MATERIALS SELECTION POLICY

1. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE COLLECTION:

Final authority for the determination of the policies in this document are vested in the Library's Board of Trustees. They have delegated the responsibility for implementing this policy to the Library Director. The Library Director may delegate to specific staff members the responsibility for selection of materials in special areas, but recommendations of these staff members are always subject to review by the Director.

It is the function of librarians to select and to withdraw library materials, and to advise on their use. They are qualified through training and experience, however they must of necessity work within limitations of space and budget. Recognizing that sensitivity to the needs and interests of the community is essential to the development of library collections, the Athenaeum welcomes advice and suggestions from patrons, trustees and authorities in various fields. Librarians, however, are responsible for judging the needs of their collection and their community, and they must make the final choices.

2. THE SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION:

The Berkshire Athenaeum is a member of the Massachusetts Library System (MLS), a statewide consortium of public, private, college and school libraries, and Central and Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing (C/W MARS), an automated network of over one hundred and forty public, academic and special libraries in central and western Massachusetts. The Library recognizes the collections and resources of neighboring libraries, C/W MARS members, and participants in the statewide Commonwealth Catalog¹, and will not needlessly duplicate services or materials. Pittsfield's participation in these networks provides our residents access to the collections of other participating libraries on a reciprocating basis. Every effort is made to locate and borrow from other libraries through C/W MARS or the regional interlibrary loan network those specialized materials that are beyond the scope of the Athenaeum collections.

The Library's collection is predominantly targeted to an English speaking audience and includes books, large print books, periodicals and newspapers in print, microform and digital formats, paperback books, CD recordings of music and books, and video recordings; downloadable ebooks, audio books and videos; and teaching kits. The Athenaeum also provides access to a variety of online databases. The Athenaeum will generally move the format of its collecting in the direction of the predominant technologies, making decisions to retain, but not necessarily add to, superseded formats only as space and demand allow.

¹ The Commonwealth Catalog provides a single, searchable catalog of materials owned by participating academic and public libraries in thirteen Massachusetts automated networks. Library patrons in good standing may use the Commonwealth Catalog to request items that are unavailable through their own library network or institution.
The Berkshire Athenaeum seeks to provide a broad range of materials to meet the varied needs of its patrons. Library materials and services will routinely support more than one library goal. To fill the need for information about popular culture and social trends the library buys popular non-fiction, general mass circulation periodicals, fiction, musical recordings on compact disc, and videos. To meet the informational needs of users, the library regularly updates resources in the areas of business, law, government, medicine, health, technology, science, current events and the arts. The Athenaeum recognizes that authoritative websites are reliable and often optimal resources for certain types of information and will not needlessly duplicate with print resources material that is best accessed online.

Area school and college libraries serve the curriculum needs of students. Without duplicating these resources or attempting to follow all the changes in the curriculum, the Berkshire Athenaeum does recognize the need to provide a wide variety of cultural and recreational reading matter for students and to provide basic class related materials for students seeking to complete assignments outside of school hours. Textbooks are not ordinarily purchased by the library except in those subject areas where material in another form is not conveniently available.

Local history and genealogical materials relating to Pittsfield and the surrounding area are particularly sought for the Local History Department, and are sometimes duplicated in the circulating collections. Histories, local newspapers, vital records, town reports, pamphlets about Berkshire County, area maps and photographs, books by local authors, and books about this area are all collected. The Berkshire Eagle and The Pittsfield Gazette are acquired on microfilm for permanent preservation and research.

3. **ORGANIZATION OF THE COLLECTION:**

   The non-fiction collections at the Berkshire Athenaeum are organized by the Dewey Decimal System. The fiction and biography collections are arranged alphabetically by author and subject respectively. Music collections are classified by the ANSCR (Alpha-Numeric System for the Classification of Music) method, and music scores are sorted thematically. Bibliographical control is achieved through the maintenance of C/W MARS database. In adding material to the collection, the temptation to form separate pockets of books arranged outside the main numerical sequence is resisted. Fragmenting the collection usually makes properly caring for the collection more complex and creates difficulties for patrons in locating items.

