

Requests for Reconsideration of Library Materials – 2012 Annual Report

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| Date: | June 24, 2013 |
| To: | Toronto Public Library Board |
| From: | City Librarian |

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the process for dealing with requests for the reconsideration of materials in the Library's collections and to provide a summary of the four complaints received in 2012.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact arising from the information in this report.

The Director, Finance and Treasurer has reviewed this Financial Impact Statement and is in agreement with it.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Library provides a process for members of the public to identify concerns about books and other material in the Library's collection. These customer complaints are dealt with in the context of the Materials Selection Policy and the principles of intellectual freedom, both of which were approved by the Board at its meeting on June 26, 2000. Subsequently, the Board approved a revision of the policy in December 2007 and, in June 2012, endorsed two Ontario Library Association statements on intellectual rights, which are now appended to the policy. The relevant section of the policy is restated here:

The library believes that a vital society encourages members of its community to actively participate in an open exchange of ideas and opinions. Material selectors consequently strive to provide the widest possible range of resources within Toronto Public Library collections.

The content or manner of expressing ideas in material that is purposely selected to fill the needs of some library users, may, on occasion, be considered to be offensive by other library users. The library recognizes the right of any individual or group to reject library

material for personal use, but does not accord to any individual or group the right to restrict the freedom of others to make use of that same material.

Materials are withdrawn occasionally from the Library's collections when the content is inaccurate, out of date, or for instance, when there is a lack of clarity or logic to the information.

Library users who object to materials located in a library collection are asked to complete a written request for reconsideration of the materials. Request forms are available for this purpose at local Library branches.

The procedures for the reconsideration of library materials are intended to ensure that the concerns of the customer are dealt with in a timely manner and with sensitivity. Typically, complaints are received at the branch level. Staff then have the opportunity to discuss the customer's concerns with them and to provide them with a copy of the Materials Selection Policy. This discussion often satisfies the customer and no further action is required. Customers wishing to pursue their complaint fill out a form detailing their concerns, which is sent to the Collection Development Manager, who forwards it to the Materials Review Committee. A letter of acknowledgement is sent to the customer explaining the process.

The Materials Review Committee is chaired by the Collection Development Manager and is drawn from a group of experienced public service librarians based on the subject of the complaint. These librarians have a mixture of expertise on adult, children's and teen materials in a variety of formats and the Manager may also call in other experts, for example language specialists, as needed. The committee researches the disputed title by considering reviews, the author's reputation, coverage of the subject in the collection, its popularity, historical importance, etc., all within the context of the Materials Selection Policy. The decision on the disposition of the item is communicated in writing to the customer by the Director, Collections Management and City-Wide Services.

COMMENTS

Challenges to titles in the collection received by the Materials Review Committee in 2012 and the actions taken by the Library are listed in Attachment 1.

There were complaints about four titles. Three were in English, two adult books and one adult video; the other, an adult video, was in German. The books and German video were retained in the collection and the English video was withdrawn.

In general, the volume of complaints received relative to the population served is very low, reflecting the Toronto public's appreciation of the breadth of TPL's collection and its understanding of the application of intellectual freedom in a library setting.

CONTACT

Vickery Bowles, Director, Collection Management and City-Wide Services;
Tel 416-395-5506; Fax 416-395-5500; Email: ybowles@torontopubliclibrary.ca
Susan Caron, Manager, Collection Development; Tel 416-395-5503; Fax 416-395-5671;
Email: scaron@torontopubliclibrary.ca

SIGNATURE

Jane Pyper
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Materials Review Committee – Reconsideration of Materials Summary
– 2012