

Melrose Public Library

Reconsideration of Library Materials or Services Policy

Well-intentioned individuals or groups occasionally question the inclusion of items in library collections or the content of library programs or services. This policy explains the Melrose Public Library's commitment to providing open access to diverse information and describes the procedure that will be followed when a resident of the Melrose community expresses a concern about the content of library collections, programs, or services.

Guiding Principles

The Melrose Public Library subscribes to the principles of intellectual freedom as stated in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution, the Library Bill of Rights and its relevant interpretations by the American Library Association Council, and the Freedom to Read Statement.

Collectively, these documents speak to:

- The right of every U.S. citizen to freely hold and express beliefs, and correspondingly, the right of every citizen to access the expressions and beliefs of other people without restriction
- The fact that it is unconstitutional for a government entity, such as a public library, to censor or restrict the free and open exchange of ideas
- The library's responsibility to make available without restriction or judgment a wide diversity of ideas and viewpoints, in support of an informed citizenry and a resilient, free, democratic society
- The library's obligation to safeguard intellectual liberty by supporting individual choice and judgment in seeking information; upholding the freedom to read, view and listen; and challenging and resisting attempts to restrict access to information or ideas by those seeking to impose their own standards, opinions, or beliefs upon the broader community
- The library field's commitment to honor the rights of an individual to use a library regardless of age, race, religion, national origin, social or political views, etc., and the obligation of library staff to provide equal service to all library users

The library staff and Board of Trustees recognize that individuals may object to library materials, programs, and services out of a genuine desire to safeguard the well-being of their fellow community members and for reasons arising from deeply held beliefs and opinions. However, we take the position that the risk of restricting access to information and ideas is greater than the risk of providing it, and that each person is capable of assessing information and making decisions for themselves without undue interference from outside sources.

Library Practices in Support of Open Inquiry and Intellectual Freedom

As a community resource, the Melrose Public Library is obligated to provide diverse resources and information to meet the varied needs of community members who have different backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, and worldviews. This includes providing material that opposes as well as supports particular beliefs, opinions, and viewpoints, including potentially controversial material, for the benefit of community members who wish to explore perspectives different from their own. The library aims to support the growth and fulfillment of individuals in all aspects of their lives, and therefore provides resources that meet needs for entertainment and leisure as well as for learning, growth and edification.

The library does not promote particular beliefs or views. Rather, it provides resources to explore various opinions that apply to important, complex, and controversial questions, including unpopular and unorthodox positions. The presence of any item in the collection does not imply the library's, Trustees', or City's approval or endorsement of its contents, with the exception that library staff make an effort to ensure that materials and programs which discuss matters of objective fact are reasonably accurate. Per the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association, library staff do not allow personal opinions to interfere with professional decision-making or the equitable provision of services to the whole community, including in the selection of materials or event presenters.

Because the library aims to represent diverse perspectives and ideas, not every event, service, or item in the collections will be for everyone. The library does not make decisions on the basis of protecting patrons from particular content or topics and expects that individuals using the library will determine which resources and services are right for them and/or their children. Library staff can help empower patrons to make these decisions by assessing their interests and guiding them to content that may be desired, but the ultimate responsibility for any person's use of the library's collections, programs and services lies with that person.

The library does not restrict young people from using any part of the collection. Library events may have a suggested or required age range, predominantly as a way to ensure an event is attended by its intended audience. The children's and young adult collections and programming may include content too mature for some individuals in those age groups, as others of the same age may be ready for the material. A child's parents or guardians are responsible for determining what is appropriate for that child and for monitoring their access to library materials. Neither library staff nor other individuals may make such decisions for other people's children.

The library avoids labeling or otherwise identifying materials to show approval or disapproval of content. (This is not to be confused with labels that indicate a genre, general subject matter, or area of the collection, which do not comment on the "appropriateness" of the content, or with rating labels which come affixed to materials, which the library does not remove.)

Reconsideration Process

The library recognizes the right of community members to question library materials, programs, or services. Any individual or group seeking the reconsideration of an item in the library's collections, or a library program or service, will be provided with the Collection Development Policy, and may submit a Request for Reconsideration form to the Library Director.