   The Library Director should make it clear to potential donors the method of organizing material in the library collections. Should a donor nevertheless insist upon physical separation of a gift from the rest of the collection, the gift may still be accepted, however specifics of its organization and content should be approved by the Board of Trustees, recorded in their official minutes and incorporated into an updated Collection Development Policy statement.

4. **REVIEW PROCESS:**

   The selection of library materials to be acquired is generally made by library staff based on the following:

   4.1. Library's mission statement and its accepted goals and priorities.
   4.2. Staff judgment and expertise.
   4.3. Published reviews from general mass-audience periodicals and from specialized library review sources.
4.4. Recommendations from library users and general public.
4.5. Local relevance.
4.6. Use analysis of specific titles, authors and subject areas.
4.7. Availability at other libraries, most notably those in C/W MARS and through the Commonwealth Catalog.
4.8. Availability in alternative formats, including on-line access, electronic storage, compact disc recordings, video recordings.
4.9. Availability of similar material already in the collection.
4.10. Cost/benefit analysis.

5. SELECTION CRITERIA:

5.1. General Considerations: The Library shall attempt to recognize patron demand (direct requests and proven popularity of similar material types and genres) in the selection of materials and will seek out materials that are pertinent and timely. A high priority shall be given to materials that have current significance, and effort shall be made to obtain materials representing all sides of controversial issues.

Because of limited resources, the relevance of the material to our collection is especially considered. Material that receives positive reviews may not be purchased if it duplicates material already owned. Materials that are too technical or so limited in scope so as to appeal to only a few of our patrons shall be passed over.

New titles are often available simultaneously in a variety of media formats, including print hardbound, large print, mass-market paperback, audio book, video, and eBook editions. Librarians will choose among these media formats taking into account such considerations as anticipated shelf life or long-term appeal, anticipated public demand, timeliness of the content, and the necessity of multiple copies. The Athenaeum is and will be responsive to collecting in new formats as space and budget permits.

5.2. Adult Non-Fiction: Recognizing its principle role is to ensure the availability of information and materials for independent, self directed learning, library staff shall consider the author's competency, overall excellence of the material (artistic, literary, etc.), superiority in treatment of controversial issues, ability to stimulate further intellectual and social development, appropriateness to the level of user, and potential usefulness to the library's collection in the selection of non-fiction materials. Staff members will look to see that authors present material accurately, fairly, clearly, and in a readable manner, however special consideration is given to those books which deal with topics about which very little else is available.

5.3. Adult Fiction: The library attempts to purchase a wide variety of fiction to satisfy the interests of all our borrowers. As some of the language and incidents in fiction will offend some tastes, individual borrowers will need to be selective when choosing materials. Library staff choose titles on the basis of reviews that consider, among other things, the appeal of a book for a specific audience, the artistic skill evident in its rendering, and the literary reputation of the author.

5.4. Large Print Collection: Supporting the library's role of providing popular materials for the community, the Athenaeum maintains a collection of large print books targeted to senior citizens and in general those with visual problems. The large print collection
located at the top of the stairs on the balcony level duplicates to a great extent a portion of
the library's recreational reading collection.

5.5. **Mass Market Paperbacks:** Paperbacks selected serve three main purposes. They must
meet the demand for popular, easily portable, inexpensive reading materials. They
generally duplicate copies of popular hardcover titles to meet heavy demand. Because
mass-market paperback books are inexpensive relative to hardcover books, and because
they are easily damaged, their processing is kept to a minimum. Specific titles are not
always sought, and books are frequently weeded. These considerations result in a
paperback collection that is constantly changing and useful mainly for browsing.

