

Materials Selection Policy – Book and Nonbook Selection

Approved: February 19, 2026; July 28, 1981
Revised: 2026; 2013; 1999; 1982

Policy Statement

The Harford County Public Library Board of Trustees and the Harford County Public Library uphold the following principles of service:

Provide open, non-judgmental access to collections and services without regard to ethnicity, citizenship, national origin, age, gender, educational level, economic status, religion, disability, or any other protected class, status, or condition protected by law.

Promote and provide free access to the communication of ideas and information.

Advocate and support First Amendment rights and the [Library Bill of Rights](#), and protect library materials from censorship.

Create an environment that encourages users to encounter the rich diversity of concepts upon which a democratic society depends.

Materials selected for the library collection are intended to meet the cultural, informational, educational, and entertainment needs of the citizens of Harford County. The primary objective of selection is to acquire materials of both contemporary significance and permanent value. The Harford County Public Library strives for representative and current materials that reflect new trends, ideas, and controversial topics from various points of view as well as a broad range of material that illuminates the past.

Harford County Public Library operates in accordance with the standards set forth in Maryland's Freedom to Read Act and its implementing regulations (COMAR 14.38.03 and related provisions):

1. Library materials, services, and resources exist and should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all persons the library serves;
2. A Library should not exclude material from its catalogue because of the origin, background, or views of a person who created the materials; and
3. A Library should not prohibit or remove material from its catalogue because of partisan, ideological, or religious disapproval;
4. The Right to use a library belongs to all individuals in the library's community and shall not be denied or hindered because of an individual's origin, age, background or views;
5. A Library should make its public spaces and facilities available to all members of the public it serves on an equitable basis; and
6. A Library should honor the right of privacy of each person who uses its services and must protect personal data and information.

In accordance with these standards, the Library affirms the following:

1. All Marylanders have the freedom to read, and the library will support that freedom with its collection.
2. The Library is responsible for providing adequate services to satisfy the diverse needs of its users.

3. Librarians and library staff “will curate collections that provide access to the widest possible array of books and other materials that support learning” (COMAR 14.38.03.B.04) within the limits of their resources.
4. The Library Board of Trustees “may not dismiss, suspend, discipline, demote, reassign, transfer, or otherwise retaliate against an employee for performing their job duties consistent with the library’s written policy under this regulation”, including decisions related to materials selection, access, and curation (COMAR 14.38.03.D).

Final authority for the determination of the policies in this document is vested in the Library’s Board of Trustees. The authority and responsibility for selection of library materials are delegated by the Board to the Library Director, and under their direction, to the staff who are qualified for this activity by reason of education, training, and experience. The final decision for purchase rests with the Library Director or their designee.

Freedom to Read Parental Responsibility

The Harford County Public Library Board of Trustees and the Harford County Public Library believe that while anyone is free to reject for himself/herself library materials which he or she does not approve, the individual cannot restrict the freedom of others to read, [view](#), or hear. Parents or legal guardians have the responsibility to guide and direct the reading, viewing, or listening of their own minor children. The library does not take the place of the parent or legal guardian. The responsibility for the use of library materials by minors under the age of 18 rests with their parents or legal guardians.

Criteria for Selection

Each item selected or donated, regardless of format, is evaluated in accordance with established [library procedures](#). Since no library can feasibly acquire all print and non-print materials, every library must of necessity employ a policy of selectivity in acquisitions. Selection decisions are made on the basis of staff member judgment, expertise and knowledge of what is already in the collection, and by evaluating reviews and other selection tools and criteria. Library customers [may request](#) that materials be re-evaluated for placement or reconsidered for inclusion in the library collection.

The criteria employed in the selection process are intended to be inclusive, rather than exclusive, and are deliberately flexible. While all relevant factors are considered in the selection process, some may be given more weight than others in any specific selection decision.

The evaluation of materials is characterized by flexibility and responsiveness to the changing needs of the citizens of Harford County. These changing needs require that materials be evaluated initially and on a continuing basis. As a result, materials which may not have been recommended for purchase initially, may, in fact, later be purchased.

Materials within the library collection are continuously monitored. Items may be withdrawn if they contain outdated or inaccurate information, are superseded by a newer edition, become worn, defaced or damaged, or are duplicates or seldom-used materials. Space, replacement cost, and the quality and appearance of the collection are factors in this decision. Additionally, duplication of titles is essential in meeting the public demand for best-sellers and other heavily used materials. Donations, memorials, and gifts of material to the library will be accepted subject to this same selection criteria. The selection of websites and on-line

information, as set forth in the Harford County Public Library Internet Policy, shall be consistent with the goals and principles of this Materials Selection Policy.

Ultimate responsibility for the selection of library materials rests with the Library Director who operates within the framework of this policy determined by the Library Board of Trustees.