

# WCLS COLLECTION POLICY

December 16, 2003

- 1. Purpose:** The Whatcom County Library System exists because of its collection, both physical and electronic, chosen to meet the needs and interests of library patrons. Trained staff support patrons' use of the collection with information and assistance. This policy is adopted by the Whatcom County Library System Board of Trustees to guide the library staff in the management of the library's collection (books, magazines, audio-visual materials, electronic and other information sources) and to inform the public of the principles used by the staff to build and maintain the collection.

Staff may make recommendations for changes to this policy as needed, and a full review will be conducted following the adoption of each long range plan.

- 2. Whatcom County** is located in Northwest Washington in the north Puget Sound region bordering Canada. The county comprises a landmass of 2,120 square miles in a long rectangular shape, two-thirds of which is largely unpopulated, comprising mountainous and natural areas.

**Economy:** The economy of the county has been traditionally based on agriculture, fishing and forestry. All three of these industries have declined greatly over the years, but agriculture and forestry are still important industries. There has been rapid growth in the retail trades and services in recent years, and manufacturing is an important part of the economy. Wages and income for the county rank in the top third when compared with other Washington counties. The unemployment rate for the county is somewhat higher than the state's average.

**Population:** Whatcom County population in 2000 was 163,500, making it the ninth largest of Washington's 39 counties. The population has increased steadily over the years at a higher rate than the state average. A significant percentage of the population increase from the 1990 census to the 2000 census can be attributed to migration into the county. The unincorporated sections of the county grew by 25% and the incorporated sections by 30%. From 1990 to 2000:

- The city of Lynden grew by almost 62%
- Blaine increased by 47%
- Everson increased by 24%
- Ferndale increased by 46.5%
- Nooksack increased by 55%
- Sumas increased by 31.5%

The population is getting older, mirroring a national trend as baby boomers age. Whatcom County has a slightly younger population than the state as a whole, especially the 20-24 age group which accounts for 9% of the county population as compared to 6% for the state, perhaps because of the presence of the colleges and university. The highest percentage of the population is in the 25-44 age group, and a little over 20% of the population is under the age of 14. The average age is 34 years.

**Racial Composition:** The racial composition of Whatcom County is predominately White at 88.4%. In addition:

- Hispanics account for 5.2% of the population, up 75% from 1990;
- 2.8% are Asian;
- 2.8% are American Indian;
- 1% are Black, up 70% from 1990.

About 2.2% of the population are families of recent Russian and Ukrainian immigrants.

**Education** is important in Whatcom County. There is a university, community college, technical college, the Northwest Indian College, and seven public school districts in Whatcom County. Many private elementary and high schools exist and there is a strong home schooling population. Achievement test scores are historically above state and national averages. School levies and bonds receive community support. Schools are excellent and are highly recognized throughout the state and region. Students and faculty receive national, state, and regional awards and receive high marks for achievement.

**3. WCLS Mission and Values:** In partnership with our communities, WCLS brings the joy of reading and the world of ideas to every resident in a safe and enriching environment. WCLS is dedicated to:

- Providing free, convenient access to a diverse collection of library resources that support popular interests and lifelong learning;
- Promoting the value and pleasure of reading and libraries, especially to children;
- Assisting and instructing residents in finding and evaluating the resources and information they seek;
- Working as partners with our towns and rural areas to create environments that cultivate community connections and serve as sanctuaries for curiosity, thinking and the free exchange of ideas;
- Supporting confidentiality and personal choice in regard to individual use of library materials and services;
- Creating a work environment that values employees, fosters excellent customer service, and operates in an economical and efficient manner.

One of the goals of the library's 2002-2007 Long Range Plan is to enhance patron satisfaction by providing the materials and services that are most desired, and the skills needed to find those items.

**4. Materials Selection Policy:** The Board of Trustees recognizes that within the service area there are groups and individuals with widely separate and diverse interests, backgrounds, cultural heritages, social values and needs. The Board further recognizes that the library was created to serve all the people within the service area of the region regardless of age, race, sex, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, or ideology, including those who are physically or mentally disabled or in institutions. The interests and needs of all are taken into account in the selection of the library's collection.

