

FLATHEAD COUNTY LIBRARY COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT POLICY

The purpose of the collection development and management policy is:

1. To document collection management procedures;
2. To guide staff in the selection, retention, and withdrawal of library materials;
3. To inform the public of the philosophy of collection development and the policies involved; and
4. To establish a framework for continuous collection evaluation and improvement.

COLLECTION OBJECTIVE

The Flathead County Library's collection is developed based upon community interests and needs, the composition and use of the existing collection, and input from customers, staff, and the Library Board of Trustees.

The Flathead County Library's primary service commitment is to the people within its service area. The Library collections fairly serve people of every age, education, background, personal philosophy, religious belief, occupation, economic level, ethnic origin and human condition. The collection is organized to provide unrestricted and easy access within the limitations of space and budget. The Library retains final authority to organize and place materials within age-designated collections using professional judgement and established library standards to serve the developmental and educational needs of the intended audience. All Flathead County Library materials are intended for public use and, with the exception of selected special or reference collections, all materials are available for check-out.

COLLECTION RESPONSIBILITY

The Board of Trustees vests responsibility for selection of library materials in the Library Director under guidelines established by the Board. Members of the staff, qualified by reason of education and/or experience, serve on the Collection Development Team and are assigned to assist with the selection of materials.

GENERAL COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The library collections are comprised primarily of popular materials directed toward the general public and an effort is made to have the most current information available. There is a special collection of materials that focuses on the history of Flathead County and surrounding areas. Older general material is held only if it has local historical significance.

COLLECTION PHILOSOPHY

The presence of materials in the Library collection does not reflect endorsement or approval of its contents by the Flathead County Library Board of Trustees, Flathead County Library Staff, or its funding agencies.

SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Selectors acquire materials based on the following criteria: Customer demand and interest
2. Critical reviews
3. Presentation and readability
4. To provide alternative or opposing perspective on a topic or issue
5. Author's reputation and significance as a writer
6. Reputation and standing of the publisher
7. Local or national significance
8. Availability of the material or information elsewhere

9. Quality of the physical format
10. Reasonable cost
11. Avoidance of any picture, image, illustration, or other visual depiction of a sexual act (as defined in 18 U.S. Code § 2246) involving a minor or that could reasonably be interpreted as involving a minor.
12. Selectors will use the tools and information available at the time of selection to make reasonable efforts to avoid placing materials that contain descriptions of sexual acts (as defined in 18 U.S. Code § 2246), whether conveyed explicitly or through implicit narrative of the act, in collections housed in areas designated for minors, with the exception of the Parent Resource Collection. If such materials are later identified, they will be relocated to another area as part of standard collection management.

CHILDREN'S COLLECTION SCOPE, SELECTION, AND PLACEMENT

PURPOSE AND RATIONALE - The Children's Collection supports early literacy, childhood learning, and age-appropriate exploration for younger patrons. Materials are organized by developmental stage to assist families and young readers in locating appropriate resources.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT STANDARD - Materials are evaluated with consideration for the cognitive, emotional, and educational developmental stages of children served by the collection. Selection decisions prioritize constructive and developmentally appropriate content for young readers.

SCOPE OF THE CHILDREN'S COLLECTION - The Children's Collection primarily serves readers ages 0–12 and prioritizes materials supporting:

1. Early literacy
2. Childhood learning and imagination
3. Family life and childhood experiences
4. Nature, science, and history
5. Cultural understanding and educational growth

RESPECTFUL REPRESENTATION - Materials in the Children's Collection should present individuals and groups in a manner consistent with mutual respect appropriate for young audiences.

Works whose primary purpose is to demean or promote hostility toward individuals or groups on the basis of race, ethnicity, or religion are outside the intended scope of the Children's Collection.

This provision does not exclude works of history, literature, or biography that examine prejudice or discrimination in an educational or historical context appropriate for young readers.

VIEWPOINT NEUTRALITY - The organization and placement of materials within age-designated collections assists patrons in locating developmentally appropriate materials and shall not be interpreted as restricting access to ideas available elsewhere in the Library's collections.

The criteria for selection, acquisition, customer requests, duplication, replacement, and withdrawal (weeding) are the same for all materials and formats. Selection of materials is driven by customer demand in all formats for all ages. Items do not need to meet all criteria to be selected, nor does fulfillment of criteria necessarily guarantee selection.

Selectors may use a number of selection aids at their disposal to assist with selection decisions and selection tools may change over time.

In most cases, the library will not purchase or accept as gifts self-published materials that are not reviewed in established review journals.

