



## How We Choose - HCLS Materials Selection Policy

### Purpose

This document articulates the principles, policies, and criteria that guide the staff in selecting, evaluating, and withdrawing items from the collection (hereinafter "materials"). The goal of this policy is to ensure a responsive and equitable approach to collection development and management and to inform stakeholders (e.g., staff, funders, volunteers, community members) about this process. The vast and diverse collection of materials in all formats supports Howard County Library System's (HCLS) curriculum and reflects the interests, aspirations, and diversity of our community. Delivering such an extensive, first-rate collection involves selecting, acquiring, organizing, preserving, maintaining, and providing convenient access.

HCLS operates in accordance with the standards set forth in Maryland's Freedom to Read Act (See COMAR Section 23-101 to 23-507):

(1) Library materials, services, and resources exist and should be provided for interest, information, and enlightenment of all persons the library serves; (2) a library should not exclude material from its catalogue because of the origin, background, or views of a person who created the material; and (3) a library should not prohibit or remove material from its catalogue because of partisan, ideological, or religious disapproval; (4) the right to use a library belongs to all individuals in the library's community and that right should not be denied or hindered because of an individual's origin, age, background, or views; (5) a library should make its public spaces and facilities available to all members of the public it serves on an equitable basis; and (6) a library should honor the right of privacy of each person who uses its services and must protect personal data and information.

In accordance with these standards, the Library affirms the following:

1. All Marylanders have the freedom to read, and the library will support that freedom with its collection.
2. The Library is responsible for providing adequate services to satisfy the diverse needs of its users.
3. Librarians and library staff "will curate collections that provide access to the widest possible array of books and other materials that support learning" (COMAR 14.38.03B.04) within the limits of our resources.

4. The Library Board of Trustees "may not dismiss, suspend, discipline, demote, reassign, transfer, or otherwise retaliate against an employee for performing their job duties consistent with the library's written policy adopted under this regulation." (COMAR 14.38.03.D)

## HCLS Commitment

HCLS is committed to equity

- We condemn racism, xenophobia, misogyny, hatred, and racial and gendered violence in all forms against all people. we believe in standing against racism and hatred each time it is in our midst and strategizing and enacting change until America's promises ring true for all people. We believe true and lasting change requires true and lasting intention to learn, grow and act.
- We believe that diversity and inclusion are about respecting, understanding, honoring, and welcoming all members of the community into the library.
- We are committed to maintaining a collection on topics and perspectives that reflect our diverse community and ensuring all community members have equitable access to library resources, services, classes, and events.
- We support and stand committed to the freedom to read, along with the freedom to hear and to view, which is protected by the [First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States](#). We believe in Intellectual Freedom as the right of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment. This Intellectual Freedom is a core value of the library profession. This freedom, essential to our democracy, will be upheld, supported, and defended in the selection and accessibility of all library materials. In this regard, the library upholds the principles of the American Library Association's [Library Bill of Rights](#), [Freedom to Read](#), [Freedom to View](#), [Statement on Labeling](#), [Free Access to Libraries for Minors](#), and Resolution 1981-32 of the Maryland State Board of Education, as well as the [MD Freedom to Read Act](#). The selection of materials does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content, viewpoint, implications, or presentations of the materials.

## Guiding Principles of Our Commitment:

The guiding principles of HCLS selection is that an educated public is possible only through free access to materials reflecting a variety of ideas, experiences, and opinions. Principles that support and guide the selection and withdrawal of materials from the collection are guided by the following framework:

- HCLS is committed to factual, accurate, and current information, fighting all forms of disinformation, censorship, and barriers to free inquiry.

- HCLS is a welcoming, inclusive place for all people and acts to dismantle exclusionary structures including racism, sexism and xenophobia.
- HCLS advances individual and societal goals for equity, inclusion, and social justice to benefit the whole of our community.
- HCLS makes selections based on the interest, information, enlightenment, entertainment, education, development, and enrichment of all community members, within budgetary constraints and availability of materials.
- HCLS makes selection decisions reflective of its community demographics and community interests with the understanding and recognition this may bring various issues and sometimes conflicting and controversial viewpoints that may be unpopular with segments of the public.
- HCLS does not serve *in loco parentis*. It is only the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) who may restrict their children, and only their own children, from access to library materials. Responsibility for children's reading and use of library resources rests with their parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s). Selection will not be inhibited by the possibility that materials may inadvertently come into the possession of children.
- HCLS recognizes laws governing obscenity, subversive materials, and other questionable matters are subject to interpretation by the courts. Consequently, no challenged material will be removed from the library for complaints of obscenity, pornography, subversiveness, or any other category covered by the law. Conversely, materials previously judged unlawful will not knowingly be selected.

