

**Aram Public Library Policy 4.2
Reconsideration of Challenged Materials Policy**

Adopted August 4, 2005

Materials in the library's collection are selected under the guidelines established in the library's *Collection Development Policy*. The term "materials," as used in this policy, includes books, periodicals, pamphlets, pictures, photographs, audio recordings, films, video tapes, software, databases, microforms, posters, displays, educational toys, and any other form or format in which information and ideas may be conveyed, either existing or as may be developed. The library recognizes that from time to time concerns or complaints about a specific title or type of material selected for, or removed (weeded) from the collection may arise. This policy provides the systematic approach to ensure the fundamental principles of intellectual freedom are upheld while completely addressing the nature of the complaint.

This policy and its procedures apply to any and all challenges to the library's collection. Any request for reconsideration of materials must follow this policy's procedures. Should a patron not follow the procedure, their complaint will not be considered for further review.

Procedure

1. Initiation of Requests for Reconsideration

Library patrons may initiate complaints about specific titles or types of materials in the library's collection by talking to or writing to any member of the staff, the Director, or a member of the Board of Trustees. At this point such communications are considered informal complaints. The appropriate response to an informal complaint is for the staff, Director, or Board member to offer the complainant a Request for Reconsideration form (appended to this policy). In addition, the rationale for having a formal complaint procedure should be explained. No further action is to be taken by staff, the Director, or a member of the Board of Trustees until a Request for Reconsideration form is completed and returned to the Library Director. Additionally, no further action can be taken until the challenged material is at the library (not checked out).

2. Acknowledgement of Receipt of Request for Reconsideration

Once a Request for Reconsideration form is received, a letter of acknowledgement is sent by the Library Director. Copies of this policy and the library's Collection Development Policy are sent to the complainant as enclosures to the letter.

3. Inquiries about Specific Requests for Reconsideration

From time to time, complainants, other members of the public, the press, etc. may have questions concerning the status of a specific Request for Reconsideration. Questions should be addressed to the Library Director.

4. Board Notification

The Library Director shall make every reasonable effort to notify each member of the Board of Trustees within seven business days of a formal complaint. The Director shall also include a notification of a formal complaint through the monthly Director's Report.

5. Staff Evaluation of Challenged Material

The Library Director shall select by random lot three staff personnel to evaluate each complaint. Staff may opt out and another name drawn. Staff will be compensated for their time.

Members of the committee weigh several factors when reconsidering challenged materials. They read, listen to, or view the material in its entirety. They look at the material in relationship to the library's Collection Development Policy and to the rest of the collection. In addition, they look at what literary critics and reviewers think of the material. After coming to individual conclusions, the committee meets to discuss the challenged material.

The committee recommends one of several actions to the Library Director: to retain the challenged material in the collection; to retain the challenged material but move it to another location in the collection; to withdraw the challenged material.

If the Library Director concurs with the committee, he or she writes a letter to the complainant explaining the reasoning behind the decision. This letter also outlines the steps the complainant must take to bring the matter to the attention of the Library Board of Trustees, if the complainant remains unsatisfied. If the Library Director does not concur with the committee, he or she will bring it to the Library Board of Trustees for review.

This step takes some time, usually a minimum of six to eight weeks. Until the decision is rendered, the challenged material is not available for use by other patrons to allow staff the time to evaluate it.

6. Reconsideration by the Board

If still not satisfied, the complainant may choose to bring the matter to the attention of the Aram Public Library Board of Trustees. This action may be taken only after receiving a written decision from the Library Director. To initiate Board consideration, the complainant should write to the Library Director or President of the Board and request that the matter be placed on the agenda of the next regular meeting. The letter must be received at least fourteen (14) days prior to the next regular meeting of the Board. If received after that time, the matter will be deferred automatically until the succeeding regular meeting. The Library Director or Board President shall acknowledge receipt of the letter from the complainant in writing, and shall include in the acknowledgement the schedule of Board meetings at which the matter will be considered.

Once the Request for Reconsideration is on the agenda, the Board shall decide by a majority voter of the members present whether it wishes to consider further the Request for Reconsideration.

If the Board votes to consider the matter further, an ad hoc review panel is selected to evaluate the challenged material, a public hearing date is set, and the matter is placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting of the Board. If the challenged material is lengthy, the matter may be postponed one regular meeting. The challenged material is recalled from circulation and is not available for use by other patrons to allow members of the ad hoc committee time to evaluate it. If the Board does not vote to consider the request further, the matter is ended.

