Mercer County Library System
Collection Development Policy

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Preface

The collections of the Mercer County Library System can be used free of charge by anyone who lives, works, or owns property in East Windsor, Ewing, Hopewell, Lawrence, Robbinsville and West Windsor Townships and Hightstown Borough. Since the Mercer County Library System cannot acquire and retain all available materials, it must utilize a policy of selective acquisition and collection maintenance. Collection development is a judgmental, interpretive set of processes applied by professional librarians. These processes require: knowledge of community needs; familiarity with the library system's collections and appropriate bibliographic tools; a general knowledge of subject literature; and consideration of the library's financial resources.

The library's collections include materials in a variety of formats, at many intellectual levels, to serve a wide range of ages, reading, listening and viewing skills, and educational backgrounds. Its collections are developed to provide the resources needed by its service population, in accordance with the Library Mission Roles and Goals Statement. Staff members assigned to collection development for any library branch shall obtain an accurate profile of the population served, in order to recognize and meet its needs. Public demands shall be treated as an indicator of need. Because resources should reflect the changing requirements of our patrons, collection development policy shall be subject to continuous review.
Responsibility for Collection Development

Final authority for the determination of policy in the development of Library collections is vested in the Library Director and the Supervising Librarian for Patron Services. Responsibility for selection, withdrawal of materials, and control of expenditures rests with Branch Managers, who operate within the framework of the administration policy and contribute to its formation and revision.

LAWRENCE HEADQUARTERS LIBRARY

The Headquarters Library is an information center supporting the Library's Branches. As the repository for a large backup collection of educational and recreational materials, it holds a selection of resources for all ages, in various media formats. The Headquarters Library also serves as the local library for Lawrence Township, and maintains a current collection of popular materials which reflect that community's needs and interests.

BRANCH LIBRARIES

Each branch maintains a current collection of fiction and non-fiction titles that reflects the needs and interests of its community. The collections include adult, young adult and juvenile materials, representative collections of audiovisual materials, basic reference tools, and a selection of popular periodicals. Branch collections are not intended to be all-inclusive in coverage.
Public Inquiries Concerning Book Collections

Requests and recommendations by patrons are welcome. Any request for a specific title will be given consideration. Any title receiving four or more patron requests will be considered for purchase. If the requested material is not purchased, the library will attempt to obtain it through interlibrary loan. If a requested item is purchased, additional copies for the system will, in general, be acquired at the rate of one copy per six patron reserves.

The library is committed to the encouragement and protection of the free flow of information and ideas, and to the right of free access to information for all individuals. It subscribes to the principles outlined in the American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read Statement, and the Freedom to View Statement.

Library materials are intended for a heterogeneous population with various tastes and needs. The choice of materials by users is an individual matter. Responsibility for the children and adolescents reading choices rests with their parents or legal guardians.

Requests for Reevaluation

Any patron may request that the library review a selection or withdrawal decision. Those who wish reconsideration of a specific title must fully complete the attached Citizen’s Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials form. The request will then be referred to a Materials Reevaluation Committee, consisting of 2 professional staff members and a Commission Member.

The Commission Member serving on the Materials Reevaluation Committee will be appointed at the reorganization meeting by the Commission President to serve for one year.

Alphabetical rosters of Professional Librarians (other than Youth Services Librarians) and Youth Services Librarians will be maintained. The librarians serving on the Reevaluation Committee will be selected from these lists on a rotating basis.

If the material in question is intended for use by children, then one Committee Member will be selected from the Youth Services roster. If it is an adult item two librarians will be selected from the Professional Librarians roster. The individual is not required to participate.
Appeal of Reevaluation Committee Decision

If the individual requesting reevaluation of an item is not satisfied with the decision of the Reevaluation Committee, they may appeal the decision by forwarding a letter to the President of the Mercer County Library Commission stating the basis of the appeal and enclosing a copy of the original request for reconsideration form and a copy of the reevaluation committee's report. A reevaluation committee appeal will appear as a separate agenda item within the next two Commission Meetings. The Commission will make a decision based on consideration of the collection development policy, public comment heard at the Commission Meeting and such other resources as the Commission may wish to consult. The findings and decision of the Commission will be published as part of the minutes of the meeting at which the appeal was heard.
General Collection Development Policies

Selection Criteria

Staff members involved in the development of materials collections select materials to reflect a variety of viewpoints. Materials are selected on the basis of favorable reviews in reliable journals or standard bibliographic tools. Important criteria include:

- Public demand as expressed in requests for the title.
- The author's reputation.
- The title's timeliness.
- The title's relation to the existing collection, e.g. the need for new coverage on the subject, opposing points of view, curriculum related materials, etc.
- Local authorship/subject matter; this consideration in some cases overrides literary/artistic considerations.

