

Great Falls Public Library Discards FAQ:

WHY DOES THE GREAT FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY DISCARD BOOKS?

We add over 10,000 new items to our collection each year! Removing items from the collection (weeding) is an essential component of library collection management. We simply do not have unlimited space, and we must continually make room for new materials. Weeding is necessary to remain relevant to our users and true to our mission.

We believe (and much research supports) that patrons are better able to find what they need when shelves are attractively arranged with the most relevant materials. People do not want to sort through old or outdated materials to find what they need.

ISN'T IT THE LIBRARY'S JOB TO PRESERVE OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE?

It is the job of some libraries (like the Library of Congress or other archives) to preserve materials. It is the mission of the Great Falls Public Library ***to serve as a connection point; we empower the community and enhance the quality of life by providing individuals access to information and social, cultural, and recreational resources.*** We are not an archive. It is our role to provide the materials to meet the current needs of our community. We do not have the space, the staff or the budget to properly store items that no longer meet the needs of our community.

NOTE: We do have the Montana Room special collection which does serve as a type of archive. It preserves access to specific local materials such as yearbooks and Montana history.

HOW DOES THE GREAT FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY DECIDE WHAT TO PURCHASE?

Our Collection Management Librarian and our Youth Services Librarian choose which items to purchase for our collection. They use various professional tools (book reviews, best seller lists, patron suggestions...) to choose individual items. Their overall decisions are guided by the ***Collection Management Policy.***

Our ***Collection Management Policy*** is updated and approved by the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees every three years. The actual selection of materials has been delegated by the Board to the Director and staff acting within the guidelines of the policy and within the limitations imposed by the materials budget.

The ***Collection Management Policy*** defines the goals for each area of the collection (fiction, nonfiction, large-print...). A full copy of the policy is available on our website.

<https://www.greatfallslibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/COLLECTION-DEVELOPMENT-POLICY-REV-OCT-2021.pdf>

HOW DOES THE GREAT FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY DECIDE WHAT TO WEED?

Items are removed from the collection for a variety of reasons. All withdrawn items have a pink “withdrawal” slip attached giving the reason for the item is being removed from the collection. We make every effort to follow best practices in all of our decisions.*

Condition: Items that are too damaged to circulate are removed from the collection. (e.g. the book with large coffee stains, the DVD scratched from dog chewing...) We often replace items which are removed because of damage.

Quality/Age of Information: Items that are outdated or no longer provide accurate information are removed from the collection. (e.g. medical books that are more than 5 years old, science items that are no longer accurate...) We attempt to purchase up-to-date materials on the same topics that are removed.

Duplicate copies: When items are new and popular, we often purchase multiple copies. Over time, these items become less popular and we do not need as many copies. We do have some space in our basement annex to store extra copies. We only keep as many copies as we think will be used by our patrons. We remove excess copies from the collection.

Lack of Interest: When items stop being of interest to our community, we remove them from the collection. We are removing most adult nonfiction items (with the exceptions of some local and collectible materials) that have not checked-out in the past 5 years. We are removing most fiction items that have not checked-out in the past 6 years. We are removing most Young Adult items that have not checked-out in the past 5 years. With Juvenile titles, we are removing items that have not checked-out in the past 3 to 6 years depending on the type of item (picture books, easy readers, chapter books, audiovisuals...).

WHAT HAPPENS TO ITEMS THAT ARE REMOVED FROM THE COLLECTION?

When an item is removed from the collection because of poor condition (coffee spills, broken spine...), the item is generally recycled or thrown in the garbage. Items removed for other reasons are usually offered for sale on our \$1.00 DISCARD sale shelves. If the items do not sell, we offer them to the Friends of the Library or AAUW for their yearly book sales. For the past few years, neither organization has been interested in many of our discarded items. (If they don't sell on our DISCARD sale shelves, they are usually items that won't sell well in the book sale.) Most items that are left are processed and recycled. In order to recycle the books, we rip off the covers. The plastic covers are discarded. The cardboard covers are recycled as cardboard. The paper is sent to paper recycling.

CAN I ASK FOR THE LIBRARY TO KEEP AN ITEM?

YES! If you see an item you believe should remain in the collection, you are welcome to fill out a **Materials Withdrawal Reconsideration Form** (page 60 of our **Collection Management Policy**). You can request a form from any Library staff or print one from our website. Once the Library receives the form, the book or material will be set aside for reconsideration by a review committee. The review committee will recommend to the Library Board if the book should be placed back in the collection or remain withdrawn. The Library Board will have the final authority.

*<http://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/selectionpolicytoolkit/weeding>