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Themes & Concepts for Today

1
Review relevant New Hampshire RSAs

2
Review guiding library principles

3
Learn about recent requests for reconsideration in New Hampshire

4
Offer "food for thought" as you think about your own library's collection development policies and procedures

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Words That Matter

"Book Bans" or "Requests for Reconsideration?"

Refer to the library policy

Remember the RSAs

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Title IX Libraries Chapter 202-A Public Libraries Section 202-A: 11 Powers and Duties

Except in those cities where other provision has been made by general or special act of the legislature, the library trustees of every public library in the state shall:

I. Adopt bylaws, rules and regulations for its own transaction of business and for the government of the library;

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TITLE XXXI Trade and Commerce

State Commission for Human Rights

Chapter 354-A:1

Title and Purposes of Chapter

The general court hereby finds and declares that practices of discrimination against any of its inhabitants because of age, sex, gender identity, race, creed, color, marital status, familial status, physical or mental disability or national origin are a matter of state concern, that such discrimination not only threatens the rights and proper privileges of its inhabitants but menaces the institutions and foundation of a free democratic state and threatens the peace, order, health, safety and general welfare of the state and its inhabitants.

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Nashua Public Library



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Recent challenges in Nashua

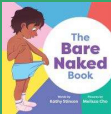
You're In the Wrong Bathroom

Laura Erickson-Schroth

Bare Naked Book

Kathy Stinson





There have been other challenges, these were appealed to the Board of Trustees.

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Appealing the Director's decision



"If you believe my decision was made in error you can appeal the decision to the Board of Trustees."

In Nashua the director responds to the requests for reconsideration after reading the recommendation of the staff committee.

- Was the book selected in accordance with our policy?
- What did professional reviews say about the book?
- Review actual book (when possible)
- Review where other libraries have shelved same title

The Director then conveys the decision **in writing** but the customer can appeal that decision.

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Board response to appeals



"You're in the Wrong Bathroom" appeal:

- Personal opinions about the book were shared
- Policy was not the center of the conversation
- Trustees needed more information to feel confident
- Director's decision was upheld

"Bare Naked Book" appeal:

- Discussion during the meeting centered on policy
- Trustees had read the same materials used by library staff
- Discussion touched on Trustee role of not including book selection
- Director's decision was upheld

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Request for Reconsideration Policy

RECONSIDERATION PROCEDURE.

- Written requests for removal of library materials or objections to programs or displays shall be considered by the Library Trustees. Forms for such requests are available at the circulation desk.
- The trustees will review the merits of such requests at the next scheduled meeting. A response to the request will be made within 30 days of receipt by the library.
- During reconsideration, no change will be made in materials presented, scheduled programs, and displays and exhibits.

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Collection Development Policy

ACCESS. The Newbury Public Library provides equal access to all library materials for all library users. Some materials may not be suitable for all ages, in which case the parent or guardian is responsible for what a child under 18 checks out on his or her card.

SELECTION AUTHORITY. The responsibility and authority for selection of all print and non-print material purchased by the Library ultimately rests with the Library Director, in accordance with the policy direction of the Trustees.

SELECTION GUIDELINES. Major factors that influence the selection of library materials including print books, audio books, and DVDs are:

- Content
- Authority
- Literary merit, artistic quality, originality, and creativity
- Accuracy, currency, objectivity, clarity, logic, and effectiveness of material relevance to the needs of the community
- Current interest in subject matter
- Local interest in subject or author, and school curriculum
- Popular demand
- Limits of space and funds

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Request for Reconsideration: Reclassification

Local group requested four titles be moved from the Children's collection to the Adult Parenting section

- Born Ready: The True Story of a Boy Named Penelope
- Being You: A First Conversation About Gender
- I Am Jazz
- Jack, Not Jackie



Staff prepared by InterLibrary Loaning copies of the titles for review for Trustees, creating packets with reviews and reading/audience levels.

Questions to consider:

- Who is audience?
- What age-level is this aimed at?
- Does this fit with current collection?

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What Worked & What Didn't



- Trustees were able to review materials in advance
- All viewpoints were heard
- Staff were able to provide feedback on placement and classification & helped inform decision
- Holding two meetings on the Requests only inflamed the situation
- Time to speak at meeting was not strictly enforced
- The policies and procedure, while clear, were not the forefront of the discussion- rather the content of the books became the focus.

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Policy Revision

- Written requests for removal of library materials or objections to programs or displays shall be submitted to the Library Director.
- The Director will form a Reconsideration Committee, who will meet to consider the request. The Reconsideration Committee will review the patron's request and the merits of the materials, display or program, bearing in mind the Library's mission statement and the selection criteria of the collection development policy and/or other relevant policies. After evaluating professional reviews and other materials submitted by the patron and the staff, the committee will submit to the individual or group a written decision within 60 days of receipt of the Request for Consideration.
- The individual or group may appeal against the decision of the Reconsideration Committee to the Library Trustees.
- The Trustees will schedule a public hearing within 60 days of the appeal. The Board reserves the right to limit the length of the presentation and number of speakers at the hearing. After receiving testimony from the public and from the library director, the Board will decide, based on the library's policies, whether to uphold or override the decision.
- The decision of the Trustees is final.

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Timeline of events

- Group in Newbury indicated they wished to have the library reconsider the location of several children's titles in the library and move to Adult parenting section.
- Group requested to be placed on the agenda for the next Trustees meeting. Although the official policy allowed for 30 day period, and all trustees had not reviewed materials, they were added to meeting.
- Group attended meeting and were allowed public comment. Date was then set for Request for Reconsideration at next monthly Trustees meeting.
- Request for Reconsideration Meeting allowed for additional public comment, after which the Trustees gave their final decision.
- At following monthly Trustees meeting, the Trustees and Director reviewed the process and the policy and discussed potential revisions, including changing the process to have a Reconsideration Committee to start the process, which would minimize emotional response and tensions of the public meeting.
- After multiple revisions to the draft, the new policy was approved a few months later.

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Closing Thoughts

- ❖ Breathe!
- ❖ Policy, policy, policy
- ❖ Ask for help

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Thank you!

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