## Policy

1. Materials are selected in appropriate formats to meet user's informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs. To that end, the selection team strives to ensure that materials:
  - a. Meet current demands for general information needs;
  - b. Reflect the community's diversity of interests, experiences, and opinions;
  - c. Are continually assessed for condition, currency, relevance, and performance; and
  - d. Support HCLS activities.
2. Selection decisions are made based on selection team judgment, expertise, knowledge of what currently exists in the collection, and evaluation of reviews and other tools. The selection team may elect not to purchase vanity press, AI- generated materials, and self-published items if the author's credentials are not apparent. Material evaluations are made based on content and quality according to these factors:
  - a. Accuracy
  - b. Authoritativeness of publisher or producer
  - c. Importance of author, artists, or vendor

- d. Availability of materials elsewhere in the area (county, state)
  - e. Budget availability
  - f. Access and ease of use
  - g. Literary merit or artistic quality
  - h. Potential (demand) or known use (popularity)
  - i. Price
  - j. Relationship to other material in the collection and scarcity of material on the subject
  - k. Significant of subject matter, adequate coverage, and value to the collection
  - l. Suitability of format size, paper, print, and binding
  - m. Timeliness
3. An item that meets selection criteria will not be removed from nor sequestered within the library solely because it represents a particular opinion, belief, or philosophy. Selection of an item does not represent HCLS' endorsement of any opinion, belief, philosophy, or precept.
  4. Sources used to inform selection include, but are not limited to, reviews from professionally recognized sources, publisher and vendor catalogues, and professional or trade bibliographies.
  5. HCLS welcomes requests to add specific materials to the collection. HCLS' selection team thoroughly reviews all such recommendations prior to deciding on whether to add them. Decisions are guided by this document, HCLS' mission, and available budget.
  6. The ultimate responsibility for selection of materials rests with the President & CEO who may delegate specific authorities and tasks.

## Formats

HCLS strives to acquire materials in a variety of format to support our education and equitable mission and the community's evolving needs.

## Unique Collections

### Materials for the Functional Needs of People with Disabilities

HCLS provides access to a wide range of materials for people with disabilities. People can borrow adaptive equipment, such as a range of magnifiers, closed caption decoders, and portable TDD devices. Books in large print are purchased for use by people with limited vision. Recent and popular titles, as well as fiction and nonfiction classics, are selected from large print publishers. HCLS does not maintain a collection of Braille materials, since people may borrow these materials from the [Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled](#).

## World Languages

The world language collection is primarily a popular reading collection for speakers of languages other than English and students who wish to practice their world language skills. Languages maintained and added reflect community needs and requests, particularly from world language readers and community partners. The collection includes fiction, nonfiction, and DVDs.

## DIY Collection

Materials in this collection are selected to support HCLS' commitment to promote experimental and creative hands-on learning.

Safety, quality, reliability, brand reputation, after-sale service, and price are key selection criteria besides collection fitness. The tools collection features three types of items:

- Individual items - examples: step ladder; stud finder; round cake pan
- Sets - a grouping of items purchase together, grouped by the vendor or manufacturer, and loaned together (e.g., bike repair set, wrench set)
- Kits - a grouping of individual items purchased separately, grouped by HCLS, and loaned together (e.g. canning kit)

## Art Education Collection

The scope of the collection is limited to visual art. Just like art books (print or digital) in the main collection, the selection of physical artworks is guided by the following:

- Historical impact
- Content or contextual diversity
- Artistic influence and professional reviews
- Genre
- Anticipated community response
- Connection to curriculum
- Decorating trends

## Educational Toy Collection

This collection of educational toys, puzzles and puppets are selected to promote early learning and to enhance the social, cognitive and motor skill sets of children, from infants through age four. Toys are selected based on safety, sturdiness of construction, developmental appropriateness, and suitability for borrowing.

