

Sarasota County
Library System
Collection Development Policy

Updated 2026

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I. Introduction

This policy is intended to guide librarians in the selection of materials and to inform the public about the principles upon which library collections are developed and maintained. In making collection decisions, the Sarasota County Library System (hereafter referred to as the Library System) strives to uphold its mission to offer equal access to information, foster lifelong learning and inspire community engagement.

Currently, the citizens of Sarasota County are served by ten community libraries, each with its own distinguishing characteristics. To make the libraries a reliable resource for all the citizens of Sarasota County, the collections are intended to be of sufficient scope and supply for the entire county, with special consideration given to the unique customer needs within each library.

Reference materials and all general collections except for New Books (items for the adult collection purchased within the past six months) and audio and video media are housed at the library they are purchased for and upon circulation and return to any branch are sent back to their owning library to be shelved. New Books and audio and video media “float”, retaining the location designation of the library where they are returned to. That library becomes the new “owner”, and the location is automatically updated in the catalog.

II. Materials Selection

Library staff selects and maintains a broad collection in a variety of formats including print, audio and video media, and digital and electronically accessible resources, to meet the informational, educational, and recreational needs of the citizens of Sarasota County. The staff strive to offer materials that reflect the diverse ages, interests, educational levels, and cultural backgrounds of members of the community. Through access to the collection, individuals may explore different points of view and issues of interest. Staff selections are based upon standards for professional practices rather than personal opinion, reason rather than prejudice, and judgment rather than censorship. Furthermore, staff remains responsive to

public demand for materials of contemporary significance and interest, while balancing the need to collect and preserve materials of permanent value.

While library staff makes material selections based upon the tenet of “one system/one collection”, selectors recognize the distinct characteristics and needs of the population that each library serves. Community profiles are used to guide selectors in efforts to develop special collections and to meet the unique patronage served by each library.

III. Responsibility for Selection of Materials

The ultimate responsibility for selection of materials rests with the Director of Libraries and Historical Resources and members of the Library System Management Team, who in turn delegate selection responsibilities to the Collection Development Librarians.

IV. Criteria for Selection

In practice it is impossible to acquire all available print, audio and video media, and digital and electronically accessible resources. Therefore, out of necessity, library staff employ a policy of selectivity in acquisitions. Selection decisions are completed using professional judgment based on knowledge of the existing collection, the evaluation of currently obtainable materials, the established priorities for collection development, item cost and available funds.

Audio and video media are evaluated for both artistic and instructional value and are selected using the same methodology as other material formats. Movies and television programs document social history and are significant indicators of cultural values. Acquisition of online databases offering both remote and in-library access is given priority over databases limited to in-library use only, and special consideration is given to acquiring proprietary materials that otherwise may not be available to the public.

The selection of periodical subscriptions is governed by the same selection criteria used to choose other materials. In periodical selection, staff selects titles with broad appeal, those

that may be difficult for patrons to obtain or those that fit a specific niche within the community. The Library System has a tiered collection criteria for periodicals where all libraries receive a standardized core collection of periodicals based on the collection criteria established for other material types. Library staff may request additional titles and subjects based upon their community. All requested periodical titles are subject to the same collection development standards as other media.

Citizens of Sarasota County are encouraged to make suggestions for purchase for items for the collection. Popular demand is balanced by the customary professional evaluation and is considered within the context of the Library System's mission and budgetary limitations. Selection of materials and material types in all areas of the library collection is governed, in whole or in part, by the following criteria (not in order of priority):

- Accuracy of information
- Potential or known use by citizens of Sarasota County
- Popular demand and current trends
- Literary merit or artistic quality
- Significance of subject matter
- Content of reviews in professional journals
- Reputation of the author, publisher or producer
- Relationship to other materials in the collection
- Current and/or permanent value to the collection
- Scarcity of material on the subject
- Availability of materials
- Cost
- Suitability of format (size, paper, print, binding, compatibility with library or personal technology devices)
- Ease of use (in particular with regard to electronic resources)
- Quality of physical format
- Local interest

These criteria are applied consistently to the evaluation of all works, regardless of the source of the content or its format, and works are always judged in their entirety and in context. AI-generated materials, unless they meet the selection criteria referenced above, are excluded from selection. AI-generated includes, but is not limited to, human guided and edited AI creations as well as AI-narrated works. Local connections of the human creator will not be considered for AI-generated works.

V. Selection Tools

Staff utilize a variety of selection tools to guide the decision making process for selection. These tools include, but are not limited to, the following (not in order of priority):

- Current review sources and professional journals
- News publications
- Catalogs and flyers
- Current sources for in print books
- National and subject bibliographies
- Online databases
- Award, Recommended, Best, and Core collection lists

In the case of local authors and/or self-published materials, where standard selection tools might not be readily available, items may be sent to the Collection Development Department for review and consideration. For more information, please see [local author information](#)

VI. Intellectual Freedom

An informed public is best supported through unrestricted access to materials that reflect a variety of ideas. The Library System supports and promotes this freedom by selecting and providing materials that represent a diversity of perspectives. In supporting unrestricted access to information, the Library System does not promulgate or support specific beliefs or

single viewpoints. The selection of materials for inclusion in the collection does not constitute endorsement of the viewpoints contained therein. Library materials may include information or opinions that are controversial or unpopular with segments of the public. The Library System affirms the public's right to free access to information by supporting the American Library Association's Bill of Rights:

- <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/statementsif/librarybillrights.cfm> and companion statements of Freedom to Read
- <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/firstatement/freedomreadstatement.cfm> and Freedom to View
- <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/ftvstatement/freedomviewstatement.cfm>

With respect to the use of library materials by children, the Library System recognizes that parents and legal guardians are responsible for guiding the choices of their children. Furthermore, the Library System supports the American Library Association's stance that "parents and only parents have the right and the responsibility to restrict the access of their children – and only their children - to library resources" as stated in the Free Access to Libraries for Minors, An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

- <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/statementsif/interpretations/freeaccesslibraries.cfm>

VII. Patron Requests

Citizens of Sarasota County are encouraged to recommend materials to add to the collection. All suggestions are evaluated although not all suggestions are added to the collection. To place a recommendation for purchase, please visit SarasotaCountyLibraries.org and navigate to I Want To > [Suggest a Purchase](#).

