

Stratford Library Association Program Policy

- I. Stratford Library Association Mission Statement
- II. Purpose
- III. Definition of a Program
- IV. Roles & Responsibilities
- V. Program Selection
- VI. Program Development, Coordination & Supervision
- VII. Program Access
- VIII. Virtual Programs
- IX. Program Materials
- X. Program Evaluation
- XI. Request for Review and Reconsideration
- XII. Appendices
 - a. American Library Association Bill of Rights
 - b. American Library Association Freedom to Read Statement
 - c. American Library Association Freedom to View Statement
 - d. Request for Review and Reconsideration of Library Programs, Displays & Materials Policy

I. Stratford Library Association Mission Statement

The mission of the Stratford Library is to empower and enrich our diverse community by providing access to innovative services, information and ideas.

II. Purpose

This Program Policy is intended to provide a basis for the selection and planning of programs by library staff. It outlines the principles and criteria upon which programs are planned and guidelines used by library staff to ensure that programs promote the mission of the Stratford Library Association.

The Stratford Library Association recognizes the importance of programs as a resource for voluntary inquiry and the dissemination of information and ideas; and to promote free expression and free access to ideas by residents. Programs provide a strong focus on: encouraging the love of reading; lifelong learning and creativity; establishing responsive connections between the diverse needs of our community, our vast collections and our digital services. A key aspect of our approach is to offer programs which play an essential role in informing and inspiring individuals of all ages and diverse backgrounds. These programs serve as a tangible expression of our dedication to serving Stratford and exemplify our belief that a vibrant library contributes to a strong community. Programs are provided for the interest, information and enlightenment of all residents, represent a wide range of varied and diverging viewpoints, and provide access to content that is relevant to research, independent interests and the educational needs of residents.

III. Definition of a Program

A library program is a free event, virtual or in-person, planned by the staff of the Stratford Library Association for the benefit of those members of the public who choose to attend. A program may involve outside presenters, facilitators or performers and may be offered in cooperation with other entities. Note: Use of a public meeting room by an organization or

individual to hold a public event is not a Library program. Such events are subject to the *Stratford Library Association Meeting Room Policy*.

IV. Roles and Responsibilities

Authority and responsibility for the development, presentation and oversight of programs is delegated by the Stratford Library Board of Trustees to the Executive Director and the Director's designated staff, in their sole discretion. Department Heads and Librarians are professionally trained to curate and develop displays and programs. Program attendees are responsible for complying with the *Stratford Library Association Code of Conduct*.

V. Program Selection

The Library strives to present programs that are educational, informational, cultural or recreational. Topics, content and timing of Library programs are developed with consideration of available resources and keeping community needs and interests in mind. Program selection is based upon the suitability of topic, format and intended audience. A program will not be excluded because its topic may be regarded by some as controversial. Library sponsorship of a program does not constitute or imply endorsement of the content or of the presenter of the program.

The following criteria is used when making decisions about program topics and presenters:

- Relevance to community needs and interests
- Relation to library collections, resources, and programs
- Historical, cultural, or educational significance
- Accuracy, authority, effectiveness and timeliness of presentation
- Inclusion of diverse viewpoints
- Contribution to one of the goals of the Library's Strategic Plan
- Connection to other community or national programs, exhibitions, or events
 - Partnerships with community agencies, organizations, educational institutions, or individuals to develop and present co-sponsored programs
- Availability of space
- Budget

The Library will not sponsor programs:

- Designed for the solicitation of business
- Which support or oppose any political candidate or ballot measure
- Which support or oppose a specific religion

Notes: Candidate forums which include invitations to all recognized candidates may be offered. Elected officials, currently in office are welcome to hold constituent meetings.

Library programs may address religious themes to educate or inform, but not to promote, observe or proselytize a particular religious conviction. Holiday programs may be offered for the entertainment of Library patrons.

