

Sarasota County
Library System
Collection Development Policy

Updated 2019

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I. Introduction

This policy is intended to guide librarians in the selection of materials and to inform the public about the principles upon which library collections are developed and maintained. In making collection decisions, the Sarasota County Public Library System (hereafter referred to as the Library System) strives to uphold its mission. The Library System offers equal access to information, fosters lifelong learning and inspires community engagement.

Currently, the citizens of Sarasota County are served by ten community libraries, each with its own distinguishing characteristics. In order to make the libraries a reliable resource for all the citizens of Sarasota County, the collections are intended to be of sufficient scope and supply for the entire county, with special consideration given to the unique customer needs within each library.

With the exception of reference materials and a few specialized collections, all items “float”, retaining the location designation of the library where they are currently shelved. As such, items are part of the system collection. Each library has temporary “ownership” of the items on its shelves. Upon circulation and return, the library to which the item is returned becomes the new “owner” and the location is automatically updated in the catalog.

II. Materials Selection

The Library System selects and maintains a broad collection in a variety of formats including print, audio and video media, and digital and electronically accessible resources, to meet the informational, educational, and recreational needs of the citizens of Sarasota County. The Library System strives to offer materials that reflect the diverse ages, interests, educational levels, and cultural backgrounds of members of the community. Through access to the collection, individuals may explore different points of view and issues of interest. The Library staff makes selections based upon standards for professional practices rather than personal opinion, reason rather than prejudice, and judgment rather than censorship. Furthermore, staff remains responsive to public demand for materials of contemporary significance and interest, while balancing the need to collect and preserve materials of permanent value.

While library staff makes material selections based upon the tenet of “one system / one collection”, selectors recognize the distinct characteristics and needs of the populace that each library serves. Community profiles are used to guide selectors in efforts to develop special collections and to meet the unique patronage served by each library.

III. Responsibility for Selection of Materials

The ultimate responsibility for selection of materials rests with the Director of Libraries and Historical Resources and members of the Library System Management Team, who in turn delegate selection responsibilities to the Collection Development Librarians.

IV. Criteria for Selection

In practice it is impossible to acquire all available print, audio and video media, and digital and electronically accessible resources. Therefore, out of necessity, library staff employs a policy of selectivity in acquisitions. Selection decisions are completed using professional judgment based on knowledge of the existing collection, the evaluation of currently obtainable materials, the established priorities for collection development, item cost and available funds.

Audio and video media are evaluated for both artistic and instructional value and are selected using the same methodology as other material formats. Movies and television programs document social history and are considered to be significant indicators of cultural values. Acquisition of online databases offering both remote and in-library access is given priority over databases limited to in-library use only, and special consideration is given to acquiring proprietary materials that otherwise may not be available to the public. The selection of periodical subscriptions is governed by the same selection criteria used to choose other materials. In periodical selection, staff selects titles with broad appeal, those that may be difficult for patrons to obtain or those that fit a specific niche within the community.

Citizens of Sarasota County are encouraged to inform staff of recommendations for the collection. Popular demand is balanced by the customary professional evaluation and is considered within the context of the Library System's mission and budgetary limitations. Selection of materials in all areas of the library collection is governed, in whole or in part, by the following criteria (not in order of priority):

- Accuracy of information
- Potential or known use by citizens of Sarasota County
- Popular demand and current trends
- Literary merit or artistic quality
- Significance of subject matter
- Content of reviews in professional journals
- Reputation of the author, publisher or producer
- Relationship to other materials in the collection
- Current and/or permanent value to the collection
- Scarcity of material on the subject
- Availability of materials
- Cost
- Suitability of format (size, paper, print, binding, compatibility with library or personal technology devices)
- Ease of use (in particular with regard to electronic resources)
- Quality of physical format
- Local interest

V. Selection Tools

Staff utilizes a variety of selection tools to guide the decision making process for selection.

These tools include, but are not limited to, the following (not in order of priority):

- Current review sources and professional journals
- News publications
- Catalogs and flyers
- Current sources for in print books

- National and subject bibliographies
- Online databases
- Award, Recommended, Best, and Core collection lists

VI. Intellectual Freedom

An informed public is best supported through unrestricted access to materials that reflect a variety of ideas. The Library System supports and promotes this freedom by selecting and providing materials that represent a diversity of perspectives. In supporting unrestricted access to information, the Library System does not promulgate or support specific beliefs or single viewpoints. The selection of materials for inclusion in the collection does not constitute endorsement of the viewpoints contained therein. Library materials may include information or opinions that are controversial or unpopular with segments of the public. The Library System affirms the public's right to free access to information by supporting the American Library Association's Bill of Rights:

- <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/statementsif/librarybillrights.cfm> and companion statements of Freedom to Read
- <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/ftstatement/freedomreadstatement.cfm> and Freedom to View
- <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/ftvstatement/freedomviewstatement.cfm>

With respect to the use of library materials by children, the Library System recognizes that parents and legal guardians are responsible for guiding the choices of their children.