5.6. **Children's Materials:** The Children's collection is targeted to babies through fifth grade
and must meet similar criteria as all other materials selected for the library's collections.
Special effort is made to continually update the collection and to weed worn and outdated
materials. In recommending materials for the children's collection, careful consideration
is given to each new title, and every new edition is treated as new. Duplicates of popular
juvenile fiction, easy readers, picture books, and board books are planned as part of our
collection development. Literary quality, good design and format, and illustration are
important criteria in this evaluation as are accuracy, relevance, and appropriateness for
the intended audience. Materials should exhibit non-stereotypical attitudes, although new
editions of classics and some titles which reflect the beliefs of other times or other
cultures may be acceptable. Classroom textbooks and readers are not considered
appropriate for the collection and are not generally purchased. The library does attempt
to provide supplementary materials to enrich the resources available to students and
teachers.

The Children's collection strives to provide children with the library materials
necessary to aid their personal and educational development. Some items may be
included that are not considered appropriate by all adults for all children. While some
materials may be too mature for one child, other children may be ready for them. Only
the child and his or her parents can decide what materials shall be used by that child, and
neither the library staff nor other library users shall make these decisions for other
people's children.

5.7. **Young Adult Materials:** The Young Adult Department, a subsidiary of the Children's
Library, has a collection targeted to the informational and recreational reading needs of
young people between the ages of twelve to eighteen, typically students from grade six
through twelve. The main purpose of this collection is to serve the educational,
developmental and recreational needs of this population while serving as a stepping stone
from the Children’s Library to the adult collections. The collection consists of hardcover
and paperback fiction and non-fiction and audio books that have been recommended for
purchase in one or more of the standard reviewing media, have been included in prepared
booklists from the American Library Association, or suggested for purchase at
professional meetings. A large percentage of the material for school-related demands and
other informational needs may be found in the regular adult and children's collections.

5.8 **Graphic Novels:** The Graphic Novels collections are shelved separately in the Adult and
Young Adult Departments. Selection is based on specialized library review sources and
public demand.
5.9. Periodicals: Recognizing the need to provide timely information on a wide variety of subject areas requires the library to offer an extensive collection of newspapers, magazines and journals.

Given the amount of time required to bring a book into print, periodicals provide quick, reliable access to current information on social and political issues, consumer affairs, new developments in science and technology, personal finance, detailed information on hobbies and other special interests. In addition to the criteria outlined in the REVIEW PROCESS section above, library staff also consider whether there is subject access to the information in the periodical through the Athenaeum’s online database indexes or through other resources located on the World Wide Web. The Athenaeum maintains a minimal backfile of older periodical issues.

The library maintains print subscriptions to several daily newspapers. Current copies are browsable by the public, and a minimal file of back issues is retained. Newspaper subscriptions are chosen in accordance with relevant criteria outlined in the REVIEW PROCESS section above. Particularly relevant is the popularity and usefulness of a newspaper’s classified advertising to the library’s users and its coverage of local issues and/or state government issues. The library also selects newspapers of neighboring metropolitan areas. The library may subscribe to multiple copies of the same newspaper in accordance with patron demand.

Offers of gift subscriptions to periodicals are considered with attention to the same criteria applied to purchasing decisions.

5.10. Local Document Repository: In accordance with its goal of providing access to materials that promote an informed citizenry, the Athenaeum acts as a document repository for specialized materials relating to educational, environmental or governmental issues of importance to the local community. These materials may include engineering studies, maps, detailed professional reports, correspondence files and other documents of a highly specialized nature, and are generally available for library use only.

5.11. Audio-Visual Materials: The Library purchases audio-visual materials targeted to all age groups as part of its collection development, and audio-visual media may have a presence in all of the library’s circulating departments.

Recorded music, as well as spoken art, such as plays, poetry, fiction, and foreign language materials, are acquired in compact disc format. While the Athenaeum no longer purchases recordings on cassette, it will maintain a collection of fiction materials in the cassette format as long as condition, patron demand, and space allow.

