
Board Policy

Selection of Library Materials

Policy Statement

Pierce County Library System has the responsibility to provide fair and equitable access to information to all people of our community.

Pierce County Library System selects materials and resources that support the Library's mission statement:

To empower the people of Pierce County by advancing all forms of literacy, championing access to information, creating inclusive and inspired spaces, and enriching lives.

Purpose

The Board of Trustees of Pierce County Library System recognizes that the highest potential of American democracy can only be realized when a full range of ideas is accessible to the people as embodied in the United States Constitution's First Amendment and Article 1 of the Washington State Constitution, which protects the free expression of ideas.

The Library's physical and digital collections, protected by Federal and State Constitutions, are a marketplace of ideas, contained in varied and divergent materials and formats.

Policy

The Library's collections will be selected and maintained to provide material to enable each individual to acquire or adapt the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in self-government, be productive, elevate the individual's humanity and contribute to the enjoyment of life according to the full exercise of free choice. Full information about issues of public concern requires access to information sources which embody, represent, illustrate and challenge these concerns. Library use is an individual, private matter. Adult individuals are free to select or reject materials for themselves, however, they cannot restrict the freedom of others to read, view or inquire. Responsibility for use of library materials by children and teens rests with their parents or legal guardians.

The Executive Director of the Pierce County Library System and, at the Executive Director's designation, such members of the staff who are qualified by reason of education and training are responsible for the selection of library materials. The Library's collections will include as broad a selection as possible. Subjects will be covered in sufficient depth to meet anticipated and expressed needs.

The Library will:

Provide diverse and inclusive collections that contain viewpoints by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences

- Provide collections that anticipates the needs and numbers of potential users
- Consider public demand, both specific and general, as expressed through requests, suggestions, and use to develop the collections

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- Consider the availability of the same, or similar, materials in other libraries or agencies
 - Consider the need for all subjects covered and viewpoints expressed
 - Consider the effect that subjects and viewpoints selected have on developing a balanced collection
 - Consider the unique nature of branch locations in developing their collections
 - Consider the unique nature of digital materials in developing their collections

Any combination of the following characteristics may be considered when selecting library materials:

- Literary or stylistic quality
- Materials created by and representative of marginalized and underrepresented groups
- Reputations, qualifications, and significance of author, producer, or publisher
- Accuracy, currency, timeliness, and validity
- Attention of critics, reviewers, awards and public
- Resources from self-published, independent, small, and local producers
- Physical quality and effectiveness of format and appropriateness of format to subject
- Cost, as measured against competing materials on the same subject
- Resources in formats that meet the needs of users with disabilities
- Availability of discounts and efficiency in vendors used for purchasing
- Suitability for intended audience
- Availability of subscriptions and standing orders for popular materials, reference and nonfiction items published or released annually

The Library welcomes public suggestion of items and subjects not included in the Library's collections. Requests for items to be added to the collections may be made through the Library's website.

Forms of expression that are not protected by Federal and State Constitution and as established by a court having jurisdiction over the Pierce County Library System will not knowingly be included in the Library's collection.

The Library's collections will be organized and maintained to facilitate access. No additional labeling, sequestering or alteration of materials because of controversy related to them will be sanctioned.

Reconsideration of Materials:

The Library welcomes expressions of opinion from customers concerning materials selected for the collections. To question a collection selection decision, a customer should first address the concern with Library staff at the branch. Many of the comments and questions that customers have regarding library materials can be answered through conversations with Library staff members. Alternatively, comments or questions about library materials may be submitted to Library administration in person, in writing, or online.

A formal process for requesting that an item in the collections be reconsidered is also available. This formal materials challenge is initiated when a fully completed and signed copy of the Request for Reconsideration Form is received by the Library. Request for Reconsideration forms, available at any library branch, will be accepted only from residents within Pierce County Library System's service area for items owned by the Pierce County Library System. The Collection Management Director, a Collection Management Librarian, and the supervisor from the branch who received the challenge will perform an independent review of the item challenged.

During the review process, the material in question will remain accessible to Library customers. The review process does not consider individual passages. No materials shall be excluded from the Library's

collections solely because of coarse language or implicit or explicit treatment of certain situations or if the work meets the selection criteria outlined in this policy. Upon completion of their review, the reviewers will deliver a report with recommendations to the Public Services Deputy Director who will deliver a formal written response to the complainant. The customer may appeal that decision to the Executive Director within five (5) days of receipt of this response. The Executive Director will review the challenge, the material, the staff research and reports, Board policies (including this policy), the Washington Library Association Intellectual Freedom Statement, the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, and Article I of the Washington State Constitution. A response will be provided in writing within 30 days.

Upon request, the Board of Trustees may hear an appeal of the Executive Director's response. Appeals must be presented to the Board in writing and be received within 30 days after receiving a response to a challenge. The standard of review exercised by the Board in reviewing any appeal is whether there is clear and convincing evidence that the Executive Director's determination was not based upon substantial evidence or support, and that the staff's decision complied with the Library's policy and selection criteria. After consultation with legal counsel, the Board will determine whether the staff's decision should be upheld, modified, or overturned. The decision of the Board is final. The Board will provide written notice of its decision to the patron.

Withdrawal of Materials

Withdrawing materials from the collections is as important part of the maintenance of the Library's collections as the initial selection. Therefore, the Library shall consider the same factors as the selection policy, as well as condition and space, when withdrawing items.

This paragraph is not intended to sanction removal of library materials based upon any controversy surrounding the material.

Board Policy

Adopted by the Pierce County Rural Library District Board of Trustees on November 11, 1992. Mission Statement revised April 11, 1996 with the adoption of the Long Range Plan. Revised February 13, 2008. Revised, January 8, 2014. Revised September 14, 2022. Revised May 14, 2025.

By the enactment of this policy the Board of Trustees of Pierce County Library System is concurrently rescinding any prior policy or procedure within PCLS that is either in conflict with or expansive of the matters addressed in this policy.