

Prince William Public Libraries
Library Policies
Materials Selection Policy

Approved by the Library Board of Trustees August 26, 2021

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Materials Selection Policy

A. Mission Statement

A mission of the Prince William Public Libraries (PWPL) is to acquire, organize, and provide access to information and materials to meet the educational, social, informational and recreational needs of the citizens and residents of Prince William County and the City of Manassas.

B. General Selection Policy

Within budgetary limitations, PWPL purchases materials of current and permanent value in all subjects of interest to the community. Consideration is given to current demand as well as future community needs. The proximity of specialized and scholarly resources in neighboring library systems permits PWPL to emphasize popular rather than scholarly titles. PWPL refers residents to other libraries when appropriate and also acquires many materials for patrons from other libraries throughout the country through its Interlibrary Loan service.

PWPL supports public, private and homeschool curricula by providing broad collections to assist users with term papers, science fair projects, regularly assigned projects, and by providing classic and contemporary titles often included on reading lists. However, PWPL is unable to fund enough duplicate copies to serve all students in a class to support a specific assignment.

Library materials are not marked or identified to indicate approval or disapproval of the contents. Materials are not sequestered. Responsibility for a minor's use of library materials rests with the minor's parent(s) or legal guardian(s).

PWPL is responsible for maintaining well-balanced collections representing all sides of an issue. The presence of an item in the PWPL collection does not represent an endorsement of any theory, idea, or policy contained therein.

PWPL will reconsider any material in its collection upon written request of a resident in accordance with its Reconsideration Policy.

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C. Responsibility for Selection

Ultimate responsibility for materials selection rests with the Library Director, who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Library Board of Trustees. The Director delegates selection responsibility to the Assistant Director for Materials Services and appropriate Materials Services staff.

D. Criteria for Selection

The decision to acquire a specific title is based on factors such as: quality, usefulness, demand, currency, format, and price. Usefulness – the need for each item in relation to the rest of the collection and to the various interests of the community – is the primary factor in selection. Materials suggested for purchase by PWPL patrons are given due consideration if they meet selection policy guidelines and can be purchased within budget limitations. In addition to the criteria used in selecting print materials, factors considered when evaluating non-print materials include: technical quality, durability, accessibility in the case of downloadable items, and equipment required for use.

Materials are evaluated as a whole and not on the basis of a specific chapter or passage. Due to the volume of print and non-print materials produced today, the selectors in the Materials Services Division cannot read, preview or purchase all items available. Therefore, the selection of materials is based on reviews in professional journals and sources, standard bibliographies, publisher's catalogs and knowledge of the author's expertise. Many valuable works are never reviewed, and therefore selectors may choose materials without a published review, using their own judgment to assess the importance of a work to this community. Selectors also consider the reputation of the publisher or producer and the authority and significance of the author, director or composer.

The DVD collection offers titles for entertainment, instructional, educational, and informational purposes. The collection includes films rated G, PG, PG-13, and R. Non-rated films are only purchased after reviewing them for content.

E. Gifts

Gifts are subject to the same selection policy as are purchased items.

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F. Reconsideration Request

Since PWPL serves a diverse population, the collection provides materials to meet the many different needs of individuals and groups.

Upon receiving a reconsideration request, the Library Board of Trustees may decide:

- a. To make no change to the item.
- b. To re-catalog the item.
- c. To remove the item.

Materials that have been reviewed by the Library Board of Trustees, as the result of a formal request, will not be reconsidered for six months. Should a new reconsideration request for the same title occur within six months of a decision, a copy of the response to the previous complaint will be sent to the individual or group submitting the new reconsideration request.

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