Selection Tools

Primary tools employed by the Library staff for selection of adult materials are Booklist, Kirkus, Library Journal, and Publisher's Weekly. For children's materials the primary tools for selection are School Library Journal, Booklist, and Kirkus, Young Adult materials are generally selected from Booklist, School Library Journal, KLIATT, and VOYA: Voice of the Youth Advocate. The online bibliographic databases, i.e., Title Source II from Baker & Taylor Company, are used to gather information, including reviews from the selection tools mentioned above, for selection consideration and is utilized by adult, children's and young adult selectors.

Donations

The Mercer County Library accepts donations of books and materials for inclusion into the library’s collections; however all donated materials must meet the selection criteria found at the start of this General Collection Development Policies section. If the donated material does not meet those requirements the material is not added and may be used in the library systems book sales.

Books donated by authors, or request from authors to purchase their works, will be considered for inclusion into the library collection if the material meets the selection criteria found at the beginning of this General Collection Development Policies section. Authors requesting the inclusion of their material will be required to provide the library with a complimentary review copy that will not be returned regardless of the library’s decision; a physical copy is required rather than any other format since durability is also a consideration.
Withdrawals from collection

Systematic removal of materials (known as weeding), which are no longer useful, is essential to maintaining overall collection quality. Professional staff members with collection evaluation responsibility shall continuously evaluate materials for accuracy, currency, condition and user appeal. Materials no longer needed by patrons, including obsolete works, superseded editions, superfluous duplicates, and worn-out or badly-marked materials, shall be withdrawn or "weeded", in order to ensure the efficient use of limited space. Each Branch Manager is responsible for weeding and developing the branch collections on an annual basis.

In all collections, the following factors shall be considered during the weeding process:

- **Declining or Nonexistent Use Patterns**: Headquarters' items which have not circulated for five years and Branch items which have not circulated for two to three years shall be considered for withdrawal.
- **Physical condition**: Damaged materials shall be discarded unless their content is very significant and they cannot be replaced.
- **Last Copy**: The Headquarters' Library shall be repository for last copies in the system, and unique but little-used materials. As a reservoir form which other Branches draw, it should carefully consider withdrawals and not necessarily make them conform to numerical ratios. Last-copy withdrawals made at the Branches should be offered to the Headquarters' Library before they are discarded, if appropriate.
- **Copyright Date**: Although most classics and valuable editions will be retained, dated materials will be discarded and replaced with more current materials, when they are available.

In general, duplicate copies in excess of three, or former "bestsellers" or "top of the charts" titles, shall be discarded after the popularity of these items has waned. Fine arts, local history, literary history, and collected literary works shall be weeded sparingly.

Reference

When superseded by new editions, general reference works may be discarded, re-catalogued into one of the circulating collections or passed to another branch with a less current edition. At least one up-to-date encyclopedia shall be available at each branch, either in print or CD-ROM format.

Replacements

The decision to replace materials that are lost, damaged, or worn out shall be influenced by continued demand, existence of adequate coverage of the topic with remaining materials, and availability of copies elsewhere in the system.
Textbooks

Textbooks are included in the circulating collections only if they fill a special need or are among the best works available on a given subject.

Gifts

Materials donated to the Library are evaluated according to the same standards as purchased materials. All donations become the property of the Mercer County Library System. A member of the professional staff will retain the final authority in the disposition of accepted material. The Library does not provide patrons with assessment of the monetary value of gifts for tax deduction purposes.

Discards

The weeded books identified as property of the Mercer County Library should be offered first to local schools and second to local institutions and non-profit organizations.

Once these agencies have reviewed the material and selected anything which may be useful to them, the remaining items may be sold through Friends of the Library groups.

A branch may choose to send all weeded materials directly to Lawrence Administration where this procedure will be followed.

Interlibrary Loans (ILL)

Materials requested for Interlibrary Loan will be considered for purchase if they fall under one or more or the following criteria:

- Multiple loan requests are made for the same title within a two week period.
- Fiction requests (if the title is in print.)
- Non-Fiction from the requests that are published within one year from the date of the request (if title is in print).

Bindery

Care should be exercised and very selective decisions made in sending books to the bindery. Re-binding should be reserved for titles which cannot be replaced or would be too costly to replace, using the following criteria:

- Out-of-print books which are of high value to the collection.
- One volume of a set which is still in good condition and important to the collection.
- Expensive books which are important to the collection.
Books which should not go the bindery include fiction, children's books, paperbacks, older books with yellowed or brittle paper, any book presently in print (unless very expensive) or time-dated books, which are close to being out-of-date.

