

4.1 Collection Development

Our Community and Our Values

The Chelmsford Public Library serves a town population of over 36,000. While many of the residents are younger families with children, approximately 30% are 60 years old and older. The diversity of the Town is also increasing, with more than 12% of people identifying as Black, Asian, Hispanic, or Latino. We state in our Mission, “We are the community’s bridge to exploration, engagement and enjoyment”, and to that end we offer a large collection of print and media items and nontraditional items like tools, electronics and games, in physical and digital formats. The people of Chelmsford and their informational needs are our foremost consideration in the selection of materials. We also consider the availability of material from other libraries in our consortium, state, and beyond, via inter-library loan. We are committed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in our policies, and to creating a collection that reflects both Chelmsford’s and the country’s past, present, and future accurately and authentically.

Per our Values statement, we offer “**Something for Everyone:** It is important to us that we level the playing field, equally serving people of all ages, incomes, ethnicities, genders or physical abilities while responding to our community’s varied interests. We offer a diversity of resources, services, and programs for everyone to explore and enjoy.” We are committed to growing our collections to serve the needs of specific populations of people who have historically experienced unequal treatment in society, and offer educational opportunities for all. We do this by researching diverse publishers, using websites that highlight these materials, and checking best books lists from a wide variety of sources.

Responsibilities for Collection Development

The Board of Library Trustees is responsible for adopting a collection development policy. Responsibility for implementing the policy is delegated to the Library Director, who may in turn delegate further portions of that responsibility to Collection Managers.

A review committee composed of the Director, a Department Head, and an appropriate Collection Manager may be convened to reevaluate selected materials if a Request for Consideration form is filed.

Criteria for Collection

The library is committed to providing a wide range of material that reflects the diverse needs and interests of our community. Selections will not reflect the tastes and opinions of any patron or staff person to the exclusion of other points of view; neither will the library yield to any pressure to influence selection to this end.

Librarians use a variety of tools to evaluate materials for selection, including but not limited to: professional review journals, popular print and broadcast media, publishers’ catalogs, and patron and staff recommendations.

All materials are considered in terms of the following criteria (in no particular order):

- Popular interest

- Contemporary, cultural, or historical significance
- Current, accurate, and authentic content
- Representation of diverse points of view
- Relationship to existing materials in the local collection and consortium
- Readability or ability to sustain interest
- Suitability of content to the age of the intended audience
- Attention by critics and reviewers
- Creative, literary, or technical quality
- Format and ease of use
- Circulation as monitored through the Library's system
- Cost and availability
- Local emphasis

Additional information for individual collections are as follows:

- Electronic Materials
 - Electronic materials are selected by the consortium and selectors from individual library contractors.
- Textbooks and Workbooks
 - The library is not primarily designed to provide materials for academic study and will not acquire textbooks or other such materials unless provided by the school or institution. Such items will not necessarily be selected for the collection and will undergo a period of staff review before being added. The library will not accept textbooks donated by individuals.

Adult Collections

All materials will be freely and easily accessible to the public. Users are free to select or reject for themselves, or children in their care, any item in the collection. A singular obligation of a public library is to reflect within its collection differing points of view and a diversity of opinion and experience. Some materials may be offensive to individuals or groups because of individual perceptions of profanity, human sexuality, social, economic, and political ideas, religious viewpoints, the background of the author, or the kind of information provided. Although the Library understands this concern, it is our position that the risk to society is far greater if public access to ideas and information is restricted. Providing free access to these materials may be meaningful and significant to other users and thus must be protected. Children are not limited to use of the materials in the children's or teen areas. Responsibility for a child's selection or reading rests solely

with their parent or guardian. Selection will not be inhibited by the possibility that children may inadvertently use such items.

Youth Collections

The library affirms the caregiver's right to guide their children's use of library materials. The role of library staff is to assist each family in finding materials suitable for them and to empower caregivers by teaching them how to find materials that are appropriate for their child. The library will not act in place of the caregiver by restricting children's access to library materials through supervision or by withdrawing materials that do not align with individual family beliefs.

Some books in the Children's and Teen collections may not be considered appropriate by all adults for all children. However, while some books are too mature for one child, other children may be ready for them. We recognize and respect that only each child and their caregiver may decide what material is suitable for their family.