- 5. Intellectual Freedom:** The Library Board believes that censorship is a purely individual matter and declares that, while anyone is free to reject for themselves materials of which they do not approve, they cannot exercise this right of censorship to restrict the freedom of others to read or inquire. The Board also recognizes that parents have the primary responsibility to guide and direct the reading, listening and viewing of their own minor children. The Library does not stand *in loco parentis* (that is, in place of a parent, or charged with a parent's rights, duties and responsibilities).

The Library Board further defends the principles of the freedom to read and declares that whenever censorship is involved library material shall not be removed from the library save under the order of a court of competent jurisdiction, nor will library materials be sequestered except for the express purpose of protecting them from damage or theft.

The Library Board adopts and declares that it will adhere to and support:

- a. The Library Bill of Rights, ALA Council, 1980, reaffirmed 1996.
- b. The Freedom to Read Statement, ALA Council, 2000 revision;
- c. Free Access to Libraries for Minors, ALA's interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights, 1991 revision.
- d. The Washington Library Association Intellectual Freedom Statement, ratified 2001.

All four of which are made a part hereof.

- 6. WCLS and the Bellingham Public Library:** Many Whatcom County residents use the Bellingham Public Library and Bellingham residents use WCLS branch libraries. To better serve our communities, both libraries have agreed to share a computerized catalog and check-out system, giving library users access to both libraries' collections with a single library card. WCLS will cooperate with the Bellingham Public Library whenever possible with regard to collection development and circulation policies, so long as such cooperation is consistent with WCLS' commitment to intellectual freedom.

- 7. Interlibrary Loan:** As part of the library's mission to bring the world of ideas to every resident, the library strives to supply any print or nonprint item requested by library users, either through purchase or interlibrary loan (borrowing from libraries outside our system)\_ provided without charge. Requests for material not owned by the library are encouraged and accepted through a variety of channels. The library endorses the Washington State Interlibrary Loan Code. Occasionally an item is not available for loan from other libraries, out of print, or not a suitable purchase for the library under the criteria outlined in this policy, and thus cannot be supplied.

Non-library suppliers and some libraries charge to lend or photocopy their materials. The library assumes these costs as part of its normal service, but budget limitations may require the library to limit the amount of charges incurred by any one patron during the course of a year.

The library lends most circulating materials to other libraries requesting them through interlibrary loan, unless local library users have holds on them.

- 8. Responsibility for Selection:** Library material selection is vested in the Library Director and, under his/her direction, such members of the staff who are qualified by reason of education and training, in accordance with R.C.W. 27.12.210. All staff members and the general public may recommend materials for purchase consideration.

Administrative policies and procedures for collection management are established by a committee of selectors in consultation with branch managers and with oversight by the Collection Management Coordinator and the Library Director.

- 9. General Collection Management:** The collection (and access to computer resources) is provided through branch libraries of various sizes in the towns and communities of Whatcom County outside Bellingham and by the bookmobile and outreach service. Library users may request most library materials in person at any branch or the Bellingham Public Library, or by phone or online. There is no fee for requesting items.

The library provides materials in a variety of formats, including books, magazines, videos, recorded books, recorded music and CD-ROMS. The library also provides access to electronic information including subscription databases as well as other internet resources.

Copying of materials owned or licensed by the library is restricted by copyright law and licensing obligations. The library will not duplicate material for its collection without permission except within the parameters of fair use as defined by law.

New formats for nonprint material are adopted after consideration of the following criteria:

- a. Demand for format in community;
- b. Durability for use by multiple borrowers;
- c. Packaging which can be processed for storage and circulation;
- d. Standards for cataloging;
- e. Availability of suitable startup and continued funding.

Older formats are gradually phased out as interest and availability decline.

An efficient request and delivery system makes it possible for the library to emphasize variety in its collections. While some items are assigned to specific branches, many are rotated from branch to branch in order to provide library patrons with a constant flow of new materials. Larger branches have more materials assigned to them; the collections of small branches are primarily rotating materials.

A budget for library materials is adopted annually by the Library Board of Trustees and allocated to various categories of materials by the Collection Management Committee.

The library has adopted the Dewey Decimal Classification and other classification schemes in order to help library users find items of interest by bringing similar materials together in an organized fashion. Classification is intended to provide assistance but it is not used to restrict access.