7. Ad Hoc Review Panel

The ad hoc review panel is selected by random drawing of three names from the Library Board roster. Members of this panel weigh several factors when reconsidering challenged

materials: they read, listen to, or view the material in its entirety; and they look at the material in relationship to the library's Collection Development Policy and to the rest of the collection. In addition, they look at what literary critics and reviewers think of the material.

After coming to individual conclusions about the challenged material, each member of the panel completes a Board Evaluation of Challenged Materials form (appended to this policy). Each recommends one of several actions to the Library Board of Trustees: to retain the challenged material in the collection; to retain the challenged material but to move it to another location in the collection; to withdraw the challenged material. These recommendations are made with reference to the fundamental principles of intellectual freedom.

The panel's completed Board Evaluation of Challenged Materials forms will be included in the packet for the meeting at which the final decision on the material will be made. They must be returned to the Library Director not later than ten (10) days prior to the meeting date.

8. Public Hearing

The public hearing on the Request for Reconsideration may be held as part of a regular Board meeting or may be held as a special meeting set for that purpose only. The Board shall decide this as a part of its decision in step number 6 (above.) In addition to noticing the public hearing, the Library Director will issue a news release to inform citizens of the date, time, and nature of the public hearing.

The President of the Library Board of Trustees shall chair the public hearing. In the President's absence, the Vice-President will assume this responsibility. After calling the meeting to order, the Chair should review the procedures to be followed at the meeting, and the process followed up to this point for reconsideration of the material. The Library Board should announce at the beginning of the hearing that it will issue its decision at the next regularly scheduled meeting, and that the hearing is simply to hear all sides of the issue.

Citizens wishing to make comments shall sign in and register on which side they will be speaking. Speakers should be allowed to speak in the order they signed in. The President of the Board shall decide whether to set time limits. If these are set, a timekeeper shall be appointed and each speaker shall be limited to a specific amount of time, e.g. three or four minutes. No participant shall be allowed to speak a second time until everyone registered has been heard once.

9. Board's Decision on Challenged Material

Having voted to consider the matter further in step number 6 (above) and having placed the matter on the agenda, final action on the disposition of the challenged material is taken at the next regular meeting of the Board (unless the challenged material is lengthy, in which case the matter may be postponed on regular meeting.) The Board's final decision is announced publicly at this meeting. A majority vote of the members present shall be required to remove materials from the library's collection, to move materials from one collection to another, or to otherwise restrict access to materials.

Whatever the Board's decision, the principles of the Library Bill of Rights should be reiterated and how the decision is in accordance with those principles, should be explained. A very brief statement of the reason for the decision should also be made, e.g. "We have concluded that the material meets our selection criteria, and will be retained without restriction."

10. Forms Appended

Request for Reconsideration form *

Board Evaluation of Challenged Materials form *

*These forms may be obtained at the library Reference Desk.

Adopted August 4, 2005

ARAM PUBLIC LIBRARY
Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials

If you question the suitability of materials in the library collection, please complete this form. A copy may be obtained at the library Reference Desk.

Title:

Author:

Publisher:

1. How was this material brought to your attention?
2. Have you read/heard/viewed the entire work? If not, what parts?
3. To what in the work do you object? Please be specific and cite pages or sections.
4. What, in your opinion, is the theme of this work?
5. What do you feel might be the result of reading/hearing/viewing this work?
6. Do you know what literary critics and reviewers think of this work?
7. What would you like the library to do about this material?
8. If this item were removed from the library, what similar material would you recommend to replace it?

Request initiated by:

Street Address:

City/State/ZIP:

Telephone:

Complaint represents: Self _____ Organization (name) _____

Signature:

Date:

Submit completed form to: Library Director, Aram Public Library

ARAM PUBLIC LIBRARY
Board Evaluation of Challenged Materials

Title:

Author:

Publisher:

Date of Publication:

Complainant:

Date of Challenge:

Having read, viewed, or listened to the material in its entirety, examined critical reviews of the material, and heard the Director's reasoning with respect to the material, we recommend:

___ retain the challenged material in the collection

___ retain the challenged material but move it to another location in the collection

___ withdraw the challenged material

___ other (specify)

Our reasons for the recommendation given above are as follows:

Signature (Board Representative):

Date:

Submit completed form to: Library Director, Aram Public Library