Periodicals

The Lawrence Headquarters Library and Branches select periodicals to meet the demand for general reading, reference information, and the most current data in subject areas. Criteria for selection shall include: coverage by EBSCOhost Magazine Index and other standard indexes, patron demand, and presentation of points of view that balance the collection.

Subscription renewals shall be subject to annual evaluation by Branch Managers and appropriate professional staff.

Decisions on discarding periodicals in the Branches will be made, taking into consideration the Lawrence Headquarters and other Branches' holdings, as well as space limitations and other physical considerations.

Large Print

Large print materials are collected at each branch. The goal is to have a variety of materials available to large print readers.

Young Adult

The Mercer County Library System recognizes that young adults (ages 12 and older) form a service population with special reading interests and information needs. Young adult collections are maintained in all Branches to meet these needs and to encourage the continued enjoyment of reading. These collections, which emphasize browsing and leisure reading, include a large variety of popular paperbacks, some fiction and non-fiction hardcover books, and high-interest/low vocabulary books to meet demand.

Young adult materials are selected and maintained by a professional youth services librarian. Criteria for selection include demand from the young adult public and reviews in such selection tools as School Library Journal, VOYA: Voice of the Youth Advocate, and KLIATT. An effort is made to select materials representing a variety of viewpoints.

Young adult collections are weeded and inventoried annually by Youth Services librarians in accordance with the previously stated weeding policy.
Children

The Mercer County Library System's children's collections include print and audio visual materials to satisfy and stimulate the informational, educational, and recreational needs of children. Youth services librarians select materials to reflect a variety of viewpoints using standard review sources such as *School Library Journal* and *Kirkus*. Selections are also based on reader demand and interest and suggestions from parents, teachers and adults working with children. To maintain the collection, out-of-date and worn materials should be weeded on a regular basis. Replacements and duplicates are purchased based on public demand and budget limitations.
Databases

Online Databases: With many print and CD-ROM databases migrating to the Internet, access to online databases shall be a priority. Online databases, unlike print resources and CD-ROMs, can be updated on a daily basis. Purchase of access to databases covering subject areas that require constant updating will be considered. Deciding factors when acquiring access to online databases are update frequency, cost, ease of use and reliability.

Among the most important resource for finding online databases is Library Journal.

Reference CD-ROMs: The reference CD-ROM collection is an important part of the library's collection development policy. Informational areas where currency and completeness are required are areas where Reference CD-ROMs might serve a need, as well as areas, such as atlases, where visual information is very important.

Factors that should be considered in acquiring Reference CD-ROMs for purchase include: update frequency, ease of use, searchability, price and multimedia capabilities. If a CD-ROM version of a print resource will provide more information and ease of use for a similar price and has multimedia or other capabilities that increases its value to a patron, it may be considered over the print version.

Most important selection tools for reference CD-ROMs are Library Journal, and Software Reviews on File. PC magazines, such as PC World and eWeek can also be valuable sources of information. If a print resource exists that the reference staff thinks might be more useful on CD-ROM, the reference staff may inquire directly to the company to see if a CD-ROM version exists.

Circulating CD-ROMs: Circulating CD-ROMs should be considered an important part of each branch's collection. Collection development should focus on CD-ROMs that most closely meet the user population's information needs.

Because of their multi media capabilities CD-ROMs allow more effective learning than print resources, or complement learning from print resources. Among these are language learning software, multimedia encyclopedias, music learning software, and home landscaping and design software. Youth Services librarians may also want to supplement their print collections with math and language learning software.

CD-ROM games, which do not have educational value, will not be considered for purchase.

Unlike books, CD-ROMs have special requirements that must be met before they can be run. They require a certain amount of memory and hard disk space, as well as certain operating system. Since Windows is the most popular operating system, most CD-ROMs acquired should be compatible with that operating system. CD-ROMs compatible with Macintosh or Linux operating systems should be bought according to their popularity.
CD-ROMs software will need to be replaced on a regular basis, as new version of the products come out that contain new information and have new features. Especially to be weeded are those CD-ROMs not compatible with newer operating systems, for example those compatible only with DOS.

**Audio-Visual Collections**

The Mercer County Library System offers a wide range of audiovisual resources and materials. Videos, compact discs, audiocassettes, DVDs and Books on Tape/CD are selected by the professional staff in a systematic manner, using review media, critical works and patron requests as selection guides.

The media collections shall be weeded routinely, with materials in poor physical condition withdrawn at any time.

