

Collection Development Policy and Materials Review Request Form — Proposed Revisions

Rationale for Update

The Board is asked to consider a substantially revised Baker County Library District Collection Development Policy, an updated Materials Review Request Form, and a new Request for Review of Declined Acquisition form.

The current Collection Development Policy was last revised in 2019. Since that time, library collections have continued to expand beyond traditional print and audiovisual materials to include e-books, streaming resources, databases, digital platforms, games, equipment, and other nontraditional circulating materials. The District has also updated several related policies, including its Materials Review Request Form in 2024 and policies addressing privacy, gifts and donations, administrative review, and public complaints. Updating the Collection Development Policy provides an opportunity to ensure that these policies operate together consistently and that the District's collection practices are clearly documented.

The proposed revisions preserve the core principles of the existing policy while making the policy more comprehensive, current, and easier to administer. The revised policy continues BCLD's commitment to intellectual freedom, broad access to information, professional selection, responsible stewardship of public resources, individual choice, and the responsibility of parents and guardians to guide the library use of their own minor children.

Revision of the Materials Review Request Form is recommended at the same time so that the form accurately reflects the procedures, evidentiary questions, and standards established in the revised Collection Development Policy. A separate declined-acquisition review form is proposed to provide a clear appeal path when an eligible resident believes a suggested resource was declined inconsistently with the Board's selection criteria.

Revision Process

Staff began with a review of BCLD's 2019 Collection Development Policy and 2024 Materials Review Request Form, together with related current District policies.

The review also considered recently updated collection-development and reconsideration policies from other public libraries, including King County Library System, Multnomah County Library, Deschutes Public Library, Washington County Cooperative Library Services, Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, Sno-Isle Libraries, and Sugar Grove Public Library. Professional guidance from the American Library Association and Oregon Library Association was also considered.

Particular attention was given to:

- maintaining BCLD's existing commitment to intellectual freedom and professional collection development;
- addressing contemporary physical, digital, licensed, and nontraditional collections;
- distinguishing professional collection-management decisions from endorsement of a particular work or viewpoint;
- clarifying the respective roles of staff, the Library Director, and the Board;
- strengthening constitutional and viewpoint-neutrality standards for post-selection restrictions;
- establishing fair, objective, and administratively workable review processes for existing materials and declined acquisitions;
- maintaining access to challenged materials while review is pending;

- ensuring that discrete works are evaluated in context and as a whole rather than from isolated passages or images;
- coordinating review procedures with BCLD privacy, complaint, donation, technology, and administrative-review policies; and
- removing inconsistencies between the 2019 policy, the 2024 form, and current District practices.

The resulting drafts are intended for Board discussion and approval and may be further revised before final adoption.

Overall Summary of Changes

The proposed revisions:

- reorganize and substantially modernize the Collection Development Policy while retaining its core intellectual-freedom principles;
- clarify that BCLD primarily develops circulating collections for general public use and broaden the definition of the collection to include digital resources, licensed content, nontraditional collections, and emerging formats;
- strengthen constitutional and intellectual-freedom protections, including heightened protection for continued access when restriction is sought because of protected content, ideas, or viewpoint;
- provide more detailed and transparent selection, maintenance, and withdrawal criteria, including consideration of documented censorship or attempted censorship;
- clarify that inclusion of material does not constitute Library endorsement and that works are evaluated in context and as a whole;
- reaffirm individual choice and parental or guardian responsibility for the library use of minor children;
- establish clearer standards for digital resources, third-party platforms, Library of Things collections, local materials, preservation, security, cataloging, and placement;
- create a formal review and Board-appeal process for declined acquisition requests;
- establish a defined materials-review process with eligibility, filing limits, completeness requirements, professional evaluation, continued availability during review, a written Director decision, and a focused Board appeal;
- clarify Board, Director, and staff roles so collection decisions remain professional administrative functions governed by Board policy;
- formalize recordkeeping and professional reporting; and
- shorten the formal Board policy-review cycle from five years to four years.

