



COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT

A consideration of the Stoughton Public Library's objectives and functions is a necessary prelude to a statement on library materials selection policy. These objectives are shared by most public libraries.

Every library which does not acquire all printed materials must of necessity employ a policy of selectivity in acquisitions. Large numbers of library materials are eliminated on the basis of expense, availability elsewhere, and usefulness to the community at large. The Stoughton Public Library's objectives are:

- To cooperate with all other constructive educative agencies toward higher goals, never forgetting that "the library is primarily an instrument of self-education."
- To provide as service center, more than as storehouse, the printed and allied materials, the creative, exciting and controversial ideas, for all the community to weigh and to use for information, self-development, expansion of knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of life and the attainment of high ideals.
- To combat all attempts at censorship, thought control, authoritarianism and class, race or religious prejudice: and to encourage the open mind and respect for individuals regardless of their status.
- To plan and program library activities and staff assignments in proportions that emphasize basic functions which are to promote reading, study, informational and reference help.
- To see that the library, in all aspects of its planning, tries to keep abreast of current problems and the needs of society and the community.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As long as a book is not banned by law, either in this Commonwealth or nationally, it is, or could be, made available to the community. Serious works which present an honest picture of some problem or aspect of life are not excluded because of coarse language or frankness. These include some classics.

Freedom of speech and freedom of the press, with certain exceptions defined by law, are part of our national heritage and are accepted and defended by our courts. Official censorship and restriction of news in peace time are considered typical of totalitarian, not democratic, states. As an agency supported by municipal funds, the public library must heed these recognized principles. The public library is based on the belief that the people have the right and duty to make the ultimate decisions on public questions. It follows, therefore, that free access to all points of view on public questions must be permitted.

On questions on which there are two or more widely supported opinions or theories, and about which definite facts have not been established or which by their very nature are not susceptible of factual proof, the Library will provide material on both or all sides as availability permits.

GENERAL SCOPE AND GUIDELINES

Purpose

To meet the needs of the Town of Stoughton, the Library attempts to provide materials ordinarily found in general library collections of standard press books and materials in the English language. Materials to satisfy highly specialized interests are met through Inter-Library Loan. First editions or collectors' items are not purchased.

Method

Ultimate responsibility for the Stoughton Public Library collections rests with the Library Director or their designee. Selection aids such as book reviews in Library Journal, Kirkus Review, American Libraries, New York Times Book Review Section, and The Horn Book are relied on for reports on current titles. However, time is of the essence, and it is not always desirable or even possible to wait for critical reviews, in which case the Librarian must make the judgment with the information on hand. No attempt is made to purchase all "best sellers" as such, but most reader requests stem from these, and demand is one criterion of selection.

Gifts and Donations

Gifts of library materials or other material are accepted with the proviso that they do not have to be added to the collection. They may be added as new titles, duplicates or replacements, or they may be discarded.

Duplicates

Duplicate copies of very popular books, CDs, DVDs and other library materials are bought if the title is likely to be useful in the Library's permanent collection. In general, another copy of a title is added to the collection when there is an excessive number of "reserve requests" for the title. Although particular attention is focused upon the needs of students, duplication of books and materials sought by students is not extensive because the Public Library should serve to supplement school library resources, but not duplicate them. Some duplication of the classics occurs in the Children's Collection, the Young Adults Collection and the Adult Collection, but only when the title is in great demand and suitable to the various age groups and reader interests of these groups.

Withdrawals of Materials

Systematic removal of materials no longer useful is essential in maintaining the purposes and quality of the collection. A regular and continuous program of systematic discard and replacement of damaged, worn and obsolete books is carried on in the Library. A careful study of each title is made, taking into consideration usage patterns over the past 5 years, number of copies in the Library, its appearance in standard lists of fiction or non-fiction, coverage of the field by other more recent or authoritative books, and physical condition of the copy. Standards for Public Library Services published by the American Library Association state that 5% of the total book collection should be discarded every year.

Replacement of Materials

It is not the Library's policy to replace automatically all library materials withdrawn because of loss, damage or wear. Several factors are weighted in regard to replacement: (1) Existence of adequate coverage in a field, (2) Availability of later or better materials, (3) Demand for that particular title, (4) General significance of that title to the Library's permanent collection.

BROAD CATEGORIES

Fiction

In selecting fiction, the Library has set up no arbitrary single standard of literary quality. An attempt is made to satisfy a public varying greatly in tastes, social and economic backgrounds and educational levels. Selection then does not mean choosing only the most distinguished novels, but also the most competent, pleasing and successful books.

Non-Fiction

Books chosen for the Library's non-fiction collection are examined to determine the following points:

- (1) Authoritativeness of author and publisher.
- (2) Accuracy of information.
- (3) Clear presentation and readability.
- (4) Permanent or timely value.
- (5) Durability of format.
- (6) Expense.

An attempt is made to provide some titles of information in all major subject areas. In selecting material for general reading in the subject fields, readability and popular appeal, soundness of the author's attitude and approach, quality of writing and values beyond the trivial are considered.

SUBJECT AREAS

Law

The Library makes an effort to provide standard and popular books in English for the general reader on such subjects as jurisprudence, history of law, legal ethics, court procedure, jury duty, etc. Manual of the General Court and other titles sent to the Library by the State are added to the collection. Some effort is made to provide research materials and text books in this field.

Medicine and Related Subjects

The Library recognizes its responsibility to supply authoritative, up-to-date, understandable material on health, hygiene and common diseases. Books on medicine, surgery, psychiatry and related fields are selected with special care with the student and the general adult layman in mind.

Semi- and Pseudo-Scientific Materials

Special care is necessary in the purchase of books in these borderline areas of science. Books by

well-established authors and scientists who hold ideas somewhat unorthodox may be bought when the author's prominence makes his ideas of general intellectual interest. The reputation of the author, the tone of his work and the method of handling his subject are deciding factors. Material on such subjects as alcohol, tobacco and food fads are scrutinized for reliability and objective presentation.

Religion

An attempt is made to present all points of view of all major religions of the world. Authoritative, well-written books on agnosticism and the psychology, philosophy and history of religion are also represented, as well as reference books on the various beliefs. For the most part, able and dispassionate accounts of comparative religion and of doctrine, books about the Bible, church histories, lives of Christ and Biblical characters, lives of saints and religious leaders, practical handbooks on religious education, missions, administration, stories of liturgical music and inspirational books are provided.

Sex

It is part of the Library's function to provide an adequate quantity of books for the general public that are well-balanced, authoritative, sound, sane, up-to-date, and scientific in treatment. Selection is made with regard to suitability for such varied groups as social workers, parents, teachers, young people, adolescents, and children.

Genealogy and Local History

Books of genealogies of individual families are not purchased by the Library. Newspapers, bound volumes of the Annual Town Reports and works about Stoughton or by Stoughton authors may be used in the Library, as well as microfilmed works, but they do not circulate if they are classified SC (Stoughton Collection). Popular works are duplicated in the circulating collection for general use. The Library does purchase access to Genealogical Databases for individual research.

Foreign Language Materials

A small collection of language materials, particularly in Portuguese, are kept for use by patrons. When library patrons need books in a foreign language, every effort will be made to provide for their needs through inter-library loan arrangements. The Library does purchase access to on-line language programs for self-teaching.

Special Materials

Magazines, newspapers, government publications, maps, and atlases are collected by the library in keeping with the general statement of policy regarding inclusions and exclusions stated in the preceding paragraphs.

Paperback Books

Paperback books are added to the library's collection when they are needed as duplicates of popular titles or when they are reprints of books no longer available in hardbound editions.