Rahway Public Library – Collection Development Policy

The mission of the Rahway Public Library is to foster, enrich, and sustain life-long learning and literacy by providing and upholding the public's free access to vital information, services, and resources in a variety of formats and technologies. Through outreach and public participation, we will serve as a center and represent our diverse community by providing programs, creating forums, and establishing partnerships.

The Board of Trustees adopted this policy as a guideline for selection and acquisition of materials, acceptance of gifts, ongoing management, and reconsideration of materials in the collection. Additionally, the policy provides a vehicle for the continuous evaluation of the Library collection as a whole. This document cannot cover every situation and is not intended to replace the judgment of professional library staff members.

a. Philosophy and Scope of Collection:

The Rahway Public Library is an integrated system with two points of access: the physical collection located within the library building, and the digital collection, which is accessible online through the library's website. Both collections attempt to provide materials for all ages in a wide range of formats including, but not limited to; text, audio, video and electronic media. These two collections aim to support and complement each other.

The Rahway Public Library's collection will be developed and maintained to emphasize generality rather than comprehensiveness or depth. The library will purchase and subscribe to materials that reflect as varied a range of interests, opinions and mores as is evident in the community. In its efforts to provide a wide range of views, the library will inevitably purchase materials on controversial subjects or by controversial authors. The library recognizes that some materials may displease some members of the community, but the goal of serving a diverse population results in a collection reflecting that diversity.

Apart from local history materials, collections are not retained for archival purposes. Fiction and subject collections are routinely evaluated for retention.

New Jersey's Freedom to Read Act prohibits censorship of library materials and provides certain protections to library workers in collection development and maintenance. It supports the right of individuals to free inquiry and the right to form their own opinions. It acknowledges the training and education that librarians receive to develop and curate collections.

The governing body of a public library, in consultation with staff members of a public library, including a librarian employed by a public library, shall have discretion in selecting, purchasing, or acquiring library material for inclusion in the public library. Nothing in this policy or the law shall be construed to require a governing body of a public library to purchase, or otherwise acquire, library material for a public library.

This policy recognizes and acknowledges that:

- Public libraries serve as centers for voluntary inquiry and the dissemination of

information and ideas.

- Prohibiting censorship of library materials promotes free expression and free access to ideas by residents.
- Library materials shall not be removed from a public library because of the origin, background, or views of the library materials or those contributing to its creation.
- Library materials should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people and should present diverse points of view in the collection as a whole;
- Librarians are professionally trained to curate and develop collections that provide residents with access to the widest array of library material available to the public; and,
- The library has a procedure for a librarian to review library materials on an ongoing basis.

b**. Selection Criteria for Library Materials:**

Library staff use their training, knowledge, and expertise along with the following general criteria to select materials for the collection:

- Relevance to interests and needs of the community
- Relevance to the existing collection's strengths and weaknesses
- Relation to cooperative collection arrangements with other libraries
- Current or historical significance of the author or subject
- Local significance of the author or subject
- Authority and accuracy of matter presented
- Extent of publicity, critical review and current or anticipated demand
- Reputation and qualifications of the author, publisher or producer, with preference generally given to titles vetted in the publishing industry with at least one positive professional review
    - Reviews from professional selection aids such as Booklist, Bulletin for the Center of Children's Books, Kirkus Reviews, Library Journal, Publishers Weekly, VOYA, School Library Journal, Horn Book; and current general reviewing selection aids such as The New York Times Books Review, Billboard, and in various published lists.
- Informational, educational, or recreational value of subject matter
- Permanent or timely value of subject matter
- Date of publication
- Price, availability, and Library materials budget
- Space within the library
- Online resources are also evaluated based on the following criteria
    - accessibility
    - the availability of library licensing
    - ease of use
    - system requirements
    - long-term accessibility
    - quality vs alternatives

c. **Access to the collection**:

Reading, listening to, and viewing library materials are individual and private matters. It is the right and responsibility of each individual library user to select the materials that they will use. The responsibility for what children read, view, and listen to rests with their parents or legal

guardians - the Rahway Public Library cannot assume such a role “in loco parentis”. Patrons of the library are free to choose what they like from the collection, to reject what they do not like, but are not free to restrict the freedom of others to choose.