Detailed Changes — Collection Development Policy

1. Purpose and Scope Are Substantially Expanded

The 2019 policy broadly described the District's responsibility to provide a diverse collection responsive to community needs and available resources. The revised policy expressly defines its purpose as governing selection, access, maintenance, evaluation, withdrawal, review of existing materials, and review of decisions not to acquire suggested materials.

It also clarifies that BCLD primarily develops circulating collections for general public use rather than comprehensive academic, technical, or specialized research collections. The definition of the collection is broadened to include physical and digital materials, streaming media, databases, online resources, games, equipment, Library of Things items, emerging formats, and resources supplied through cooperative or third-party platforms.

2. The Intellectual-Freedom Philosophy Is Strengthened and More Fully Articulated

The 2019 policy affirmed free expression, broad access to published thought, constitutional protections, collection diversity, and the principle that selection does not constitute endorsement. The revised policy retains these principles but adds explicit protection against selection, exclusion, restriction, relocation, or withdrawal based solely on controversy, partisan or doctrinal disapproval, or the identity, background, beliefs, or views of a creator.

It also expressly requires materials to be evaluated in context and as works as a whole rather than from isolated passages, images, or excerpts.

3. The Policy Adds an Affirmative Commitment to Preserve Access to Challenged or Suppressed Works

A new provision recognizes that meaningful intellectual freedom depends not only on freedom from restrictions but also on the continued availability of ideas. BCLD therefore recognizes a particular responsibility to preserve opportunities for individuals to encounter works that others have attempted to suppress or restrict and to make their own independent judgments.

This principle is reinforced in the selection criteria by expressly allowing documented censorship or attempted censorship in the United States to receive collection consideration when acquisition would preserve public access to challenged ideas or expression or promote public understanding of censorship efforts.

4. Constitutional Protections Are Revised from a Categorical Statement to a More Detailed Decision Standard

The 2019 policy stated that the Board considered all selected materials constitutionally protected and provided for removal if a court with jurisdiction determined otherwise. The new policy instead states that BCLD administers the collection consistently with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, Article I, section 8 of the Oregon Constitution, and applicable law.

It distinguishes professional library selection from an unlimited public forum and establishes heightened protection after a resource has been selected. As a matter of District policy, constitutionally protected material may not be restricted, relocated, or removed because of objection to its protected content, ideas, or viewpoint unless required by law or necessary to serve a compelling governmental interest and narrowly tailored to that interest. Less restrictive alternatives and the effect on other users' continued access must also be considered.

5. ALA Intellectual-Freedom Principles Are Expanded

The 2019 policy expressly endorsed the Library Bill of Rights. The revised policy also expressly endorses the Freedom to Read Statement and Freedom to View Statement, creating a broader statement of the professional principles guiding collection decisions.

6. Individual Access and Parental Responsibility Are Retained and Clarified

The 2019 policy stated that reading, listening, and viewing are private individual matters and that parents and guardians—not the Library—are responsible for directing the choices of their own minor children.

The revised policy preserves this position, makes clear that one person's objection does not determine another person's access, and explains that age or audience designations assist discovery rather than establishing that every item in an area is suitable for every individual of that age.

7. Responsibility for Collection Decisions Is More Clearly Divided Between Board Governance and Professional Administration

The 2019 policy delegated collection responsibility to the Director under Board authority and permitted qualified staff to select materials. The revised policy makes the governance distinction more explicit: the Board establishes collection policy, while the Director administers it and may delegate selection, evaluation, acquisition, maintenance, and withdrawal responsibilities to qualified staff.

Collection decisions are expressly characterized as professional and administrative decisions made under Board policy.

8. Selection Criteria Are Substantially Expanded and Modernized

The 2019 policy listed factors such as collection objectives, collection composition, significance, timeliness, public interest, demand, audience, community relevance, viewpoint diversity, and effective expression.