The fully completed form should be signed and dated by the community member. The Director will set up a committee consisting of three professional staff appointed by the Director. This committee will review the concerns and then evaluate the material or service in question according to the standards stated in the Collection Development Policy and the Program Policy. Evaluation of an item or program will be based on consideration of the item or presentation as a whole, not on selected individual sections. The following factors may be taken into account, as appropriate, in reconsidering an item, program, or service:

- Accuracy and currency of content
- Reputation, qualifications, and/or significance of the author, creator, presenter, etc., including their local importance if applicable
- Popular demand
- Relevance to the community's informational and recreational needs and interests
- Availability of other materials or programs that cover similar information or meet a similar need or interest, in the library's current collections/services or otherwise
- Representation of diverse points of view
- Artistic, literary, and/or technical merit
- Appropriateness of the material for the level of its intended audience
- Quality of treatment of controversial issues
- Reviews from authoritative sources (professional journals, individuals experienced with the relevant subject area, other librarians, etc.); critical reception
- Relevance to the library's mission and goals; relationship with other library materials, events, or services

Factors that will not, in and of themselves, be considered appropriate reasons to remove an item from the collection or cancel a program or service include:

- An individual's personal disagreement or feelings of offense with the content or its presentation on the basis of their own particular opinions or beliefs (political, religious, or otherwise)
- The origin, personal history, and/or views of the author, creator, presenter, etc.
- The mere fact that content is controversial, graphic, or explicit, or includes profane language or sexual content
- Content considered inappropriate for children or teenagers that is in the adult sections of the collections or presented as part of an event aimed at adults
- A rating or "explicit content" warning

The Director will receive the recommendation from the investigators within two weeks.

The Library Director will notify the community member with a written statement about the recommendation of the evaluators. If the community member is not satisfied with the decision, they may appeal to the Board of Trustees who will ascertain whether or not library policies were followed. The recommendation of the Melrose Public Library Board of Trustees is considered final as a decision of the majority.

No item is to be removed from the shelf or be placed in a restricted-access status, and no program or service is to be preemptively abridged, modified, or cancelled, during the reconsideration process. No item in the collection is to be removed or restricted, and no program or service is to be cancelled, because of a complaint except in accordance with this procedure. Items that have become missing or lost but that are deemed to still be appropriate for the library collection will be replaced.

Responsibility

Final responsibility for all library policies lies with the Board of Trustees. Responsibility for implementation of policies and day-to-day operations, including collection development and program planning, rests with the Library Director. The Director delegates these responsibilities and tasks to other library staff members as appropriate. Decisions by library staff are subject to review by the Library Director, as necessary.

The library does not have control over the content of certain electronic collections, including those administered by the NOBLE consortium or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, or over materials that may be available through interlibrary loan from other libraries.

April 4, 2022
Approved by Trustees

MELROSE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Request for Reconsideration of Library Material

Date: _____ Library Card #: _____

Your Name: _____
(Last) (First) (MI)

Address _____
(Mailing) (City) (State) (Zip)

Phone No. (_____) _____

Please note that requests for reevaluation will be considered when made by a Melrose resident.

Whom do you represent?

___ Myself ___ Organization (be specific) _____

Other _____

Description of material/program:

Author: _____

Title: _____

Publisher/Date: _____

Type of Material/Program:

Please respond to the following questions:

1. Have you seen or heard reviews of this material? _____

If yes, please name source(s): _____

2. What do you object to in this work/program? Please cite specific instances: _____

3. What do you believe is the theme or purpose of this work/program?

4. What action do you recommend the library take on this work/program?

5. Have you read Melrose Public Library's Collection Development Policy and the Freedom to Read and Freedom to View statements:

_____ Yes _____ No

The Melrose Public Library appreciates your interest in our library's collections and services. You will receive written notification of the disposition of the request within two weeks.

Signature of Resident: _____

Received by: _____

Date: _____ Time Received: _____

MELROSE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Preliminary Response Letter to Patrons Requesting Reconsideration of Materials

re: _____

Dear _____:

Your written request for reconsideration concerning the library's having/not having the item noted above has been received and is being evaluated by the library's professional staff. Their written recommendation concerning your request will be given/sent to you within 2 weeks. The report will be based on the library's established Collection Development Policy and will reflect an unbiased and objective review of the item in question.

The library appreciates your interest, and I sincerely hope that the disposition of your request will be to your satisfaction.

Sincerely,

(Name), Director
Melrose Public Library