

New Haven Free Public Library Collection Development Policy

I. Library Mission and Collection Statement

Library Mission

The New Haven Free Public Library fosters lifelong learning, inspires curiosity, and builds community through shared access to resources, experiences, and opportunities for all.

Purpose/Scope of Collection

The Collection Development Policy supports the Library in its mission, defines the purposes and objectives of NHFPL'S collections, and gives direction to their growth and development.

To support its mission, the Library collects, organizes, and provides access to information to enhance the cultural, creative, civic, and spiritual growth of the New Haven community. The Library actively seeks to promote awareness of its resources and services to community members and organizations.

The objective is to acquire a collection of resources that is well-balanced and representative of the community and adequately satisfies the needs of New Haven's residents. Library staff are committed to selecting, maintaining, and supporting access to content that is diverse, inclusive, and enriching to fulfill the ongoing needs, interest, abilities of all the people the library serves.

Intellectual Freedom and Censorship

The Library's paramount role in a democratic society is to inform decision-making by collecting information within a broad spectrum of responsible viewpoints on current issues and fulfilling its purpose as a place for voluntary inquiry, the dissemination of information and ideas and the promotion of free expression and free access to ideas by residents. The Library endorses the statement that "Democratic education communicates rational knowledge and shared social values while honoring the individual's freedom to challenge these ideas and values." ¹

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It is the Library's responsibility to provide free access to such materials and it incorporates the **Library Bill of Rights**, adopted by the Council of the American Library Association, the **Freedom to Read Statement**, prepared by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association, and the American Book Publisher's Council, the American Library Association's **Freedom to View Statement** and the **First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States**. The principles embodied in the above documents apply to all materials, not only to printed matter. The Library seeks to fulfill its primary collection development objective by adhering to professional standards, and established procedures. Developing and maintaining a diverse collection requires:

¹ McCabe, *Civic Librarianship*, 2001

- Commitment to building, organizing, and preserving an inclusive collection of materials across its five locations that is representative of its surrounding communities.
- Emphasis on digital equity and inclusion in the community by providing free access to printed and digital media, broadband internet, lendable technologies.
- Selection of content in multiple formats including print, digital and electronic formats.
- Consideration and collection of resources created by and representative of marginalized and underrepresented authors and/or creators.
- Curation of content by and about a balanced range of people, cultures, and subjects to authentically reflect a wide range of varied and diverging ideas, information, stories, and experiences in the collection as a whole.
- Acquisition of resources in languages and formats used in the community the library serves, where possible.

The final approval of this policy rests with the Library Board of Directors. Responsibility for the implementation and oversight of this policy rests with the City Librarian. The selection of materials will be delegated to qualified employees in the various departments and services of the Library, subject to review by the City Librarian.

II. Responsibility of Selecting Library Materials

Library materials shall be chosen by librarians professionally trained to curate and develop a collection that provides access to the widest array of library and educational materials, for values of interest, information, enlightenment, recreation, and credibility (i.e., sourced from standard, recognized review media). The Library does not exclude materials solely because of the race, nationality, political, gender, sexuality, or social views of the author. All library materials are evaluated and made accessible in accordance with the protections against discrimination set forth in section 46a-64 of the general statutes.

Any librarian or staff member of a public library who, in good faith, implements the policies described therein shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed and shall have the same immunity with respect to any judicial proceeding that results from such implementation.

III. Selection Criteria and Responsibility

These materials shall be selected according to the following guidelines.

General Criteria

1. Suitability of subject and treatment for intended audience
2. Present and potential material relevance to assessed community needs
3. Importance as a document of the times
4. Relation to existing collection and other material held on the subject
5. Reputation and/or significance of author
6. Skill, competence, and purpose of creator
7. Attention of critics, reviewers and public as evidenced in standard review sources
8. Suitability of physical form, content, and style for Library use
9. Potential user appeal and/or continued demand of material
10. Cost and availability

Non-Fiction

The Library's non-fiction collection includes material on topics of interest or concern to the New Haven community. The Library also purchases books, audiovisual items, and e-resources for those whose interests or needs are not widely shared.

Unusually expensive materials and those with an extremely narrow or limited focus are not normally acquired. In addition, textbooks and academic titles are not normally acquired.

The Library attempts to collect materials representing all significant points of view on current and historical questions and controversies, including legal, constitutional, political, economic, medical, ethical, religious, social, sexual, and other issues. Inclusion of material representing a particular belief, opinion, or point of view in the Library's collection does not constitute endorsement by the Library.

Specific Criteria for the Evaluation of Nonfiction

1. Authority
2. Comprehensiveness and depth of treatment
3. Objectivity
4. Clarity, accuracy, and logic of presentation
5. Currency
6. Representation of various, including underrepresented and marginalized, groups and challenging points of view

Fiction

This collection provides classic, critically acclaimed, current, and popular works of fiction in print and digital formats. There is an emphasis on meeting the demand from recreational readers for popular, new titles.

Specific Criteria for the Evaluation of Fiction

1. Representation of movement, genre, trend, or national culture
2. Vitality and originality
3. Artistic presentation and experimentation
4. Sustained interest
5. Effective characterization
6. Authenticity of historical or social setting

There is no single standard that can be applied in all cases when deciding on whether to add items to the collection. No publication will be excluded solely because of the race, nationality, gender, sexuality, political or social views of the creator.

