

FLINT MEMORIAL LIBRARY POLICY STATEMENT

I. BACKGROUND

The Flint Memorial Library was established in 1872 as the Flint Public Library in a rented room in the old Academy Building. In 1875 the library moved to a room in the just completed Flint Memorial Hall. The basis for the original book collection was the former Farmer's Library, established in 1860 and dissolved in 1871. Harriet Flint, widow of Charles Flint, provided the initial funding in 1872 and continued to support the library for the remainder of her life.

The library remained in increasingly crowded quarters in Flint Memorial Hall until 1958 when the collection was moved across the street into the freshly renovated Damon Tavern building. The building was renamed to Weeks Memorial Library Building in honor of William Weeks whose generous bequest provided the funds necessary for the move.

The basement of the Weeks Building was remodeled into a much needed Children's Room, the Flint Youth Room, in 1963. The second floor of the building was renovated to include a meeting room, a Trustee's room and a kitchenette and lavatories in 1968-69. The restoration of the famous Rufus Porter murals on the ballroom walls was completed during this renovation. A Local History Room was created on the second floor in 1978 to encourage the preservation and study of materials relating to the history of the town.

In October 1991, the library moved from the grossly overcrowded and structurally inadequate Weeks Memorial Building to the newly renovated and expanded Flint Memorial Hall. The library occupies all 22,000 square feet of the building. An adjoining vacant lot was purchased and is used as a 32 space parking lot. The Local History Room is located on the second floor and the Children's Department occupies the entire fourth floor of the building. The Library Activity Room, located on the ground floor with direct access from the parking lot, was designed so that it can be used even when the library is not open. This was done to encourage the community to participate in all aspects of the library's programs and facilities.

II. MISSION STATEMENT

The Flint Memorial Library is the only institution in North Reading whose mission is to make readily available print and non-print materials selected in response to the informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs of all segments of the community.

The library seeks to meet these needs by facilitating informal self-education of all members of the community using traditional library resources as well as new technologies; by providing information, materials or referrals using local and library network resources; by enriching those areas of knowledge which people are studying in a formal educational setting; by encouraging the use of library facilities for cultural and

community activities; by providing specialized programs aimed at specific age groups; and by promoting the use of all library services to increase public awareness of the library in the community.

III. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The essential goal of the Flint Memorial Library, represented by its Trustees and staff, is to provide a wide range of materials, both print and non-print, selected to enrich the lives of all the individuals who constitute the community of North Reading.

The library-related needs of the community are considered to be informational, educational, cultural and recreational in nature. The library strives to respond to each of these needs through a variety of services and programs. The library is an essential ingredient in the total community because it is the only free cultural and intellectual institution that seeks to meet these needs for all segments of the population. The library Trustees and staff subscribe to the belief that a library should offer something for everyone through its collections, services and programs.

IV. ORGANIZATION

The Flint Memorial Library falls under the jurisdiction of the selectmen in the Town Charter. The selectmen appoint the Board of Library Trustees, according to the formula set forth in the General Laws, Chapter 78, Section 10. The Town Administrator appoints the Library Director on the recommendation of the Trustees. He also appoints all other staff members on the recommendation of the Library Director.

The Trustees are responsible for policy setting, long range planning, and overseeing expenditures. The Director is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the facility in all its aspects, including: personnel, materials selection, public relations, budget preparation and allocation, and operational details.

V. MATERIALS SELECTION

The Trustees of the Flint Memorial Library support the Library Bill of Rights promulgated by the American Library Association and the Freedom to Read statement of the American Library Association and the Association of American Publishers. These two documents are the basis for the selecting and lending policies of this library.

The materials which constitute the library's collection are the foundation and justification for its existence. Because the library is a public institution, supported by taxes paid by members of the entire community, its collection must represent a wide range of viewpoints, opinions, and tastes to satisfy the needs and interests of the entire community of individuals. Unpopular as well as popular positions, both sides of controversial issues, minority views, all current political issues, and a wide variety of recreational and special interest materials all have a legitimate place on the library's shelves.

The Library Director has the final responsibility for the selection of all materials to be incorporated into the library's collection, regardless of the mode of acquisition. It is the Director's responsibility to provide materials that are of both current interest and permanent value, that are up-to-date, that are responsive to the interests and needs of the population and that do not discriminate against any political, religious, economic or social view or group through deliberate exclusion of their views. The Library Director shall try to provide for a diversity of materials without exercising either direct or implied censorship. The Director shall be responsible for expending available funds in an equitable manner so that all divisions of the collection receive a just proportion of said funds.