The library does not mark, identify, or otherwise label material to show approval or disapproval of its content. Materials are not restricted by age – adults have full access to children’s materials and children have full access to adult materials. Materials are not labeled to restrict their use by age, nor will they be sequestered, except to protect valuable items from theft or damage. Placement in a special location does not imply promotion or censorship.

d. **Multiple Copies**:

Although the Library does not have the budget to buy multiple copies of every title, it does purchase multiple copies of titles having high levels of patron demand. The numbers of copies of a particular title that are purchased, and the format in which it is ordered, are determined by the individual selector. When there are five or more holds per copy of a title, additional copies may be purchased. In subject areas such as cookbooks and computer tutorials where the interest is typically on the topic rather than in a particular title, the library prefers to buy copies of several different titles rather than numerous copies of one title. Through this approach, the library is able to offer variety, depth, breadth, and relevance to the needs of the community.

e. **Patron Recommendations:**

Patrons may request items the library does not own. Library staff will assess these requests using our selection criteria. If a request is not deemed to be relevant to our collection, library staff will help facilitate access to this item through the STELLA consortium or through interlibrary loan.

f. **Local Author Policy**

1. The author must be local to Rahway, NJ to be considered. If the author does not currently reside or work in Rahway, library staff reserve the right to determine if the author should be considered local.
2. The work must be no older than two (2) years from the time of publication. Older works will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
3. Materials by local authors will be evaluated on the same selection criteria (outlined in section b) as the rest of the collection for the purposes of inclusion or discarding.
4. Not all works created by local authors will meet the selection criteria above, including works that are self-published.

g. **Gifts/Memorials**

The Rahway Public Library is pleased to accept donations of either money or materials to support the library.

Money donated to the library – as a memorial, in honor of a person, or as a gift – will be used to purchase materials for the collection. These items will be selected according to the same criteria as library funded material purchases. If the donor specifies a particular subject area, the library will make every effort to fulfil that request. If a specific item is requested, it will be evaluated by our selection criteria

The library accepts gifts of materials without commitment as to their final disposition. Donated materials will be evaluated by the same criteria as purchased materials. Once accepted, donated materials become the exclusive property of the library. The library will assume responsibility for the disposition of these materials in a manner we deem appropriate.

The library will not appraise donated materials for tax purposes. Upon request, library management is able to give a written receipt including the number and type of material donated.

h. **Excluded Materials**

The library does not specifically exclude any format or type of material from its collection. We strive to create a collection of materials that fits the needs of the community that we serve. Our selections are based on the criteria outlined in section b of this policy and materials are removed based on the criteria outlined in section i of this policy. We do not have the budget or space required to collect materials that would not be popular or useful to the community. Community needs are constantly changing and we factor those needs into our decisions.

i**. Collection Maintenance**

The collection as a whole is not archival. In order to maintain a collection that is current, accurate, and inviting to Library users, materials are withdrawn on a systematic and continuing basis. The choice of materials to be withdrawn is determined by library staff under the supervision of the Director. The following factors will be taken into consideration:

- Accuracy and timeliness
- Subject coverage available in the collection
- Age of material
- If a newer edition is available
- Physical condition
- Number of copies
- Compliance with the Selection Criteria for Library Materials
- Space limitations
- Local interest
- Relevance to the needs and interest of the community
- Current demand and frequency of use
- Deemed to be of an enduring nature

Library materials shall not be removed from the collection because of the origin, background, or views of the authors/creators.

j. **Weeding Guidelines**:

Why must the library weed materials?