The Library will add the best literary and nonfiction works produced each year based on critical acclaim and literary awards. The goal is to create for the public a collection representative of the best of human thought, creativity, and knowledge across the range of human experience.

IV. Overview of Physical, Digital Materials and Databases Collection

The Library collects materials in the formats as listed below:

- Print: Books, magazines, newspapers, historical City of New Haven documents and materials, Government documents, census data
- Physical Media: DVDs, music CDs, audiobooks on CD, audio, and visual foreign language learning materials
- Digital Media or Electronic Resources: Online databases, streaming and downloadable eBooks, films, music.
- Museum and Theater Passes: The Library offers free or discounted passes to local and state museums and shows.
- Library of Things: The Library curates a collection of items for checkout or in-library use to facilitate learning and exploration such as board games, baking pans, musical instruments, STEM kits, seed libraries and more. Offerings in this collection are subject to change based on community demands and availability.
- Lendable Technologies: Chromebooks, hotspots, laptops, iPads

- Early Literacy Resources: Launchpads, Early Literacy Backpacks

V. Local History

The Local History Room located at Ives Main Library preserves and promotes the history and cultural heritage of New Haven. It seeks, through its collection, to relate the City's rich history to its present.

The Local History collection supports public interests by archiving books, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, photographs, genealogical materials, municipal documents, maps, atlases, audiovisual materials, electronic resources, and indices which document the economic, natural, political, and social history of New Haven. The collection also includes works on general Connecticut history, historical methodology and the history of the New Haven Free Public Library.

The Local History Room maintains a digital collection of historic images. Items are chosen from the Library's photo archives and the Local History collection, and include photographs, postcards, and maps of historical relevance to New Haven.

Community Artifacts, valuable manuscripts, and other items of relatively high intrinsic value and/or rarity may be considered for addition to the collection. However, the special considerations these items may entail may not be consistent with the public nature of the Local History collection. Should the Library decline any donated local history items, suggestions will be provided for placement in other New Haven area special collections.

VI. Gifts and Donated Materials

The Library accepts a limited number of donated books and other materials. The ability to receive large donations depends on staff availability to evaluate and process gift materials. The same selection criteria are applied to unsolicited items as to purchased items. The Library will dispose of gifts that are not added to the collection according to the guidelines outlined under *Collection Maintenance*. The donor may impose no restrictions on the use of gift books or other gift materials added to the collection and no special collections shall be set up as a condition for such a gift unless approved by the Library Board of Directors. The Library does not accept textbooks for donation in any condition.

Yale University Press gifts the Library \$2,500 in books each fiscal year. NHFPL Collection Managers select the titles.

VII. Interlibrary Loan

Interlibrary Loan supports collection development by obtaining books or articles not available in our collection from other libraries. This is a service to provide New Haven residents with access to materials not in the Library's collection or that fall outside the Library's overall collection development policy. Titles frequently requested and falling within selection criteria will be purchased and added to the collection.

VIII. Collection Maintenance

The Library will maintain an active, useful collection by retaining or replacing essential material according to the availability of duplicates, age appropriate or grade-level material and removing on a continuous basis those publications which are, obsolete, of little historical significance, no longer in demand, or in poor physical condition. Criteria applied to the selection of books and audiovisual items will also be applied to their removal.

Books that have been donated or de-accessioned may be offered for sale via a third-party vendor that the Library uses to re-sell select items. Materials may be offered to local charitable organizations which accept them. Materials are given to local agencies intending that they will not re-sell the items.

IX. Controversial Materials

The Library recognizes that some materials may not be considered appropriate by all patrons. Selections will not be made based upon anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the merits of the work in relation to the building of the collection and to serving the interests of the overall library patron community.

Responsibility for the reading, listening, and viewing habits of children rests with their parents or legal guardians. The Library maintains several age-appropriate collections for children and teens. Materials may be reassigned among these sub-collections based on the age appropriateness of the content. Selection of adult material will not be inhibited by the possibility that books may inadvertently come into the possession of children. The removal, exclusion or censoring of any book on the sole basis that an individual finds such book offensive is prohibited.

Library materials will not be marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of the contents, and no catalogued book or other item will be removed from the open shelves except for the express purpose of protecting it from damage or theft.

The decision by an author, publisher, or other content creator to withdraw their work from the market and stop selling or publishing it will not be considered sufficient reason alone for the Library to withdraw it from the collection.

The Library neither approves nor disapproves of the views expressed in materials included in the collection.

X. Requests by the Public

Suggestions by the public for materials that they would like to have added to the Library's collection are always welcome and will be considered for purchase, using the criteria described in this policy. A "Request to Purchase" form is available for this purpose. The form is attached to the end of this document. Also available online here: <https://nhfpl.org/how-do-i/request/suggest-a-purchase/>

The forms are forwarded to selectors who make the decision whether to purchase the item. If the item is ordered, a hold is placed for the requesting patron.

XI. Requests for Reconsideration of Library Materials

The New Haven Free Public Library limits consideration of requests to reconsider material, displays or programs to individual residents of the City of New Haven. Please see our Materials Review and Reconsideration Policy for additional information on this process.

XII. Revision of Policy

This policy will be periodically reviewed at least every three years by the City Librarian, Deputy Director, Acquisitions Librarian and assigned staff. Recommendations for revision will be brought before the Library Board of Directors.

Last reviewed, revised, and approved by NHFPL Board of Directors, October 28, 2025. Approved by the NHFPL Board of Directors, July 27, 2021; previous version approved October 24, 2023