Electronic collections available through MontanaLibrary2Go are part of a statewide consortium. These materials are selected and withdrawn by a cooperative committee, not by Flathead County Library staff, and are subject to separate collection development policies and procedures. MontanaLibrary2Go is administered by Montana State Library and by two committees: an elected Executive Committee and a volunteer Selection Committee.

[MontanaLibrary2Go Policies and Procedures](#)

USER REQUESTS

Flathead County Library values community input on our collections. As such, all user requests are considered for purchase. Items requested must meet the selection criteria described in this policy, and the Flathead County Library is not obligated to purchase items requested.

1. Generally requested titles are purchased if: The title was published in the last 5 years,
2. The cost is less than \$35,
3. The subject has strong local interest.

Titles outside these parameters may be purchased after the Library Director's review. If requested items are not selected for purchase, every reasonable effort will be made to secure requested items via the Partners Sharing Group or Inter Library Loan.

DUPLICATE PURCHASING

Flathead County Library selectors may purchase multiple copies of items in order to meet the demand of local users. However, every effort is made to ensure that purchasing of duplicates does not occur at the expense of less popular, though equally important, collections.

In order to achieve this balance, the Flathead County Library maintains a 5:1 hold ratio for all collections. This calculation is made using only holds placed by Flathead County Library cardholders, and does not include holds placed at Partner Libraries. Downloadable materials through MontanaLibrary2Go are part of a state-wide consortium. The holds ratio for these items is set and overseen by an outside selection team

REPLACEMENT OF MATERIALS

Selectors are responsible for reviewing withdrawn items, and consider replacement based on the same criteria for original purchase, as well as ongoing demand for that item. There is no limitation on how many times a given title may be replaced, assuming there is sufficient availability and demand for that title.

WITHDRAWAL OF MATERIALS

Staff shall review the collection on an ongoing basis with the goal of maintaining the quality and vitality of the library collections. Collection management involves continuous collection evaluation through the use of circulation reports and analysis of collection use. Worn, damaged, and dated materials shall be removed from the collection on a regular basis.

Materials may also be withdrawn if they are not used or are superseded by a new edition or a more authoritative work on the same subject. Other criteria that may be applied include changing user demands, replacement of materials with alternative formats, space limitations, maintaining collection balance, and the post-purchase identification of materials that do not comply with the selection criteria.

DISPOSITION OF WITHDRAWN MATERIALS

1. All withdrawn materials shall be removed from the MT Shared Catalog, visibly marked as withdrawn and all Flathead County Library identification destroyed. Withdrawn materials will be disposed of in the manner deemed most appropriate for that item. Methods of disposal may include: Distribution to Library support Organizations and/or vendors for resale;
2. Distribution to local entities to support community literacy efforts;
3. Freely distributed from the Libraries' Free Shelf

In rare circumstances, library materials may be recycled. This method of disposal is reserved for items that are heavily damaged or remain after other disposition methods fail.

SPECIAL COLLECTION

The Special Collection exists to collect, preserve, and make available for research primary and secondary archival materials relating to Flathead County. The Special Collection is a repository for materials primarily concerned with Flathead County, Montana. Less extensively collected are materials related to northwest Montana and to the State of Montana as a whole. Materials with no connection to these geographic regions may occasionally be included based on local interest and demand.

Since materials in the Special Collection are intended to provide a persistent source of information on Flathead County, they are for use only in the library. Customers may use items from the Special Collection in any Flathead County Library location. When a customer requests that an item from the Special Collection be sent to a satellite location, the item will be transported there by the library courier and will remain available for a limited number of days. Items judged to be irreplaceable or too fragile to transport may be used only at the Flathead County Library Kalispell.

DONATIONS

All such gifts, grants, donations, devises, or bequests must be received or accepted by the Library Director or proxy on behalf of the Board of Trustees. See also Donations Policy.

DONATIONS OF PHYSICAL MATERIALS

Donated and memorial materials are subject to the same standards as the rest of the library collection. Once a gift is accepted, it becomes the property of Flathead County Libraries, to be used or disposed of in accordance with the Flathead County library policy.

Upon request, Flathead County Library will provide the donor a receipt, but will not appraise the value of donated items.

Whenever possible, Flathead County Library will honor a donor's wishes to house materials at a particular branch. However, at the discretion of library staff, the library reserves the right to relocate materials to its other branches.

Flathead County Library will not return unsolicited materials, nor will it be responsible for payment of costs incurred when unsolicited materials are sent.

