

King County Library System Materials Selection Criteria

The eight-point Materials Selection Criteria form a framework to use as we pursue the charge of the Materials Selection Policy and the mission of free and open access. The criteria guide us in our good-faith efforts to judge what may fall inside or outside of the scope of the King County Library System's collection. They are intended to be inclusive rather than exclusive and are deliberately flexible. They prompt us to evaluate the entire set of factors and to be able to show that we had reasonable grounds to believe that something fits or does not fit the criteria. In addition to decisions to purchase, we also have to be able to defend decisions not to purchase.

The eight basic Selection Criteria are:

1. Current and anticipated needs and interests of the public
2. Evaluations in review media
3. Accuracy and timeliness of content
4. Author's, artist's, or publisher's qualifications and/or reputation
5. Contribution to diversity or breadth of collections
6. Presentation of unique or controversial points of view
7. Receipt of or nominations for major awards or prizes; or inclusion of title in standard bibliographies or indexes
8. Quality of production

Below are some specifics of how we interpret and apply the basic criteria in deciding what to buy and what not to buy. Library employees' personal reactions to a subject or presentation have no bearing on any factor. The library system does not question and is not concerned with a patron's personal use of the information and resources found in the library collection.

1. Current and anticipated needs and interests of the public.

This is the most general of the eight criteria. We try to be inclusive rather than exclusive, and draw upon current awareness and professional judgment. Current awareness tools include popular press, library review media, branch input, vendor databases, patron requests, and staff educational and avocational interests. Materials judged to be too specialized for our collections can be recommended for Interlibrary Loan.

2. Evaluations in review media.

Reviews in a library review journals and the popular press frequently guide purchase decisions. Library review media often assess how well a publication serves a particular

audience (for example, essential for public libraries," marginal for academic collections," for completists only"); this helps with decisions not to purchase as well.

3. Accuracy and timeliness of content.

These criteria apply primarily to factual information rather than to subjective works. We rely on reviews and vendors to assess accuracy and currency. These factors are often considered together and drive our frequent purchases of materials in rapidly changing subjects (medicine/health, computing, and travel, for example) as well as the removal of outdated editions from our collections.

4. Author's, artist's, or publisher's qualifications and/or reputation.

With few exceptions, works by best-selling and well-known authors, directors or musicians are selected. Self-published works or those from small presses will warrant a closer look.

5. Contribution to diversity or breadth of collections.

This guides us to have broad cultural and subject coverage and to collect materials in languages commonly spoken in our service area. It helps to balance collections by steering us away from titles where much is available on a subject.

6. Presentation of unique or controversial points of view.

This criterion supports the KCLS Mission statement goal of providing an environment which encourages users to encounter the rich diversity of concepts on which a democratic society depends.

7. Receipt of or nominations for major awards or prizes; or inclusion of title in standard bibliographies or indexes.

We consider regional and national awards in all formats. Some examples of standard bibliographies are the Fiction Catalog, Public Library Catalog, and Children's Catalog.

8. Quality of production.

This refers to the physical or technical caliber of illustrations, covers, bindings, descriptive covers, recording or printing.

(Adopted by the King County Library System Board of Trustees on April 29, 2008)