Reference materials and some current magazines must generally be used in the library; otherwise all library users regardless of age may borrow any item in the library's collection.

Labels such as ratings supplied with new items will not be removed, nor will they be added by the library. Parents and guardians are encouraged to guide their children in the use of the library's collection. Library materials will not be sequestered except for the purpose of protecting them from damage or theft.

- 10. Selection Criteria:** WCLS is a public library, serving the diverse needs of the entire community. Therefore selectors choose a balance of materials representing as complete a range of non-fiction topics, fiction genres, authors, performers, and styles as possible. The focus of the collection is breadth rather than depth; and materials suitable for the general reader, rather than the advanced student or the expert. The collections of academic and special libraries in Whatcom County and beyond provide WCLS patrons with more technical and specialized materials through interlibrary loan.

Materials acquired by WCLS should support library users who are:

- a. Pursuing life-long learning;
- b. Using leisure time to enjoy books and other library materials;
- c. Improving skills in daily life and pursuing hobbies;
- d. Keeping abreast of new ideas;
- e. Examining various sides of issues;
- f. Becoming informed citizens of the community, the nation and the world;
- g. Improving business success and occupational performance;
- h. Discovering and developing creativity.

The share of the budget and shelf space allotted to each of these purposes will shift according to use and demand, but each one will always be represented in the library's collection. Materials will not be selected if their purchase interferes with the library's ability to maintain this balance.

Materials are selected using the following resources:

- a. Reviews in library journals and other review sources;
- b. Suggestions from staff and library users;
- c. Publishers' catalogs;
- d. Coverage in local bookstores and media;
- e. Bibliographies.

Materials are selected according to one or more of the following guidelines:

- a. Favorable reviews and/or critical acclaim;
- b. Community requests and/or anticipated popular demand;
- c. Enduring quality and renown;
- d. Attention of critics, reviewers and the public;
- e. Reputation of author or publisher;
- f. Artistic, literary, and/or scientific merit;
- g. Practical usefulness;
- h. Suitability for the lay person;
- i. Contribution to the balance of the collection;
- j. Support for school reports;
- k. Contribution to a diversity of taste and opinion;

- l.** Representation of ideas that are unique, alternative, experimental or controversial;
- m.** Anticipation of new trends in literature, technology, leisure and culture;
- n.** Durability sufficient to withstand its intended use;
- o.** Technical quality (nonprint);
- p.** Price.

Second hand materials are purchased in rare circumstances when there is continuing demand for an out-of-print work and library copies are insufficient.

A work which otherwise meets WCLS guidelines for the collection will not be excluded from the collection solely because it represents a particular aspect of life, because of frankness of expression, or because it is controversial.

**11. Adult Fiction:** The library acquires classics and popular fiction in a wide range of genres in hardback and paperback format. Titles are selected according to quality and user demand. Patron requests are highly regarded and encouraged. Popularity determines multiple copies of titles. Readers advisory booklists are created to assist patrons and multiple copies of titles are acquired to support these lists.

**12. Young Adult Fiction:** Titles of interest to young adults aged 12-18 are purchased and shelved in the “Teen” section of each branch. Multiple copies of selected titles are purchased to support the “Booktalk” program which promotes reading and library use to teens in all the school districts in Whatcom County outside Bellingham. Emphasis is placed on the purchase of paperback fiction titles popular with this age group. Readers advisory booklists are supported with multiple copies of titles on each list.

**13. Juvenile Fiction:** The J Fiction collection serves readers at 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, and all ages for read-alouds, and contains a balance of materials at all the various levels. Like the adult collection, the children’s collection contains classics and popular fiction in a wide range of genres in hardback and paperback format. Titles are selected according to quality and user demand. Patron requests are highly regarded and encouraged.

An important part of the Youth Services mission is to actively promote literacy for children. Multiple copies are typically purchased to support booktalks and Reader’s Advisory booklists. Books of exceptional quality and renown are actively selected, promoted, and maintained in the collection.