The Stratford Library Association supports intellectual freedom and endorses the American Library Association (ALA) Freedom to Read Statement, Freedom to View Statement, the Library Bill of Rights and all relevant interpretations. The Library will strive to include a wide spectrum of opinions and viewpoints in library-initiated programs, as well as offer programs which appeal

to a range of ages, interests, and information needs.

VI. Program Development, Coordination & Supervision

Library programs may originate from Library Staff, partnering institutions or members of the public. In the event of a co-sponsored program, supervision of the program may be delegated to the co-sponsoring organization depending on the timing and venue of the program. All programs sponsored or co-sponsored by the Library must abide by this policy regardless of where they are hosted.

VII. Program Access

Library programs are free and open to the public, unless they are fundraising events. Advanced registration may be required and is on a first-come, first-served basis. Library staff may also limit attendance by age or grade level. Within programs for designated age groups, children and their parent, legal guardian or caregiver are solely responsible for determining the suitability of any program offered for their child.

Any individual requiring accommodation to participate in a Library program should contact the Library two weeks prior to the program by calling 203-385-4166 or sending an email to administration@stratfordlibrary.org.

VIII. Virtual Programs

Some Library programs may be offered using a Library-approved virtual meeting platform that registered patrons may use to access the program from their own internet-enabled devices. This may include programs which are simultaneously run at the Library as well as programs which are offered only virtually. In the event an interactive, virtual program is being recorded for later viewing, attendees will be informed of that fact at the start of the program. While hosting a virtual program, Library staff, partnering organizations and program facilitators will follow industry standard best practices for virtual events. Patrons are required to provide their own equipment and internet connection to participate in virtual programs. The Library will make a good faith effort to utilize platforms that will be compatible with the widest array of hardware and software, but makes no guarantee that every patron will be capable of accessing every virtual Library program successfully. Nor can the Library guarantee the quality of audio, video or internet connection of the program presenters or attendees.

IX. Program Materials

Books, media or other ancillary materials related to the content of a program may be offered for sale at a Library program as a convenience to attendees.

X. Program Evaluation

To provide high quality and useful programs, Library Staff will gather information about program results to guide future programming decisions. Data points may include: number of attendees, program content evaluation based on objectives, patron satisfaction surveys, or other appropriate measures.

XI. Request for Review and Reconsideration

The Library welcomes expressions of opinion from the public about programs. Concerns or questions should first be addressed to the Department Head responsible for the service area

offering the program. If this does not resolve the issue, see the Library's *Request for Review and Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs and Materials* policy for more information.

Only *Request for Review and Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs and Materials* from current Stratford (Connecticut) residents will be subject to the process for response (Organization and Teacher Cardholder requests will not be considered).

All library materials (including programs) are evaluated and made accessible in accordance with the protections against discrimination set forth in [section 46a-64 of the Connecticut General Statutes](#), including, but not limited to, discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability.

XII. Appendices

In the interest of protecting the individual's right to have access to programs, and implementing this Policy, the Library in its discretion may utilize and rely upon the following documents/resources:

a. American Library Association Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
- V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.
- VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019; Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

b. The American Library Association Freedom to Read Statement

The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.
2. Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.
3. It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.
4. There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.
5. It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.
6. It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.
7. It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.

c. American Library Association Freedom to View Statement

The freedom to view, along with the freedom to speak, to hear, and to read, is protected by

the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. In a free society, there is no place for censorship of any medium of expression. Therefore these principles are affirmed:

1. To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

This statement was originally drafted by the Freedom to View Committee of the American Film and Video Association (formerly the Educational Film Library Association) and was adopted by the AFVA Board of Directors in February 1979. This statement was updated and approved by the AFVA Board of Directors in 1989. Endorsed January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council

d. Request for Review and Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs & Materials

I. Stratford Library Association Mission Statement

The mission of the Stratford Library is to empower and enrich our diverse community by providing access to innovative services, information and ideas.

