

# Somerset County Library System – Policy Manual

## **CHAPTER IV - OPERATING POLICIES**

### **H. Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials and Electronic Resources**

#### A. Introduction

- a. The staff of the Somerset County Library System strives to make judicious and appropriate decisions when purchasing materials, subscribing to databases or adding links to the SCLSNJ website. The use of the criteria, standards and practices described in the SCLSNJ Collection Management Plan will create well-balanced collections of resources that:
  - i. encourage literacy and lifelong learning;
  - ii. support the needs of students in formal education programs;
  - iii. provide up-to-date and accurate resources to meet residents' information needs;
  - iv. provide popular materials in a variety of formats;
  - v. reflect the diversity of backgrounds and interests found in its member communities.
- b. The library's collections of resources are large and diverse and they reflect a wide variety of opinions, perspectives, values, tastes and world views. It is very likely that individual library users will find materials in the library's collections that conflict with their personal opinions, perspectives, values, tastes and world views.
- c. The library respects its users' rights to question the presence of specific resources and to request information about why these items were selected. The library is open to requests that the presence of specific items be reconsidered and has developed a process for the reconsideration of library materials.

#### B. Principles and Objectives

- a. When considering the presence of specific items in the library's collections or specific website links it is important for the library and its users to recognize the following:
  - i. In order for a democracy to be successful, its citizens must have access to materials that reflect multiple viewpoints about issues;
  - ii. Free and unrestricted access to ideas, information and materials is a fundamental objective of public libraries;
  - iii. The presence of a particular resource in the library's collection in no way indicates that the library promotes or endorses the views expressed in that resource;
  - iv. Library materials are not labeled or shelved based on point of view or bias;
  - v. Individual patrons are free to select or reject for themselves items in the library's collections.
  - vi. Patrons of all ages may use any part of the library and may select materials from any part of the library.

- vii. Parents and/or legal guardians are responsible for guiding their children's reading, listening and viewing. Parents are encouraged to preview their child's materials when they have concerns about content.

C. Process for Reconsideration of Library Materials

- a. Library users who would like to express concern about why an item is in the library's collection should discuss their concern with a librarian. The patron will be asked to fill out a "Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials and Electronic Resources" form that will provide the library with information about their concern.
- b. Each request will be considered seriously. However, no item will automatically be removed from the collection just because a request was made.
- c. The librarian responsible for collection development of the area where the item in question is located will review the request and read, listen to or view the item. He/she will also read reviews of the item when available, check the item's circulation statistics, and compare the item to the selection standards set forth in the SCLSNJ Collection Management Plan.
- d. In considering the reconsideration request the staff member will evaluate the item as a whole. Items will not be removed from the collection based solely on frankness of expression, the expression of controversial viewpoints or objections to a particular passage considered outside of the context of the entire work.
- e. The person who submitted the reconsideration request will be sent a written response to his/her request. A copy of the response will also be sent to the County Library Administrator. If the requester is not satisfied with the staff's response he/she may bring the concern to the County Library Administrator. If the response of that person does not satisfy the requester, he/she may present the concern to the Library Commission.

*Approved 12/05/2007*

*Revised 6/4/14*

*Amended 12/7/16*

*Amended 9/6/17*