**14. Picture Books:** Picture books are selected based on the quality of the illustrations, writing, and format. Due to high circulation, picture books are purchased almost exclusively in sturdy, hardback formats. Board books (books printed on sturdy, cardboard pages) are frequently purchased when they are of high quality and are appropriate for children ages birth to three years. Pop-up books are generally not purchased for the picture book collection because of their fragile nature. However, lift-the-flap or pull-the-tab books will be considered for purchase based on quality. Marketing tie-in books (books based on products, movies, television shows, etc.) are generally not purchased, except in limited quantities to meet substantial demand. The picture book collection consists of a wide variety of classic and new literature and illustration styles.

**15. Easy Readers:** The Easy Reader collection is intended to meet the needs of beginning readers. Phonics based and controlled vocabulary books are both considered for purchase. Books are generally intended for readers between the ages of four and seven.

**16. Adult Nonfiction:** Nonfiction books in a wide range of subject areas are acquired for the informational, educational and recreational needs of the public. One copy is purchased of most titles. Multiple copies may be purchased when:

- a. The title is in high demand (3-5 holds waiting per copy);
- b. The title is of high quality, unusual, or likely to attract interest;
- c. The title provides basic information on a topic of recurring interest.

The library attempts to provide a balanced collection which includes opposing viewpoints. General material understandable to the lay reader has priority over scholarly or technical material or material intended for professional use. Textbooks are generally not added to the collection except when they cover a topic of recurring interest to adult patrons. Materials to support middle and high school reports are also purchased.

**17. Young Adult Nonfiction:** Nonfiction of interest and specifically addressed to young adults aged 12-18 is purchased and shelved in the "Teen" section of each branch library. Multiple copies of many current critically acclaimed titles are assigned to the larger branches. Many of these titles are promoted during booktalks at branch libraries.

**18. Juvenile Nonfiction:** Within budgetary limits, the library attempts to provide a balanced collection of high quality materials at interest and reading levels from preschool to 6<sup>th</sup> grades, on topics in demand for children's personal enjoyment and independent learning as well as for school reports. Like the adult collection, the children's collection includes diverse and sometimes controversial viewpoints.

- a. It is the library's policy to provide students with a nonfiction collection that addresses school assignment needs. However, the library's ability to completely fulfill those needs is limited by budgetary constraints and by the need to maintain balance in the collection.
  - i. For example, the budget does not allow the library to purchase multiple copies of a single title sufficient for an entire class or materials on one topic sufficient for an entire school.
  - ii. The library does not generally buy textbooks. It buys books that can serve both as general interest materials and as support for school reports;
- b. The library will use a variety of strategies including shortened loan periods and library-use-only status to give the maximum number of students access to its school-report materials.
- c. The library supplements print materials with electronic resources and with library staff assistance for students searching the Internet. This includes selecting web sites that are useful to young students and posting them on the library web site.

**19. Reference Collection:** Collections of reference materials are maintained at all branches within the system. Reference materials are for use in the library, to provide quick, concise, and up-to-date information to support the range of subjects in the nonfiction collection.

Some of the reasons to include an item in the reference collection are cost of the material, authoritativeness, usefulness as a ready reference tool, and complexity. Reference works include encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, directories, bibliographies, etc., as well as more specialized materials to support the information needs of both junior and adult library users. When demand dictates and cost permits, additional copies of reference materials may be purchased for the circulating collection.

The reference collection at the System Reference Center (usually housed in the largest branch) is developed to meet the needs of the immediate community as well as the system as a whole, with more resources in more depth. A goal for branch library reference collections is to develop a core collection of reference materials for each branch tied to our service level policy, which takes branch size into account.

**20. Magazines and Newspapers:** The library subscribes to magazines to meet the varied informational, educational and recreational interests of library users. Branch managers annually make selection recommendations for their branches, balancing local interest and variety. Back issues are retained for one to five years depending upon reference value and space available. The library depends upon electronic full-text periodical databases for subject access to periodical information.

Every branch library subscribes to the Bellingham Herald and any local newspaper. Larger libraries may receive national newspapers and/or the newspapers of nearby regions and urban centers (daily or Sunday only), depending upon interest and funds available.

**21. Electronic Databases:** The library provides access to commercial electronic databases, giving priority to magazine and newspaper indexing and full text articles. Other reference databases are selected to augment print reference resources or replace them, if more cost effective, and, where possible, to be made available to all branches. Some electronic databases may be purchased for System Reference to meet the needs of in-depth reference work. When possible, access to electronic databases will be made available to library users from their homes and offices through the Internet. Selection in this area involves comparing electronic databases, print and Internet resources to select the most cost effective and most useful resource. WCLS participates in the Washington State Library Statewide Database Licensing Project that provides reduced costs for a range of electronic resources.

