



## Austin Public Library Policy and Procedures Manual

**Subject:** Materials Selection Policy

**Effective Date:** August 5, 2012

**Revised:** October 1, 2021

**Contact:** Customer Access Division Manager

**Telephone:** 974-7476

**Department Director's Approval:** 

### **Purpose:**

To articulate the principles, policies, and criteria that guide the staff in selecting materials to develop responsive collections for the library system and to inform the public on these principles and selection standards used by the Library.

### **Commitment:**

We are committed to providing easy access to books and information for all ages through responsive professionals, engaging programs, and state-of-the-art technology in a safe and friendly environment.

Austin Public Library prioritizes a commitment to equity ensuring that all members of the Austin community have equitable access to library services and programs. Diversity and inclusion are about respecting, understanding, honoring, and welcoming all members of the staff and community into the library. Decisions about hiring, collection development, policies, and programming are made with a lens of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

### I. **Principles**

The Austin Public Library Materials Selection Policy is based on the following principles:

- A. Materials are selected which provide for the interest, information, enlightenment, entertainment, education, development, and enrichment of all library customers, within budgetary constraints and availability of materials.
- B. The freedom to read, along with the freedom to hear and to view, is protected by the [First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States](#). This freedom, essential to our democracy, will be upheld, supported, and defended in the

selection and accessibility of all library materials. In this regard, the library upholds the principles of the American Library Association's [Library Bill of Rights](#), [Freedom to Read](#), [Freedom to View](#), [Statement on Labeling](#), and [Free Access to Libraries for Minors](#) as well as to the Texas Library Association's [Intellectual Freedom Statement](#).

- C. Selection of materials does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content, viewpoint, implications, or presentation of the materials.
- D. The library staff does not serve *in loco parentis*. It is the parent(s), and only the parent(s), who may restrict their children, and only their own children, from access to library materials. Responsibility for children's reading rests with their parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s). Selection will not be inhibited by the possibility that materials may inadvertently come into the possession of children.
- E. The library is not a judicial body. Laws governing obscenity, subversive materials, and other questionable matters are subject to interpretation by the courts. Consequently, no challenged material will be removed from the library for complaints of obscenity, pornography, subversiveness, or any other category covered by law until after receipt of an independent court order. Conversely, materials previously judged unlawful will not knowingly be selected.

## II. **Policy**

In accordance with the above principles, the following policies apply in regard to materials selection and accessibility for the general library collection.

### A. Selection

As budgetary constraints limit the purchase of materials, the selections made follow the aforementioned principles while attempting to maintain diversity, quality and responsiveness to patron interest patterns. As such, selections are made on the basis of any one, several, or all of the following considerations:

1. Diversity is pursued by attempting to meet the needs of all ages, backgrounds, and educational levels, by providing as many subject fields as possible, and by providing alternative perspectives on unpopular or unorthodox as well as popular materials. The collection represents various opinions and viewpoints on all issues of general concern and should broadly reflect the various ethnic and social groups in the City.
  - The collection represents industry accepted equity, diversity, and inclusion topics including, but not limited to, Asian, Black, Disabilities & Neurodiversity, Equity & Social Issues, Hispanic &

Latino, Indigenous, LGBTQIA+ & Gender Studies, Mental & Emotional Health, Middle Eastern & North African, Multicultural, Religious, and Substance Abuse & Addiction.

2. Quality is pursued by applying professional discretion and standards established by the library profession and through the use of appropriate selection aids, including book reviews, best seller lists, etc.
3. The Library staff responds to community interests by careful consideration of the following: patron requests for purchases, use patterns for existing materials, purchase trends of similar materials from retailers, and any other source of information indicating community interests. The Library collection serves, to the degree possible, the interests of a diverse community without exclusion. Responsiveness to the interest of one individual or group is not restricted on the basis of dislike or objection of another individual or group.
4. Undue duplication of materials is avoided, either in the library itself, or with other institutions in the community. Esoteric or very technical works, and materials available elsewhere to special interest groups, are generally excluded from the collection. Materials may also be excluded if the existing collection already covers the field.
5. Materials with formats that do not conform or lend themselves to library use are usually excluded.
6. Gifts, unsolicited materials, and citizen suggestions for purchases are all evaluated under the same policies, principles, and selection criteria as regularly purchased materials.

B. Criteria

Library materials, whether purchased or donated, are subject to the criteria listed below. An item need not meet all of these standards to be included in the Library's collection:

1. Public interest or demand
2. Relevance to the community
3. Contemporary significance
4. Enduring value
5. Readability and style
6. Treatment of subject for intended audience
7. Physical durability, and attractiveness
8. Suitability of the format for library use
9. Creative, literary, or technical quality
10. Cost
11. Availability from our contracted vendors
12. Reviews in the professional journals
13. Reviews in popular media
14. Professional or literary reputation of the author, publisher or producer

15. Circulation of similar material
16. Relation to existing collection and other materials on the subject

Materials missing or withdrawn from the Library's collection are not automatically replaced. The decision to replace items is based on the following criteria:

1. Availability of other copies or editions in the collection
  2. Public interest
  3. Adequacy of coverage in the subject area
  4. Circulation of withdrawn or missing item
  5. Cost
  6. Availability from our contracted vendors
- C. Formats collected include books, periodicals, newspapers, maps, audio and video recordings, graphic novels, online eBooks and audiobooks, online databases, and "library of things" such as tools, manipulatives, etc. New and/or emerging formats will be considered when appropriate. The collection does not include pop-up books, coloring books, workbooks, cutout books, or fragile, multipart items that will not withstand circulation.
- D. Periodicals and newspapers are selected to include current information not available in book format. Back issues are retained in paper, microform, or electronic formats considering reference usefulness, customer interest, and space limitations.
- E. The Austin History Center, a special collection of the library, collects, preserves, and manages information about Austin and Travis County. Due to the nature of the materials collected, the Austin History Center has its own [collection development policy](#).