II. Purpose

The Library welcomes expressions of opinion from the public about displays, programs and materials. This policy outlines the process for submitting a Request for Review and Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs and Materials and the process for evaluation by the staff, Executive Director and Board of Trustees. All library materials (including programs and displays) are evaluated and made accessible in accordance with the protections against discrimination set forth in section 46a-64 of the Connecticut General Statutes, including, but not limited to, discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability. The Library is prohibited by state statutes from removing, excluding or censoring any book on the sole basis that an individual finds such book offensive. A Stratford, Connecticut resident who wishes to formally request that a specific item, program or display be reconsidered must complete and submit a *Request for Review and Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs and Materials* Form.

In accordance with Public Act 25-168 Sec. 322, 323 the Stratford Library Association abides by the following statutory requirements:

- No library material, display or program shall be removed, or programs be cancelled, because of the origin, background or viewpoints expressed in such material, display or program or because of the origin, background or viewpoints of the creator of such material, display or program.

- Library materials, displays and programs shall only be excluded for legitimate pedagogical purposes or for professionally accepted standards of collection maintenance practices as adopted in the collection development and maintenance policy or the display and program policy.
- The materials review and reconsideration process for library cardholders/town residents to challenge any library material, display or program shall neither favor nor disfavor any group based on protected characteristics.
- The individual completing a reconsideration form must include specific information about which portion or portions of such material they object to and provide an explanation of the reasons for such objection. The Request for Review and Reconsideration form must include the individual's full legal name, address and telephone number.
- Reconsideration requests are not confidential patron records under section 11-25 of the general statutes.
- Any library material being challenged will remain available in the library according to its catalog record and be available for a resident to reserve, check out or access until a final decision is made by the Executive Director.
- Any employee of the Stratford Library Association who, in good faith implements the policies described herein shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal that might otherwise be incurred or imposed and shall have the same immunity with respect to any judicial proceeding that results from such implementation.

III. Process

The Executive Director, along with appropriate staff, will review the Request for Review and Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs or Materials form and evaluate the request using the standards set forth in the Display Policy, Program Policy or Collection Development & Maintenance Policy. The Executive Director will provide a written response no later than 60 (sixty) days from the date of receiving such request.

Appeal of the Executive Director's decision: This policy permits the individual who submitted the Request for Reconsideration form to appeal, in writing, the Executive Director's decision to the Library Board of Trustees or other governing body for the Library. The final authority regarding the removal or retention of library materials ultimately resides with the Library Board of Trustees.

The Library Board, after evaluating the challenged material under the Collection Development & Maintenance Policy, Display Policy, or Program Policy shall:

- a) consult with (i) the Executive Director, (ii) the State Librarian, or the State Librarian's designee, (iii) a representative of the cooperating library service unit, as defined in section 11-9e of the general statutes, (iv) the president of the Connecticut Library Association, or the president's designee, and (v) the president of the Association of Connecticut Library Boards, or the president's designee,
- b) deliberate on such request for review and reconsideration,
- c) provide a written statement of the reasons for the reconsideration or refusal to reconsider the library material, and
- d) provide any final decision that is contrary to the decision of the Executive Director.

In the event that a single resource, program or display is challenged multiple times, the

Executive Director is permitted to consolidate any requests for reconsideration of the same challenged library material (including programs and displays). A resource that has previously been reconsidered by request shall be exempt from additional requests for reconsideration for 36 months following a Library Board of Trustees decision to retain. The Executive Director shall summarize the previous decision in response to any new request for review and reconsideration during that 36 month time period.

Concerns or questions should first be addressed to the Library Department Head responsible. If not satisfied, the patron may utilize the Request for Review and Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs & Materials process. Formal requests are welcome from current Stratford (Connecticut) residents only (Organization and Teacher Cardholder requests will not be considered).