**22. Internet:** WCLS provides access to the Internet as part of its mission to “bring ... the world of ideas to every resident.” The Internet is completely unmoderated, and has the widest selection of ideas, coverage, and focus of any resource in history. Determining the accuracy or authenticity of information found on the Internet may present special problems. WCLS is not responsible for information found on the Internet through computers in our branches or via our website. Patrons are responsible for determining whether information found on the internet is appropriate to their needs.

**23. Selection of Links for the WCLS Website:** WCLS seeks to link to Internet resources which provide:

- a. Useful, timely information or information with historic value
- b. Sites which are well organized, comprehensive, easy to navigate, with minimal commercial content.

- c. Credible authors or creators
- d. Balanced information that serves the interests and needs of public library users, focusing on the most popular subjects

The library staff may select a site that does not meet all of the above criteria if the site has unique, valuable content. Library staff shall use all possible review sources to determine sites for inclusion, however staff review of the site has equal merit. Links suggested by library patrons will be considered if they meet the selection criteria outlined in this policy.

Websites may change frequently due to a site being discontinued, a change in address, or a change in subject matter. While we have performed a basic review of information on selected sites, WCLS is not responsible for the information found on these sites. Also, WCLS has performed no review of links on selected sites to other websites. Patrons are responsible for determining whether information found on the internet is appropriate to their needs.

- 24. Recorded music:** The library purchases recorded music in most current genres. Selections are based largely upon popularity with a sampling of well-reviewed titles in a variety of genres to balance the collection. A single copy is purchased for most titles; multiple copies are usually purchased when three or more holds are waiting.
- 25. Recorded books:** Classics and popular fiction and nonfiction in a wide range of genres and subject matter are acquired in unabridged versions when available. Availability and quality as well as cost are considered and patron requests are encouraged. Abridged versions are chosen if the item is very popular and only available in this version and the flavor and quality of the original is retained, as determined in reviews. Donations of recorded books are often in the abridged format and are accepted when needed.

**Language instruction:** WCLS purchases language recordings in most commonly used languages. Special attention is paid to acquiring English as a second language materials, and instruction in languages represented in Whatcom County.

- 26. Visual Media:** The library purchases a balanced collection of video recordings of documentaries, informational and educational videos, music and entertainment videos, including high-quality television and film dramas and comedies. An emphasis is placed on classic, foreign and independent films and films based on books, but the library may also buy well-reviewed recently released feature films when they are available at a reasonable cost. Well-reviewed or award-winning television series may also be purchased, but generally not long-running series or series from broadcast television except PBS. In order to maintain a balanced collection, limitations may be placed on the amount of funds spent on such materials. The library will attempt to borrow on interlibrary loan any requested videos not purchased, except for American feature films released in the last five years.
- 27. Interactive Multimedia (e.g. CD-ROMS):** The library buys primarily children's and educational interactive multimedia, and a select number of highly rated puzzle, world-building and strategy games, but generally does not buy combat, racing or other arcade-style games.
- 28. Literacy:** WCLS supports access to information at all levels of reading ability. The library

offers support to both adults who are learning to read and those who are learning English as a second language.

**29. Foreign language collections:** WCLS acquires a limited number of materials in languages other than English which are spoken by significant population groups within the library district's boundaries. The collection is developed to:

- a. Contribute to the learning process for those acquiring a language;
- b. Provide native speakers with a small collection of materials in their own languages.

The collection includes materials for adults and children in appropriate formats and consists primarily of popular fiction, nonfiction and literary works. Translations of English language authors are preferred in fiction and literature.

**30. Outreach materials and Large type:** WCLS purchases fiction and nonfiction to suit a variety of reading interests and reading levels of patrons of all ages requiring the large print format.

The Outreach Collection is primarily intended to serve library users who are visually impaired or who are physically unable to use a library building. The majority of items in the collection are large type books. The collection also includes browsable material in regular print format which features photographs and pictures, and audio and audio-visual materials.