The proposed policy establishes 19 more detailed criteria, adding breadth of perspectives, intended audience, accuracy and authority when relevant, literary and cultural value, underrepresented or controversial viewpoints, professional reviews, accessibility, local significance, licensing models, continuing costs, useful life, replacement cost, technical infrastructure, staff capacity, and documented censorship or attempted censorship. It also makes clear that no one criterion controls a decision and that an item need not satisfy every criterion to be selected.

9. Digital Resources and Third-Party Platforms Receive a Dedicated Policy Section

The 2019 policy treated electronic and non-print formats generally and applied ordinary selection criteria to linked Internet resources. The revised policy separately addresses digital licensing, accessibility, device compatibility, vendor privacy practices, authentication, simultaneous-use restrictions, platform costs, package selection, and continued access.

It also recognizes that selecting a database or platform does not constitute individual endorsement or evaluation of every title supplied through it.

10. Nontraditional Collections and Library of Things Materials Are Expressly Authorized

A new section permits BCLD to develop nontraditional circulating collections and establishes additional criteria involving safety, durability, sanitation, storage, maintenance, training, liability, technological obsolescence, and anticipated use.

It also authorizes special borrowing requirements based on physical characteristics or risk and allows new collection concepts to be introduced as pilots and evaluated using circulation, cost, operational experience, and community feedback.

11. Local and Regional Collecting Responsibilities Are Made Explicit

The proposed policy establishes a particular responsibility to provide access to materials concerning Baker County, eastern Oregon, and the region. It permits additional consideration for local creators while clarifying that local authorship alone does not require selection.

Materials of enduring local historical value may receive different retention or preservation treatment from ordinary circulating materials.

12. Purchase Suggestions Now Include a Formal Review Process for Declined Acquisitions

The 2019 policy encouraged patron suggestions and allowed unmet requests to be addressed through resource sharing or other means. The revised policy retains that approach but adds a formal review procedure for eligible residents whose specific acquisition suggestion is declined.

The Director must reconsider the acquisition decision under the selection criteria and provide a written decision; the requester may then appeal to the Board on the question of whether the policy was properly applied. A completed acquisition review ordinarily will not be reopened for 12 months unless material circumstances change.

13. Gift Language Is Simplified and Coordinated with BCLD's Separate Donation Policy

The 2019 policy simply provided that gifts were subject to the same criteria as purchased materials. The revised policy retains that principle but cross-references the District's separate Gift and Donation Policy and clarifies that accepting a donation does not guarantee that it will be added to or permanently retained in the collection.

14. Collection Maintenance and Withdrawal Standards Are Substantially Expanded

The 2019 policy provided generally that withdrawal used the same factors as selection and was not intended to sanction removal because of controversy. The new policy identifies 13 specific considerations, including use, accuracy, currency, physical condition, duplication, newer editions, historical significance, availability elsewhere, technological obsolescence, digital licensing, space, and cost.

It expressly states that controversy or objection to content or viewpoint is not by itself a basis for withdrawal.

15. Cataloging, Labeling, Placement, Preservation, and Security Rules Are Clarified

The 2019 policy prohibited labeling, sequestering, or alteration based on controversy while allowing restricted collections for rare, fragile, expensive-to-replace, theft-prone, damaged, or processing materials.

The revised policy more clearly states that cataloging, shelving, audience designations, subject headings, and labels must be based on professional and viewpoint-neutral considerations. Restricted circulation, supervised use, or in-library use may still be imposed for rare, fragile, difficult-to-replace, or unusually theft-prone materials, but such restrictions must be based on preservation, security, or operational considerations rather than content or viewpoint.

16. The Informal Concern and Formal Materials-Review Process Is Significantly More Defined

The 2019 policy recognized the right to question collection materials and allowed staff discussion followed by written review and possible committee consideration. The new policy establishes a clear sequence: informal consultation with the Director or designee, formal written Request for Review, completeness determination, professional review, written Director decision, and possible Board appeal.