Self-Published and Chelmsford Authors

To encourage resident authors, and to showcase the writing talent of Chelmsford, the Library maintains a Chelmsford Authors collection. We will make an effort to purchase works by Chelmsford authors published through mainstream publishers, and according to our criteria for collection.

Self-published authors (e.g., print-on-demand, vanity, or subsidized presses) who are Chelmsford residents (past or present) are welcome to donate their works to the library. These will be shelved in the Chelmsford Authors collection. We may occasionally purchase self-published titles by Chelmsford authors for our regular collection, if there is a compelling reason to do so (valuable local content, high local interest).

These items will be retained or withdrawn according to the same guidelines as the rest of the collection (outlined below).

Authors who are not residents of Chelmsford are welcome to donate copies of their work for consideration for our regular collection. If the item does not meet our collection development criteria, it will be given to the Friends of the Library.

Patron Suggestions

Suggestions are welcome and we will consider all requests from Chelmsford residents using the same selection criteria that we use for the collection.

If an item is unavailable for purchase we will attempt to obtain the item via Inter Library Loan for Chelmsford residents to the best of our ability.

Gifts and Donations

- The Chelmsford Library thanks you for your generosity in considering the library for your gift or donation. Due to space constraints, the library is unable to accept all donations offered to us. Gifts and donations to be added to the collection will undergo the same thoughtful

scrutiny as any other item considered for the library's collections, including timeliness and relevance, condition, suitability and other criteria described in the sections above.

- Donated materials are accepted with the understanding that the Library has the right to determine the disposition of the gift items. Donations become the property of the Chelmsford Library, and may be given to other libraries and nonprofit agencies, sold at the Chelmsford Friends of the Library book sale, or discarded at the discretion of Library staff. Donated materials which have been added to the collection will not automatically be replaced if worn-out, damaged, or lost, or if they have become obsolete.
- Monetary Donation: To support the enhancement of Library resources and to strengthen and promote the Library's quality services, see the Monetary Donations section on our Gifts/Donations page, or contact the Chelmsford Friends of the Library.

Collection Maintenance and Removals

Library staff regularly review items in the collection to ensure that they continue to meet the communities' needs. In order to keep the collection vital and useful, the library will regularly remove items that are worn, outdated (particularly in rapidly changing fields), or no longer in demand. Removal is as important as the original selection of items, and the same criteria are applied. Not all items that have been removed from the collection for condition will be automatically replaced. Items that have been removed from the collection in undamaged and complete condition may be sold for the benefit of the library by the Friends of the Library (per [MGL Ch. 30B, S. 15 \(g\)](#)) or an otherwise specified retail vendor (i.e. Discover Books, Better World Books, or similar). Unsold items may be given away for charitable purposes or recycled if no other options are available.

Request for Reconsideration

If a Chelmsford resident cardholder should raise a question about the appropriateness of a particular item in the collection, a Request for Reconsideration form must be submitted to the Director in writing in order for any formal review of an item to take place. A copy of the form is appended. Copies of the form are also available at all desks within the library. Once an item goes through the reconsideration process, it cannot be submitted for reconsideration again for three years. The procedure is as follows:

- Request for Reconsideration form given to concerned patron (must be a resident of Chelmsford) by staff member
- Request for Reconsideration Form returned to Library Director, fully filled out
- Library Director acknowledges receipt of RfR Form in formal correspondence to patron and outlines response procedure and anticipated timeline, attaching Collection Development Policy and copying Board of Library Trustees
- Library Director convenes Review Committee made up of appropriate Collection Manager, their Department Head, and the Director to:
 - Read, view, listen to challenged material/material of concern in its entirety.

- Research and copy professional reviews on work
- Record notes and complete a Review Committee report
- Library Director sends correspondence outlining Review Committee's findings and attaching excerpts/copies of professional reviews and reasons selection falls within Collection Development Guidelines to the patron
 - Patron is advised that they may refer their concern upward to elected Board of Library Trustees. If they do:
 - Work will be discussed with Review Committee findings in the next Trustees meeting, inviting the patron to attend if they wish
 - Trustees will determine whether the work falls within approved Collection Development Guidelines, and will recommend retention, relocation or removal of the work
 - Library Director will send formal correspondence concluding the process

Approved, Library Board of Trustees, May 2022