**31. Special Collections:** The library director may, from time to time, authorize the creation of special subject collections taking into account funding, space limitations and community needs, as well as Library System benefits.

**Kits:** The library may package small collections of materials as "kits" to be circulated together to support preschools, book clubs, or other community needs and interests.

**Nooksack collection:** The library established a collection of materials about native Americans of the Pacific Northwest through grants from the Nooksack tribe. The collection is housed at the Deming and Everson libraries. The library continues to add appropriate materials when available.

**32. Professional collection:** The library maintains a collection of books, periodicals and other items to support the staff in their work. Most of these materials are also available to the public who can place holds on them.

**33. Government documents** are defined as "Publications by agencies of all levels of government in the U.S." The library adds print documents from government agencies as needed to fill perceived information needs and access to some documents through links on the library's website or catalog records in the library's catalog.

The library acquires at least one copy of Environmental Impact Statements pertaining to Whatcom County and other significant county government documents, putting one copy in System Reference to be retained in perpetuity and one or more for reference and/or circulation in the branches.

- 34. Vertical files:** Pamphlets and other ephemeral materials may be collected on high demand and/or local topics when the information is not available through the Internet or in the regular collection. Each branch library collects materials according to its local needs.
- 35. Local history materials:** The library acquires and retains multiple copies of works about the history of Whatcom County. Locally authored and self-published materials may receive special consideration but generally will be added to the collection only if they meet regular selection guidelines.
- 36. Gifts and Donations:** The library accepts gifts of books and other materials or gifts of money for their purchase. Gifts of books or other library materials may be added to the library's collection if they are needed, are in excellent condition, and meet the general criteria for selection. Gifts not chosen for retention may be sold in a book sale conducted by the library or by the Friends of the branch libraries for the benefit of the library.

Gifts of funds may be designated for a particular purpose, providing that the items to be purchased meet the general criteria for selection and contribute to a balanced collection. A general rather than a specific designation is encouraged because it will allow library staff to make the most advantageous use of such funds. A portion of gift funds designated for the purchase of books or other library materials may be used, if necessary, to defray the cost of processing the materials.

Requests to house gift items in a particular library facility must be approved by the appropriate selector, however items must be available for the use of other WCLS users in the same manner as other library materials. Requests for separate housing, restricted use, or other special considerations must be approved by the Library Director, who will consider space limitations and community needs, as well as Library System benefits. Unless otherwise agreed upon between the donor and the Library Director, the items may be replaced or disposed of according to the best judgment of the library's staff.

Contributions to the Whatcom County Friends of the Library Book Endowment will be welcomed. A donor may designate that endowment funds be used for a particular purpose when such a designation is feasible and meets the criteria outlined above.

Gifts to the Library may not serve as compensation in lieu of payment for fines and charges. A lost item may be replaced with a new (never used) gift of the same work in the same edition and binding, subject to the approval of the appropriate selector.

The library cannot assign a dollar value to gift materials for tax purposes, but if a donor provides a specific list of items, the library will sign a statement acknowledging receipt.

- 37. Free publications:** As a public service branch libraries may provide space for the distribution of free materials except that:
- a. The distributor must have the prior approval of the Assistant Director, Public Services;
  - b. The distribution in no way indicates endorsement by WCLS;
  - c. Library users have the right to reject such material, but may not deny it to others;
  - d. Materials may be removed at any time due to space limitations.

- 38. Withdrawing Library Materials:** The library has an established process for regularly assessing the materials in its collection. Except for local history and local documents, the library does not serve an archival function. When library materials lose the value for which they were originally selected, they will be withdrawn from the collection. Worn or outdated materials are a detriment to the collection and a disservice to the public. Furthermore, space limitations require that the library withdraw approximately 10% of its collection annually to make room for new materials, except when new branch construction allows for expansion. Selectors are responsible for withdrawal decisions based on declining patron interest (as demonstrated by use), condition of the item, and currency. (See also WCLS Disposal of Library Materials policy.)
- 39. Commenting on Library Materials:** The library welcomes the comments of library users about library materials and has established a procedure for bringing those comments to the attention of library selectors and management. The library will give serious consideration to each patron's opinion. Library users submitting written comments to the library will receive a written response in a timely fashion. Materials under review will remain available to patrons until a decision is made.

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