The process for a formal Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs & Materials is as follows:

1. The patron will meet with the Department Head responsible for the service area hosting the display, program or material. Based on the area of concern, the Department Head will provide the patron with the Library's Display Policy or Program Policy or Collection Development Policy. The patron will be asked to read the policy prior to submitting a *Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs & Materials* form.
2. The patron will then be given a *Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs & Materials* form to complete, detailing their objections. This form can be obtained from any service desk in the Library. A completed, hard copy of the *Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs & Materials* form is then to be submitted to the Executive Director, Stratford Library, 2203 Main Street, Stratford, CT 06615.
3. The Executive Director, or their designee, with a committee of at least three Stratford Library staff members, at least one who holds an MLS/MLIS Degree, will evaluate the submitted *Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs & Materials* form and determine the alignment of the objection with the Library's policies.
4. Within 60 (sixty) business days of receipt of the *Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs & Materials* form, the Executive Director, or their designee, will respond to the concern by sending a letter or email, outlining the results of the evaluation, to the patron.
5. If the patron is not satisfied with the decision, a written appeal may be submitted to the Library Board of Trustees within 15 (fifteen) business days of the issuance of the Executive Director's decision. Appeal of the Executive Director's decision: This policy permits the individual who submitted the Request for Reconsideration form to appeal, in writing, the Executive Director's decision to the Library Board of Trustees or other governing body for the Library. The final authority regarding the removal or retention of library materials ultimately resides with the Library Board of Trustees.
6. If the Board of Trustees plans to address the appeal at their Board Meeting, the individual will be notified of when and where the meeting will be held.
7. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to limit the length of public comments at this meeting (and the length of the portion of the meeting dedicated to the appeal); the Board will not restrict the viewpoints presented but will require that all speakers offering testimony/comment on the appeal observe appropriate decorum at the meeting and restrict their comments to the appeal.
8. The decision of the Board of Trustees is final and will not be subject to any further appeal or Request for Review and Reconsideration for 36 months. In the event that a single resource, program or display is challenged multiple times, the Executive Director is

permitted to consolidate any requests for reconsideration of the same challenged library material (including programs and displays). A resource that has previously been reconsidered by request shall be exempt from additional requests for reconsideration for 36 months following a Library Board of Trustees decision to retain. The Executive Director shall summarize the previous decision in response to any new request for review and reconsideration during that 36 month time period.

Request for Review and Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs & Materials Policy

Approved by the Board of the Stratford Library Association 11/20/2025

Stratford Library Association

Request for Review and Reconsideration of Library Displays, Programs & Materials

Please include your full name, address, and telephone number on this form or it will not be accepted. Only requests from current Stratford (Connecticut) residents will be considered (Organization & Teacher Cardholder requests will not be considered).

Date: _____

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Library Card#: 24003 _____

Email: _____

Do you represent yourself? Y or N

Do you represent an Organization? Y or N

Provide the name of the Organization: _____

Resource on which you are commenting:

_____ Book	_____ Music
_____ Display	_____ Newspaper
_____ Movie	_____ Artwork
_____ Magazine	_____ Library Program
_____ Other	_____

Title: _____

Author/Artist/Producer/Provider: _____

For the following questions, answer in the space provided or on additional pages as needed. Please be specific.

1. Specify which portion or portions of the material is objected to and explain the reason for your objection (Use additional pages, if necessary.).
2. What brought this resource to your attention?

3. Have you read or viewed the material in its entirety? Y or N.
If the answer is "no", what, if any part(s) did you read or view?
4. Explain your concerns about this material. Please be specific.
5. For what age group should this material be recommended?
____Adults ____Teens ____Children ____All Ages
6. Did you share your concerns with Stratford Library staff? What was their response?
7. What, in your opinion, were the positive aspects of this resource?
8. Are there resources you can suggest which provide additional information and/or other viewpoints on this topic?
9. Explain how your recommended resource(s) would comply with the Library's Display Policy, Program Policy or Collection Development and Maintenance Policy.
10. Why do you feel your opinion about this resource should prevent other members of the Stratford, Connecticut community, who may not share your concerns, from accessing this resource?
11. What would you like the Stratford Library Association to do about this resource?

Reconsideration requests are not confidential patron records under section 11-25 of the CT General Statutes. Please return this completed form to the Executive Director of the Stratford Library Association, 2203 Main Street, Stratford, CT 06615.

Program Policy Approved by the Board of the Stratford Library Association 11/20/2025