Furthermore, the Library System supports the American Library Association's stance that "parents and only parents have the right and the responsibility to restrict the access of their children – and only their children - to library resources" as stated in the Free Access to Libraries for Minors, An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

- <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/statementsif/interpretations/freeaccesslibraries.cfm>

VII. Patron Requests

Citizens of Sarasota County are encouraged to recommend materials to add to the collection.

All suggestions are evaluated although not all suggestions are added to the collection.

VIII. DONATIONS

The Library System accepts donations of books, audio and visual media and magazine subscriptions with the understanding that the items may not necessarily be added to the collection. All donated materials are evaluated by library staff, applying the same criteria used for the selection of new materials. Special collections materials such as genealogy resources, items of historical value and local interest items, especially unusual items or those in a specified subject area may be of exceptional value. Such items may be considered for addition to the collection even if they do not closely match the selection criteria. Self-publication, ad hoc publications and manuscripts follow the same [selection criteria](#) as other materials. The Collection Development Librarians are authorized to make these decisions. Donated materials which become part of the Library System's collection are governed by the same policies as purchased materials and may or may not float, depending upon the classification. Without exception, items that contain potentially harmful substances, such as mold, will not be accepted. (For information about monetary donations for the purpose of enhancing the Library System's collection, please see the Gifts and Bequests Policy within the Library System's Policies and Procedures Manual.)

IX. Availability and Access to Materials

The Library System makes its collections available to all. However, not all library materials are immediately accessible at all locations within the system. The Collection Development Librarians determine the appropriate number of copies to purchase and the appropriate placement by evaluating anticipated demand, the borrowing trends at each branch, space limitations and available budget. Libraries with larger or specialized collections serve as resource libraries for other branches.

The Library System is committed to the expeditious delivery of materials and information to patrons. Some library materials, however, may be subject to in-house use requirements due to rarity, cost, physical condition or the permanent value of the content.

X. Reconsideration of Materials

As recommended by the American Library Association, the Library System follows a formal procedure to respond to requests for reconsideration of an item in the collection. Any individual may request reconsideration. When a member of the community wishes the Library System to reconsider an item in the collection, he or she should submit a “Request to Reconsideration of Library Resources”. This form is available at all library locations.

XI. Rebalancing the Collection

Due to the nature of a floating collection, the volume and composition of branch collections change continuously. Periodic adjustments to the collection locations are made to maintain balance.

XII. Materials De-Selection

De-selection and selection must be recognized as similar yet different facets of the same continuous process that defines collection development. Like the selection process, de-selection of items reflects the Library System’s mission. Standard evaluation criteria are applied, including frequency of circulation, interest in the subject, and availability of more current materials. Library System staff conducts ongoing evaluation and subsequent withdrawal of items such as materials no longer in demand, resources containing outdated information, unnecessary duplicate copies, obsolete formats and items in poor condition.

XIII. Evaluation

Continuous collection evaluation is conducted to identify areas of strength and areas in need of enhancement, to assess the physical condition of individual items, and to apply standards of collection development.

XIV. Web Site Links

The Library System's website is designed to facilitate access to electronic information beyond the physical walls of the library. Links to Internet sites from the website are selected to broaden, enrich and complement the Library System's collections. Selection of resources on the website is consistent with the Library System's collection development policy of providing accurate and timely resources to meet the informational, educational and recreational needs of the citizens of Sarasota County.

Displaying an Internet link in no way signifies the endorsement of the linked website. Sites are reviewed and selected in accordance with selection criteria to assist in the location of information on the Internet. The linked sites are separate and independent from the Library System's website; the Library System does not control the information content on remote sites. The Library System cannot ensure the availability or accuracy of external electronic resources. As with print materials, not all electronic sources provide complete or current information.

Linked Internet sites are reviewed periodically for content, accessibility, accuracy and usefulness. Sites that no longer meet the selection criteria, or are inactive or outdated are removed. Factors considered when evaluating sites include: (not in order of priority)

- Access - stable site, no fees required, consistently available
- Design - well organized, clear instructions, easy to use, uncluttered and cleanly designed, graphics that enhance content
- Content - authoritative, documented, verifiable, accurate, updated regularly, relevance of subject matter
- Preference may be given to educational (.edu), governmental (.gov), and non-profit organization sites (.org)

- Content of use to library staff in assisting customers
- Content that meets the needs and interest of the citizens of Sarasota County