discarded from the library collections because they are out of date, so badly worn or damaged they cannot be rebound or mended, because it is cheaper to replace them, or because they are once-popular materials that are no longer used. Space, the cost of replacement, and the appearance of the collection are also factors in these decisions (see WEEDING POLICY & PROCEDURES).

8. GIFTS:

Gifts of books and other materials in good condition are welcomed by the library, however, material is accepted with the understanding that they may be used or disposed of as the library sees fit. Donated material will be checked to see if it meets the Library's criteria for selection and if it helps maintain the Library's need for balance on matters of opinion. Sincere proponents of various causes or beliefs may offer the Library materials espousing their special

viewpoints. The Library can utilize only a small proportion of such material. The Library cannot make cash assessments of donations, nor does it assume the responsibility of returning any items to donors not added to the Library collection (see GIFT POLICY & PROCEDURES).

9. FREEDOM TO READ, SEE AND HEAR:

- 9.1. Overview: The Berkshire Athenaeum subscribes to the principles of intellectual freedom as stated in Freedom to Read, Freedom to View, and the Library Bill of Rights (appended) and their interpretations issued by the American Library Association. Included in these statements is the commitment to honor the rights of an individual to use the Library regardless of age, race, religion, national origin, or social or political views. Accordingly, library staff provide equal service to all library users. Children and adults are equally free to use the entire Library and to borrow all materials in the circulating collections. Limitations to be placed upon the reading and viewing materials of young people are left to the discretion of the parents.

Well intentioned persons or groups occasionally question the inclusion of items in library collections. Although we understand and appreciate their fears and doubts about the effects of materials on impressionable persons, the Board takes the position that the risk of not providing access to information and ideas is greater than the risk of providing it. Sometimes suggestions are made regarding the restriction or removal of certain library materials, and the Board, therefore, wishes to establish the following principles:

- 9.2. Controversial Materials: In an effort to provide Library patrons with diverse sources of information and the widest possible range of ideas and viewpoints, the Library will acquire some controversial materials. Some of these materials may be offensive to individuals or groups because of perceived profanity, social, economic and political ideas, religious viewpoints, the background of the author, the kinds of information provided, illustrations, or other reasons. Acquisition or use of any item does not imply approval or endorsement of the contents. Indeed, it cannot, since such a variety of ideas is collected. The Board believes it is essential to provide such materials if the American ideal of freedom is to be retained.
- 9.3. Age: Judges, legislators, educators, and others are giving increased recognition to the fact that young people need access to all the information and ideas that are essential to their growth. Therefore, anyone, of any age, who is eligible for a Library card may use any materials in the Library, and is not to have that privilege limited by any staff member. If parents wish to deny their children access to certain materials they must take the responsibility themselves.
- 9.4. Labeling: It is sometimes suggested that a descriptive label be affixed to library materials indicating a political or social point of view or indicating that such an item is questionable or controversial. Such labeling suggests that Americans are incapable of making up their own minds about controversial subjects, and this practice is contrary to the American idea of the free marketplace of ideas. The Berkshire Athenaeum does not subscribe to this practice, which is not to be confused with the routine genre labeling (i.e.

mystery, romance western, etc.) of library materials which makes no attempt to prejudice the attitude of potential readers about the work in question (see STATEMENT ON LABELING appended).

- 9.5. Special Collections: The use of rare, scholarly, and/or fragile items of great value may be controlled to the extent required to preserve them from harm, but no further action shall be taken to restrict the public's access to the Library's collections.
- 9.6. Reconsideration: The Library is willing to re-examine its position on any item in the Library's collections. A procedure has been established to deal with objections to materials owned by the Library. No item is to be removed or restricted because of a complaint except in accordance with this procedure (see REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS and PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING COLLECTION COMPLAINTS appended).