<https://www.sarasotacountylibraries.org/services/interlibrary-loan/suggestion-for-purchase-form>

VIII. DONATIONS

The Library System accepts donations of books, audio and visual media and magazine subscriptions with the understanding that the items may not necessarily be added to the

collection. All donated materials are evaluated by library staff, applying the same criteria used for the selection of new materials. Special collections materials such as genealogy resources, items of historical value and local interest items, especially unusual items or those in a specified subject area may be of exceptional value. Such items may be considered for addition to the collection even if they do not closely match the selection criteria.

Self-publication, ad hoc publications and manuscripts follow the same [selection criteria](#) as other materials. The Collection Development Librarians are authorized to make these decisions. Donated materials which become part of the Library System's collection are governed by the same policies as purchased materials and may or may not float, depending upon the material type. Without exception, items that contain potentially harmful substances, such as mold, will not be accepted.

IX. Availability and Access to Materials

Although the Library System makes its collections available to all, not all library materials are immediately accessible at all locations within the system. The Collection Development Librarians determine the appropriate number of copies to purchase and the appropriate placement by evaluating anticipated demand, the borrowing trends at each branch, space limitations and available budget. Libraries with larger or specialized collections serve as resource libraries for other branches.

The Library System is committed to the expeditious delivery of materials and information to patrons. Some library materials, however, may be subject to in-house use requirements due to rarity, cost, physical condition or the permanent value of the content. The Library System also provides Inter-Library Loan services for print items which are not available in the collection or for purchase. For more information see

<http://SarasotaCountyLibraries.org/InterlibraryLoan>

X. Reconsideration of Materials

As recommended by the American Library Association, the Library System follows a formal procedure to respond to requests for reconsideration of an item in the collection. Any individual may request reconsideration. When a member of the community wishes the Library System to reconsider an item in the collection, a “Request for Reconsideration of Library Resources” should be submitted to Library Administration. This form is available at all library locations and can be submitted at any branch location.

In the event a publisher ceases to produce, or pulls the inventory of a title, the standards for acquisitions and retention of the item(s) remain the same. If the item has ceased publication due to data that is no longer accurate, the title(s) will be removed as per general collection weeding policy. If the publication has ceased due to a fiction title being incorrectly marketed as nonfiction, the title(s) will be relocated to the appropriate classification. If the item has ceased publication due to changing cultural values, the title(s) will be retained as examples of previous viewpoints and more current and diverse titles will be purchased by Collection Development staff to be used as a comparison. In cases where a popular author’s materials are ceasing publication due to changing cultural values, the Library System will pull one copy of the title(s) to reroute to Library Administration to be archived for historical purposes.

When a publisher ceases to produce, or pulls the existing inventory of a title, any official statement to the public or media about the retention process will be issued by Library Administration, which will also develop FAQs for library staff as needed. Library Administration will consult with key leaders in the field, such as the Urban Libraries Council, The American Library Association, along with peer Florida Libraries.

XI. Rebalancing the Collection

Due to the nature of collection development, the volume and composition of branch collections change continuously. Periodic adjustments to the collection locations are made to maintain balance.

XII. Materials De-Selection

De-selection and selection are similar yet different facets of the same continuous process that defines collection development. Like the selection process, de-selection of items reflects the Library System's mission. Standard evaluation criteria are applied, including frequency of circulation, interest in the subject, and availability of more current materials. Library System staff conducts ongoing evaluation and subsequent withdrawal of items such as materials no longer in demand, resources containing outdated information, unnecessary duplicate copies, obsolete formats and items in poor condition.

XIII. Evaluation

Continuous collection evaluation is conducted to identify areas of strength and areas in need of enhancement, to assess the physical condition of individual items, and to apply standards of collection development.

XIV. Web Site Links

The Library System's website is designed to facilitate access to electronic information beyond the physical walls of the library. Links to Internet sites from the website are selected to broaden, enrich, and complement the Library System's collections. The selection of resources on the website is consistent with the Library System's collection development policy of providing accurate and timely resources to meet the informational, educational and recreational needs of the citizens of Sarasota County.

Displaying an Internet link in no way signifies the endorsement of the linked website. Sites are reviewed and selected in accordance with selection criteria to assist in the location of information on the Internet. The linked sites are separate and independent from the Library System's website; the Library System does not control the information content on remote sites. The Library System cannot ensure the availability or accuracy of external electronic resources. As with print materials, not all electronic sources provide complete or current information.

Linked Internet sites are reviewed periodically for content, accessibility, accuracy, and usefulness. Sites that no longer meet the selection criteria or are inactive or outdated are removed. Factors considered when evaluating sites include: (not in order of priority)

- Access - stable site, no fees required, consistently available
- Design - well organized, clear instructions, easy to use, uncluttered and cleanly designed, graphics that enhance content
- Content - authoritative, documented, verifiable, accurate, updated regularly, relevance of subject matter
- Preference may be given to educational (.edu), governmental (.gov), and non-profit organization sites (.org)
- Content of use to library staff in assisting customers
- Content that meets the needs and interest of the citizens of Sarasota County