**Video and DVD collections**: Videos and DVDs for both adults and Children are selected to meet educational, cultural and entertainment needs of our communities. Selection criteria include:

- Favorable reviews in reliable journals and sources.
- Director’s/Producer’s reputation. Material’s subject timeliness.
- Material’s relation to existing collection, e.g., the need for new coverage on a subject or opposing viewpoint.
- Public demand as expressed in requests for the title, if the title fits within any of the above criteria.

Because resources for purchasing audiovisual materials are limited, the Mercer County Library System does not purchase the latest popular entertainment videos or DVDs in a comprehensive fashion. The Mercer County Library System will therefore purchase a representative collection of popular entertainment videos and DVDs that meet the above criteria, garner critically-acclaimed reviews, and which fall within the collection needs as determined by the library audiovisual selectors. The Mercer County Library System will not purchase more than one copy of a DVD or video title per branch.

**Audio Recordings**: Audio recordings are collected in compact disc and/or audiocassettes format at all Branches. Criteria for selection include public demand, importance of the work or performance, recording quality and relation to other materials in the system.

**Books on Audio Cassette/CD**: The Mercer County Library System has a collection of books recorded on tape and CD. Criteria for selection include patron demand and favorable review.
Special Collections

Lawrence Headquarters Library's Reference Collection

The Lawrence Headquarters Branch is responsible for reference support to all system Branches, and thus must maintain the most current and comprehensive collection of reference sources. The reference staff also utilizes the resources of the Statewide Reference Center when necessary.

No one format, such as print, CD-ROM, or Internet databases, should be given absolute priority. Those resources which are acquired should be looked at on the basis of the following criteria: ease of use; popular demand; currency; price and what they add to the collection that other works in the same subject area do not.

Reference librarians have the responsibility of evaluating new books for the collection and for keeping the collection current. Important collection development tools include *Library Journal*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Booklist*, and electronic selection tools (which bring together reviews form many publications.)

Pamphlets and Other Vertical File Materials

Vertical files will be maintained at the Headquarters Library and in the Branches as supplements to other collections. They shall provide timely and accurate information that is not readily available in other sources with special emphasis on local information.

The Lawrence Headquarters Library maintains special vertical file collections on New Jersey and Mercer County and its municipalities. Each branch shall maintain an extensive file on its local government and history.

Each item placed in the files shall be dated, and a systematic removal process shall be in effect. Continuing demand, currency and relevance to local history shall be reflected in retention choices.

Microforms

Microfilm and microfiche are available in the Lawrence Headquarters and Ewing Branch collections in order to acquire and preserve items not available in print, and to conserve storage space. As most microfilm materials acquired by the Library are copies of printed originals, the traditional principles of selection usually apply.
Maps

The Lawrence Headquarters Library reference collection shall include a broad range of maps, with exhaustive coverage of material on Mercer County and nearby areas of the state. Branches will hold small, representative collections of physical, highway/street and historical maps.

Selection criteria should include accuracy, currency, facility of use, suitability of format for the intended age level, and durability. Maps of lasting importance that are perishable should be considered for preservation by means of cloth backing or lamination.

New Jersey Collection

The Lawrence Headquarters' New Jersey Collection contains New Jersey historical and genealogical materials, with special emphasis on Mercer County. Books and other materials of significance to New Jersey and especially to Mercer County should be added regularly to the collection.

Preservation, rather than withdrawal, shall be the decision in most cases for disposition of worn or damaged materials, as this is one of the few organized sources of local history.

Foreign Language Materials

Branches shall maintain small collections of titles in Spanish, Chinese, French, German, Russian and other languages, based on demand. The collections consist of popular fiction and nonfiction and are primarily intended for the recreational reading of patrons fluent in the languages represented, or students and teachers of foreign language.

Lawrence Headquarters' Library has a large collection of foreign language materials in many languages. West Windsor branch, which serves a large Asian population, will concentrate on developing Chinese and Hindi language collections. Hightstown branch will actively collect Spanish language materials to serve its significant Hispanic community.

To meet additional demand, interlibrary loan can be utilized, e.g., a bulk loan from Newark Public Library.

Graphic Novels

According to YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association), graphic novels are defined as "book length collections of sequential art containing a single story, or a set of interrelated stories. Not to be included are: illustrated books; non-illustrated books featuring superheroes as a main character; non-fiction books about comics and graphic novels; and collections of comic strips". The use of the Graphic Novel collection is
primarily recreational. The novels included in this collection span traditional age ranges - juveniles, young adults and adults may all find titles of interest. Various subject areas are covered and one may find both fiction and non-fiction topics covered.

Various tools are used when selecting titles for the Graphic Novel collection. Review sources such at VOYA, Library Journal and Brodart TIPS; listservs and web sites; and patron requests all are taken into consideration when acquiring materials. Much of the collection is driven by popular culture and patron demand.