## Equity Resource Collection

This collection includes fiction and non-fiction titles for all ages across an array of topics and formats. The collection's scope is broad and inclusive. Key themes include:

- The history of race and racism in the US and Maryland
- The impact of racial discrimination on housing, education, health care, etc.
- Policing and the criminal justice system
- Immigration and emancipation
- Gender/gender identity
- Literary or media perspectives from or about African Americans, Asian Americans, Indigenous people/Native Americans, LatinX, Jewish Americans, LGBTQIA+, ableism and more

## Hotspots Collection

Hotspots are selected to support the commitment to provide equitable and reliable access to technology and wi-fi to the community and Project Literacy's curriculum. They reflect cost effectiveness, durability, ease of use, and reliability.

## Video Game Collection

This collection of video games includes a selection of games for Xbox, Nintendo Switch and Switch 2, and PlayStation 4 and 5. Games are rated E, E10+, and T. This collection is available at all branches and can be returned to any location. Video games can be borrowed by all ages, with parents taking responsibility for the games. Not available to these special borrowers cards: A+ Educators, DIY cards, satellite collections, and temporary residents.

## STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) Activity and Literacy Kits Collection

The scope of the collection is limited to STEAM and literacy hands-on activities combined with a STEAM or literacy theme and designed for independent educational value. Like other collections, selection of this collection is guided by the following:

- Originality and application to approved national science or literature educational standards
- Variability to exercises to meet the needs of a wide range of people within the selected age range
- Durability and safety of the contents
- Price and availability
- Connection to curriculum

## Howard County Author Collection

HCLS recognizes local literary and creative efforts and provides Howard County authors with the opportunity to share their work through the Howard County Author Collection. For a title to be included in this collection, the author must currently reside or work in Howard County and be willing to

donate one or more copies of their title to their local branch. Interested authors should fill out [this form](#) and submit it with their donation at their nearest branch. Works of local authors are added only if these materials meet general selection criteria. Donations are not returned.

## Interlibrary Loan Materials

HCLS recognizes the wealth of resources available through other libraries in the state of Maryland and does not needlessly duplicate materials. The Maryland Interlibrary Loan Organization makes available the resources of neighboring municipal, county, and academic libraries to HCLS cardholders via Marina Interlibrary Loan. Accessible to the holdings of Maryland libraries and many libraries through the United States is available through the Maryland State Library Resource Center, the State Library, or Maryland that provides broadband internet access for public libraries, school, and local governments in Maryland, and an extensive collection of specialized online research tools for the use of Maryland public library users.

## Gifts and Memorials

HCLS may accept donated books with the understanding that they most likely will not be added to the collection. HCLS may have gifts appraised based on the perceived value of the gift and demand for the collection. Appraisal of gifted items is extremely rare and must be requested in writing with justification to the President & CEO. Donations and gifts not accepted will be included in HCLS' existing outsourcing and resell program.

Friends and Foundation of HCLS accepts monetary gifts from individuals and organizations for the purchase of materials and in support of classes. Such gifts may be in memory or honor of an individual, in which case a recognition memento will be determined with the originator of the gift fund. HCLS selection standards also apply in these cases.

## Collection Maintenance

Collection maintenance is an ongoing process used to maintain accuracy, relevance, appeal, and usefulness of HCLS collections. Materials in the collection are continuously reviewed. As items are added to the collection, others are evaluated for their ongoing value and may be withdrawn if the format becomes obsolete or they contain outdated or inaccurate information, are superseded by a newer edition, are worn or badly marked, are duplicates, or are seldom used. Space, replacement cost, and the quality and appearance of the collection are factors in this decision.

## Reconsideration of HCLS Materials

Howard County Library System (HCLS), in support of the Freedom to Read Act, exists to serve and reflect the Howard County community, which is home to people with a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, interests, and perspectives. In support of free thought, lifelong learning, intellectual freedom, and curiosity, HCLS provides access to a broad and diverse collection of materials intended to meet the varied needs and interests of the community.

HCLS recognizes that not every item will appeal to every individual. Responsibility for reading, viewing or listening choices rests with each individual. Because HCLS is committed to preserving access to diverse viewpoints and ideas, it does not accept requests for reconsideration of materials in its collection. Community members are encouraged to explore the collection, engage with a variety of perspectives, and judge the merits of materials for themselves.