MONETARY DONATIONS

Monetary gifts, grants, donations, and bequests intended for the purchase of library materials shall be placed in Fund 7055 (Gift Fund)

Whenever possible, Flathead County Library will honor a donor's wishes when purchasing library materials with donor funds. As with any purchase, the Collection Management Policy will be followed in order to ensure a balanced collection.

Whenever possible, Flathead County Library will honor a donor's wishes to house materials purchased with donor funds at a particular branch. However, at the discretion of library staff, the library reserves the right to relocate library materials to its other branches.

At the request of the donor, library materials purchased with donated funds may be designated by a bookplate or other appropriate identification.

CENSORSHIP AND SELECTION

Flathead County Library believes in freedom of information for all, and does not practice censorship. The selection of library materials is based on a person's right to read, listen, and view and the freedom from censorship by others. Attempting to meet the needs and interests of a diverse population requires a wide range of materials. Inevitably, there will be something in a balanced collection that may be unacceptable or disturbing to someone.

The function of materials selection is to obtain print and non-print materials suited to meet the diverse needs of Flathead County citizens. As professional librarians, selectors are conscious to not allow personal biases, pressure from outside individuals or groups, or fear of such pressure to influence selection decisions. Following the democratic principles under which it operates, the Library is obligated to fairly represent all sides of controversial topics, wherever possible.

Flathead County Library holds censorship to be a purely individual matter and declares that while anyone is free to personally reject materials of which he or she does not approve, he or she may not exercise censorship to restrict the freedom of others. For this reason, selection decisions are not influenced by the possibility that materials may be accessible to minors. Cataloging and classification should in no way represent a value judgment of the material, and as such items are not labeled to show approval or disapproval, nor to subjectively identify certain philosophies. No items are sequestered except to protect them from damage or theft.

Flathead County Library does not act In Loco Parentis, and as such, responsibility for materials selected and read by children and adolescents rests with their parent or legal guardians.

Flathead County Library does not collect materials that fall within the U.S. Supreme Court's definition of Obscenity and asserts that the definition and application of obscenity is the responsibility of the judiciary.

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION PROCEDURE

Criticism and comment on material selected for inclusion in or exclusion from the collections is an essential right of community members and a valuable part of the Flathead County Library's selection process. This process provides an opportunity for staff members to review and transparently account for selection choices and reasoning.

The Library Board of Trustees acknowledges that occasional objections to resources will be made despite the care taken and the procedures followed in their selection. The Library Board and library staff are prepared to defend the principles of freedom to read and access

information. Objections to particular language or point of view of material cannot be used as justification for the exclusion of materials, but material may be relocated to a different collection if housed in a minor designated area. Selectors may address user concerns about materials identified as containing sex scenes housed in designated areas for minors (excluding the Parent Resource Collection) informally by relocating these materials to areas outside minor designated areas. The term "sex scenes" refers to descriptions of sexual acts (as defined in 18 U.S. Code § 2246), whether conveyed explicitly or through implicit narrative of the act.

Selectors will gladly respond to any concern from users about library materials. If users are not satisfied with this response, they will be referred to the Library Director. If a complaint cannot be resolved informally, the complainant may complete and return a written and signed Citizen Comment on Library Materials Form. This form may be obtained from any Flathead County Library staff member. In the absence of a fully completed form there is no formal complaint and no action will be taken. Completed Reconsideration forms will be considered only if reasonable attempts for informal resolution have been made.

When a fully completed written complaint is received, a formal review process begins. During the formal review process, all existing copies of the challenged material shall remain in circulation and are subject to the same management described in this policy. The investigation process is as follows, and should be completed within 45 days of receipt of the formal complaint:

1. The Library Director establishes a review committee to investigate the complaint, consisting of members of the Collection Development Team and other professional library staff;
2. The challenged title is reviewed in full by the committee;
3. The review committee meets to discuss the title. Discussion should include, but is not limited to:
 - a. An accounting of how the material was acquired,
 - b. The objective legality of the material in question,
 - c. Analysis of circulation data,
 - d. Critical reviews of the title, its author(s), publisher, etc.
 - e. The application of the Flathead County Library selection criteria
 - f. Consideration of whether the challenged material should be relocated to a different collection.
4. A recommendation is written and presented to the Library Board of Trustees for a final decision, following established voting procedure.

Appendix: Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials

Titles may be reconsidered more than once at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

Adopted: 4/09/2008, Revised 10/27/2022, 1/25/2024, 5/22/2025, 4/23/2026

David Ingram, Chair
Library Board of Trustees