

## MEMORANDUM

To: George F. Johnson Memorial Library Board of Trustees  
From: Erin Singleton, Head of Youth Services  
Kenneth Roman, Head of Adult and Teen Services  
Date: 6/21/2023  
Subject: Collection Development  
CC: Seth Jacobus, Library Director

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Dear Library Board of Trustees:

We recently had a patron come into the library who had an issue with one of the books in our Young Adult collection. In light of this issue, we would like to explain the process of how materials are selected for circulation in our library. The professional staff of the library includes six librarians who each hold a Masters degree in Library Science and a New York State Public Librarian's Professional Certificate. These librarians select the materials for children and teens in accordance with the policies and procedures set by the Library's Board of Trustees.

### **Mission Statement and Collection Development Policy**

The Library's Mission Statement includes goals to provide a wide array of services and materials to all of our patrons. The following excerpt highlights this goal.

We promote policies, practices, and resources that will help people of all races, cultures, and socioeconomic statuses to have meaningful opportunities to learn and thrive and to ensure that the library is an environment where everyone is valued and respected (<http://www.gfjlibrary.org/policies/>).

Regardless of our personal beliefs, it is important for GFJ's librarians to select materials that represent the viewpoints of everyone in our community. We pride ourselves on having a diverse collection that reflects the greater Endicott community and provides materials in accordance with our Mission Statement. Additionally, the Library has a Collection Development Policy that guides us in choosing materials for our collection, which begins with the following statements.

It is the policy of the Library to select materials that assist its patrons to cope with the day-to-day problems and challenges of living in a society that is socially, politically, and economically complex; as well as materials for recreational reading

and viewing...It is understood that patrons are of all ages, interests, abilities, educational levels, and priorities (<http://www.gfjlibrary.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/collection-development-policy.pdf>).

The Policy further extrapolates upon these tenets while continuing to reinforce the intent that the library should purchase materials for all facets of the population.

### **Collection Development Process**

Materials for children and teens are selected based on reviews in journals that are published for librarians and information specialists. GFJ Library typically uses School Library Journal, BookList, and Horn Book in selecting materials for these age groups. These journals are used because they are well-respected in the field and have a long history of providing timely, thorough, peer-reviewed book information for librarians. We also learn about books from professional development opportunities such as conferences and webinars. The various areas of the library are divided amongst the librarians who make their selections using these journals, and submit their choices to their department head for approval.

### **Patron Issue**

The book that initiated the patron issue on 6/14/2023 is *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe. This title is shelved in our Nonfiction Teen Graphic Novel section and was ordered on 7/18/2019. It was selected by Kenneth Roman, who was our Young Adult Librarian at the time, based on its starred review in the July 2019 edition of School Library Journal. The “Controversial Materials” section of our Collection Development Policy addresses many of the points in this patron’s objection.

It is inevitable that a public institution serving a diverse people will be unable to please all of those people all of the time. Selection of materials will be made on the principle that most of the people will be well-served most of the time if the library is able to provide diverse ideas and viewpoints, in both fiction and non-fiction. The library will not knowingly violate this principle by taking the side of one group or another and permitting this to affect its selection and weeding decisions. The Library also encourages parents to take an active role in helping their children make their reading, viewing, and listening choices (<http://www.gfjlibrary.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/collection-development-policy.pdf>).

The library staff encourages parents to participate in making decisions about the materials that their children are borrowing. This is a reflection of the American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights, which discourages restricting library access to children.

Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources and services available to other users is in violation of the American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights. The American Library



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Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users

(<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/minors>).

It is the decision of the parents or guardians in determining what their children can or cannot read. This is not the decision of the library or the librarians.

We understand that our community may have many different views and opinions about materials in the Library's collection. However, it is our professional responsibility to ensure that we have a balanced collection to serve all the members of our community. Thank you for taking the time to review this information.

Sincerely,  
EMS & KDR