- Space restraints – there is only so much room on our shelves and older items must be weeded to ensure space for new items.
- To ensure an uncluttered and clean environment for patrons. Overflowing shelves look chaotic and make it harder for people to find the materials they want and need.
- Old materials can be damaged, worn, torn, soiled or even moldy. These books are unlikely to be checked out by patrons and therefore do not need to be kept in the collection.
- Older materials may contain unacceptable stereotypes and misinformation, they may not be reliable, accurate, unbiased, or up to date.

k. Requests for Reconsideration:

Individuals with a vested interest who feel that an inappropriate item has been selected for the collection may request that said item be reconsidered or withdrawn using the *Patron's Request for Reconsideration of Library Material* form. In such situations, the following steps shall be taken:

1. The staff member to whom the question is first addressed will provide the patron with a copy of the *Patron's Request for Reconsideration of a Library Material* form. The staff member will tell the patron that they can return the form to any staff member within the building, mail it back to the library, or email it to the library director using the email address provided on the form.
2. The Director will alert the review committee (refer to Request for Reconsideration Form for review committee details) that they need to meet to discuss the reconsideration form that was received. The committee will write their findings and submit them to the patron who submitted the form and the library Board of Trustees.
3. The Library Board of Trustees will review the findings at their next scheduled meeting. The patron who submitted the form is encouraged to attend the board meeting.
4. After the Library Board meeting, the Library Director will reply, in writing, to the patron and alert them to the decision of the Library Board.

During the process of reconsideration, the item in question shall remain in the collection or continue to be offered to the community.

The Rahway Public Library adheres to the principles of intellectual freedom, library materials are selected by professional staff in in accordance with approved standards and guided by the basic principle of the Freedom to Read Act as set forth by the State of New Jersey and American Library Association—please see the New Jersey Freedom To Read Act and the American Library Association's Freedom To Read Statement.

l. Reason for Policy:

The purpose of this policy is to provide standards for the curation of library materials; establish criteria for removal of existing library material or library material selected for

inclusion in the public library; and provide protection against attempts to censor library materials.

m**. Definitions:**
The attached list of definitions is designed to help ensure mutual understanding by all parties who read this policy.

Censorship. Means to block, suppress, or remove library material based on disagreement with a viewpoint, idea, or concept, or solely because an individual finds certain content offensive, but does not include limiting or restricting access to any library material deemed developmentally inappropriate for certain age groups.

Diverse and inclusive material. Means material that reflects any protected class as enumerated in the "Law Against Discrimination," P.L. 1945, c 169 (c.10:5-1 et seq); material produced by an author who is a member of a protected class as enumerated in the "Law Against Discrimination," P.L. 1945, c 169 (c.10:5-1 et seq); and material that contains the author's points of view concerning contemporary problems and issues, whether international, national, or local.

Governing body. Means the board of trustees of the Rahway Public Library

Individual with a vested interest. Any resident who is served by the public library or residents in a county or municipality where the library is situated.

Library material. Means any material, including, but not limited to, nonfiction and fiction books; magazines; reference books; supplementary titles; multimedia and digital material; software and instructional material, belonging to, on loan to, or otherwise in the custody of the Rahway Public Library.

n**. Responsibilities:**
Attached is a list of people who are responsible for adhering to and upholding this policy.

Library Board – As established in section n, the governing body of the Rahway Public Library. They establish, review and update this policy.

Library Director – Coordinates implementation of policy, trains staff, approves purchases, serves as first responder for patron complaints.

Request for Reconsideration Review Committee – Reviews challenged materials, deliberates, and makes recommendation(s) to the Library Board.

Librarians – Selects materials for the library collection that help to achieve the library's mission and follows the collection development policy. Manages the withdrawal of materials from the collection according to library's criteria (see Procedures).

Individuals with a vested interest – Any resident who is served by the public library or residents in a county or municipality where the library is situated.

Date Adopted:
March 24, 2026

*Date(s) Revised:
* This policy will be reviewed as required, with a maximum gap of 3 years between review periods.

April 28, 2026

Approved: Rahway Public Library Board of Trustees – March 24, 2026
Amended: Rahway Public Library Board of Trustees – April 28, 2026