The circulating collections contain general interest video titles of both a recreational and informational nature. While the Athenaeum no longer purchases VHS items, it will maintain a collection of materials in VHS format as long as condition, patron demand, and space allow. Selections of adult feature length videos concentrate on popular, award-winning and classic films, and television series. In addition to widely promoted feature films, selections of children's videos concentrate on productions of children's books made into video, and many contain animations of the original picture book illustrations and dramatizations of longer children's fictional and non-fiction works. Children's titles also focus on lesser-known works that stimulate the imagination and enhance the learning process.

In addition to this circulating collection, the Children's Library maintains a collection of videos with public performance rights that do not circulate. These videos
are intended for public viewing in the Children's Library and for use in children's programming. This collection is comprised primarily of short presentations of animated award winning picture book stories featuring the original illustrations. Other notable children's works are also included.

The same criteria used to purchase other materials apply to audio-visual materials with the additional requirement of clarity of reproduction and performance.

5.12. **Scores:** The Athenaeum’s score collection includes classical and modern works for solo and grouped instruments and voice (collections, parts, and study scores); piano-vocal scores for operas and popular musicals; piano, guitar and vocal scores for folk songs, popular and rock standards, holiday, and patriotic songs. Scores are cataloged on the library’s electronic database.

5.13. **Computer Software:** Public computers with Internet access are available at the Athenaeum in both the Reference Department and Children's Library. Non-circulating software installed on public computers in the Reference Department include standard office applications of word processing, spreadsheet, database management and desktop publishing. Some main floor workstations are loaded with educational software. The Children's Library computer focuses on software of an educational nature. The library does not acquire software for use in the library whose primary purpose is recreation.

Some print items purchased for the Adult Non-Fiction Collection include software intended to reinforce or supplement in some way the information provided in the book. This software is circulated with the book as a bundled item. The software, which is created by publishers for an individual book purchaser, may or may not function on the library’s public computers, which are protected with robust security programs which staff will not override.

5.14. **Downloadable ebooks, audiobooks, and videos:** The Athenaeum provides access to a collection of downloadable ebooks, audiobooks, and videos made available to our patrons by virtue of our membership in C/WMARS. The Athenaeum is a participating library in the Commonwealth eBook Collection, a program receiving funding and support from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and the Massachusetts Library System. These items are provided for the use of those patrons who have access to a non-library Internet computer with the ability to install a software management console and then download the borrowed item. These items are largely not accessible from library Internet computers, which are protected with robust security. Although significant expansion in compatibility has been made in the last five years, some downloadable content is not universally compatible with personal playing devices.

Athenaeum patrons are also encouraged to investigate and are eligible to make use of the downloadable resources offered by the Boston Public Library.

5.15 **Online Databases:** The Athenaeum makes available to its patrons through its website, www.pittsfieldlibrary.org, a variety of online database resources. Some of these databases are available by virtue of the Athenaeum’s membership in the MLS and as full members of C/WMARS. Those databases that are purchased directly by the Athenaeum should be selected with attention to the same criteria applied to print resources.

5.16.1 **Apps:** Content on library-owned circulating devices is considered in the separate policy statement describing the Athenaeum’s TECHNOLOGY LENDING PROGRAM.
5.17 **Foreign Language Materials**: The Athenaeum generally does not purchase materials in foreign languages, however deposit collections of adult materials are borrowed from the Boston Public Library in languages represented in the Pittsfield community.

5.18 **Local History Department**: Because of the very specialized nature of this collection, it is dealt with separately in the LOCAL HISTORY DEPARTMENT: COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY STATEMENT.

6. **REQUESTS FOR PURCHASE**: The Library welcomes requests for purchase of materials, however, it is to be understood that such requests will be subject to the same criteria for selection as other considered materials. Patrons requesting items that are not ultimately purchased will be referred to network, statewide or national lending resources to obtain access.