Public library collections for children and young people are not intended to directly support the school curricula, but to offer alternatives and enrichment. It is acknowledged that children's interests and abilities vary as widely as those of adults. The library makes the same effort to provide for this diversity as it does in the adult collection.

The criteria for the selection of materials for inclusion in the library's collection are: permanence of value, currency of interest, diversity of viewpoint, and literary or artistic merit. An item meeting any one of these criteria will be considered for inclusion in the collection. Bestsellers and other popular materials are considered to be of current interest and therefore worthy of inclusion in the public library.

Choice of materials will result from a variety of professional activities on the part of the Director and professional staff. Reviews of new materials from both professional journals and popular reviewing media form the single most important tool in the selection process. Recommendations from staff, Trustees, and the public are evaluated in the acquisitions process. The strengths and weaknesses of the total collection are continually under review and efforts are made to improve weak areas through selective acquisition of new materials. The library will make every effort to keep up-to-date with new formats and technologies.

The criteria for the withdrawal of materials from the collection are essentially the same as those for inclusion. Materials containing outdated information are discarded regularly while those deemed to be of long-term or permanent value are retained on the shelves. The process of weeding the collection is an on-going activity designed to maintain currency in the collection without sacrificing quality.

VI. GIFTS

In accepting donations of any materials intended for the library, the right of the final disposition of such gifts is reserved for the library. The same criteria for inclusion in the collection that are used for purchase decisions shall be applied to gifts. Gifts that cannot be added to the collection shall be disposed of at the discretion of the Director.

VII. ACCESS

In accordance with the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement of the American Library Association and with the Minimum Standards for Public Libraries established by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, the Flint Memorial Library does not restrict access to any materials in the collections on the basis of color, religion, national origin, socio-economic status, sex, age or place of residence. Free access to the total library is a necessary concomitant to the diversity of materials essential to full public library service to the whole community.

The library subscribes to the reciprocal borrowing standard established by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, whereby residents of all other cities and towns in Massachusetts which also subscribe to this standard, and have not been de-certified by the Board, are offered free access to all the library's materials.

The Library Director, staff and Trustees are not judges or censors of the public morality. Their function is not to restrict the access of others to library materials. The library staff must not be expected to act in loco parentis by parents who wish to limit the reading material of their own minor children. Parents who wish to limit their own children's use of library materials should accompany the children to the library to supervise them and not rely on the library staff for such supervision.

The Trustees and staff of the library also support the concept of the confidentiality of library circulation and registration records as propounded by the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the American Library Association and as protected by law. This policy asserts the right of any individual to borrow any library materials without the fear of unwarranted public disclosure. (Mass Gen Laws 4:7 exemption k).

VIII. SERVICE AND PROGRAMS

The Flint Memorial Library maintains a full range of free library services for all residents of North Reading.

Reference service is provided in-house, on the telephone, by mail, or by email. Reference librarians will assist patrons in finding a wide variety of information, materials, or referrals to reliable external sources. Staff cannot offer interpretation of legal, tax-related, or medical information.

The library offers access to many materials not available locally through its membership in the Eastern Massachusetts Regional Library System and the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium and their interlibrary loan systems. The deposit collections offered by the Regional System are also utilized to supplement the local collection.

Special collections of materials are made available to special segments of the population. The Children's Room Department, the Young Adult collections and the Large Print collections are examples of such special collections. A regular deposit collection of materials is provided to the local nursing homes and local housing-for-the-elderly facilities and limited home delivery to shut-ins is also offered.

Diverse programs are offered for the education and enjoyment of the community. These programs are as varied in nature as the library's collections and are planned to appeal to many different groups within North Reading. The goal of such programs is always to expand the knowledge of those who choose to attend them and to expand the ways in which the library can serve as a community resource.

VIII. SUMMARY

The Flint Memorial Library is a free public library in the full sense of the term. It strives to provide the widest possible range of materials for all segments of the population of North Reading. It recognizes no barriers in every individual's search for knowledge, information, education, culture and recreation through published materials, in all formats and media. The library endeavors to meet the needs of the community as a whole and in all its diverse parts. Its goal is to serve the people of North Reading in all aspects of their need to know.

Approved by the Board of Trustees 12/17/79

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