Eligibility is standardized as an adult Baker County resident who is a registered BCLD cardholder; organizational requests are not treated as formal review requests. The policy also establishes one request per person per 30 days, a three-year period before ordinary repeat review of retained material, a 30-day cure period for incomplete applications, and express public-record/privacy provisions.

17. The Professional Review Standard Is Strengthened

The earlier policy directed reviewers to consult reviews, read/view/listen to the material, and determine whether it fit the selection policy. The revised policy requires consideration of the request, the material, intended audience and context, applicable selection criteria, professional evaluation resources, collection/use information, and other relevant evidence.

For discrete works, reviewers must examine the work in its entirety when reasonably practicable and evaluate it as a whole rather than from isolated passages or images. Reviewers are expressly directed to set aside personal agreement or disagreement and determine consistency with Board policy.

18. Challenged Material Ordinarily Remains Available Throughout Review and Appeal

The prior policy expressly kept material available when a court was considering its constitutional status but did not establish as detailed a general rule for all challenges. The revised policy states that filing a request does not itself justify restriction, relocation, removal, or recategorization and that the resource remains available under ordinary library rules unless an unrelated reason, law, or court order requires otherwise.

19. The Director's Decision-Making Authority and Response Timeline Are More Explicit

The new policy defines available outcomes—retention without change, viewpoint-neutral recataloging or relocation, withdrawal under applicable criteria, or another action consistent with policy—and establishes a normal 30-calendar-day written-decision target.

When additional time is required, BCLD must provide a status update and estimated decision date.

20. The Board's Role Changes from Potential De Novo Reconsideration to a Defined Appellate Role

Under the 2019 policy, the Board could hear public concerns and refer a matter to an ad hoc Materials Review Committee, including three or five appointed persons, before directing another course of action.

Under the revised policy, the Director makes the professional administrative decision first. A requester may appeal within 10 business days, but the appeal must identify a policy or procedural provision allegedly not followed or correctly applied. The Board determines whether the review process and resulting decision reasonably complied with Board policy rather than substituting individual trustees' preferences for professional collection judgment.

21. Recordkeeping and Intellectual-Freedom Reporting Are Formalized

The 2019 policy required the Director to keep the Board informed and report challenge incidents and outcomes to ALA. The revised policy establishes administrative recordkeeping for both materials reviews and declined-acquisition reviews and permits reporting of intellectual-freedom challenges to the State Library of Oregon's Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse, Oregon Library Association, ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom, or similar professional organizations, subject to appropriate protection of confidential information.

22. Related District Policies Are Expressly Coordinated

The revised policy identifies the Administrative Review of Library Services, Gift and Donation, Library Displays, Privacy and Confidentiality, Public Complaint/Patron Grievance, Technology Use, circulation, resource-sharing, and records-management policies as related documents.

Concerns that principally fall under another policy may be directed to that process. This coordination was not present in the 2019 policy.

23. The Policy-Review Cycle Is Shortened and Strengthened

The 2019 policy required Board review at least every five years. The proposed policy requires the Director to periodically assess the policy and procedures for consistency with law, professional standards, technology, collection practices, and community needs, and requires formal Board review at least once every four years.

Overall Effect

The proposed revision changes the Collection Development Policy from a relatively concise selection-and-withdrawal policy into a comprehensive governance framework for BCLD's collection. It preserves the fundamental principles adopted in 2019 while adding modern format coverage, more transparent professional criteria, stronger protections for intellectual freedom and continued access, clear constitutional and viewpoint-neutrality standards, structured processes for both challenges and declined acquisitions, defined Director and Board roles, and greater consistency with BCLD's other current policies.

The result is intended to give patrons clearer rights and procedures, staff clearer decision standards, the Director a stronger administrative framework, and the Board a more clearly defined policy-making and appellate role.