7. **WITHDRAWAL OF MATERIALS**: Selection of materials for the Library collection is an ongoing process which includes the removal of materials no longer appropriate; replacement of lost or worn materials that are still of value for informational or recreational needs; and/or the replacement of materials in a format more responsive to patron demand and expectation. Materials are regularly discarded from the library collections because they are out of date, so badly worn or damaged they cannot be rebound or mended, because it is cheaper to replace them, or because they are once-popular materials that are no longer used. Space, the cost of replacement, and the appearance of the collection are also factors in these decisions (see WEEDING POLICY & PROCEDURES).

8. **GIFTS**: Gifts of books and other materials in good condition are welcomed by the library, however, material is accepted with the understanding that they may be used or disposed of as the library sees fit. Donated material will be checked to see if it meets the Library's criteria for selection and if it helps maintain the Library's need for balance on matters of opinion. Sincere proponents of various causes or beliefs may offer the Library materials espousing their special viewpoints. The Library can utilize only a small proportion of such material. The Library cannot make cash assessments of donations, nor does it assume the responsibility of returning any items to donors not added to the Library collection (see GIFT POLICY & PROCEDURES).

9. **FREEDOM TO READ, SEE AND HEAR**: 9.1. **Overview**: The Berkshire Athenaeum subscribes to the principles of intellectual freedom as stated in “Freedom to Read,” “Freedom to View,” and the “Library Bill of Rights” (appended) and their interpretations issued by the American Library Association. Included in these statements is the commitment to honor the rights of an individual to use the Library regardless of age, race, religion, national origin, or social or political views. Accordingly, library staff provide equal service to all library users. Children and adults are equally free to use the entire Library and to borrow all materials in the circulating collections. Limitations to be placed upon the reading and viewing materials of young people are left to the discretion of the parents.

   Well intentioned persons or groups occasionally question the inclusion of items in library collections. Although we understand and appreciate their fears and doubts about the effects of materials on impressionable persons, the Board takes the position that the
risk of not providing access to information and ideas is greater than the risk of providing it. Sometimes suggestions are made regarding the restriction or removal of certain library materials, and the Board, therefore, wishes to establish the following principles:

9.2. **Controversial Materials:** In an effort to provide Library patrons with diverse sources of information and the widest possible range of ideas and viewpoints, the Library will acquire some controversial materials. Some of these materials may be offensive to individuals or groups because of perceived profanity, social, economic and political ideas, religious viewpoints, the background of the author, the kinds of information provided, illustrations, or other reasons. Acquisition or use of any item does not imply approval or endorsement of the contents. Indeed, it cannot, since such a variety of ideas is collected. The Board believes it is essential to provide such materials if the American ideal of freedom is to be retained.

9.3. **Age:** Judges, legislators, educators, and others are giving increased recognition to the fact that young people need access to all the information and ideas that are essential to their growth. Therefore, anyone, of any age, who is eligible for a Library card may use any materials in the Library, and is not to have that privilege limited by any staff member. If parents wish to deny their children access to certain materials they must take the responsibility themselves.

9.4. **Labeling:** It is sometimes suggested that a descriptive label be affixed to library materials indicating a political or social point of view or indicating that such an item is questionable or controversial. Such labeling suggests that Americans are incapable of making up their own minds about controversial subjects, and this practice is contrary to the American idea of the free marketplace of ideas. The Berkshire Athenaeum does not subscribe to this practice, which is not to be confused with the routine genre labeling (i.e. mystery, romance, western, etc.) of library materials which makes no attempt to prejudice the attitude of potential readers about the work in question (see STATEMENT ON LABELING appended).

9.5. **Special Collections:** The use of rare, scholarly, and/or fragile items of great value may be controlled to the extent required to preserve them from harm, but no further action shall be taken to restrict the public's access to the Library's collections.

9.6. **Reconsideration:** The Library is willing to re-examine its position on any item in the Library's collections. A procedure has been established to deal with objections to materials owned by the Library. No item is to be removed or restricted because of a complaint except in accordance with this procedure (see REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS and PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING COLLECTION COMPLAINTS appended).