

# Syracuse Little Free Libraries Collection Development Policy

By Loranne Nasir<sup>1</sup>

The following document is designed to guide the collecting practices for caretakers and other administrative team members working with the Syracuse Little Free Libraries (LFLs). Collection development within libraries is the process of selecting and removing materials from the library collection. While influenced by more traditional collection development policies, the nature of the LFL project requires a somewhat less standard approach. For instance, the LFLs are going to focus more on the selecting aspect, and not on the removal of items that are already part of the collection.

The Syracuse Little Free Libraries—much like their Wisconsin counterparts—are grounded in reflecting the diverse needs and interests of their respective communities, spanning numerous demographic groups. At the same time, the LFL seeks to connect these diverse groups. To that end, the LFLs must strive to cultivate an assortment of books that are high in variety.

Also reflected in the initial seed collection for the first LFL locations indicates a focus on activities (see Appendix A), and materials that support learning about or how to do a particular activity. This is geared toward building community and promoting constructive, enjoyable community interactions.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

One individual caretaker has been designated for each Little Free Library location. New acquisitions to be purchased for the LFL will be determined by the caretaker—either in conjunction with the other caretakers, or individually.

Donations may be assessed with regard to this policy in one of two ways. During a book drive, it would save the caretakers a lot of time if the individuals or organizations hosting the book drive were to take a preliminary pass at making sure donated items fall into the classifications set forth by this document.

Unless an organization hosting a book drive is also capable of keeping donated items sorted according to the classifications identified in this document, the caretaker(s) will still need to review all donated materials and sort them accordingly. This sorting process will consist of marking the books as being part of the LFL, inserting a bookmark, and putting them into boxes to be added into the LFL. It will still fall to the caretaker(s) to gather a selection of items from each classification to be put into circulation in their LFL.

## PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

### Censorship

The Little Free Libraries are *not* intended to dictate matters of taste or opinion to the communities they serve. It is possible and perhaps even likely that at some point, some individual user may disapprove of or be offended by a particular title and its presence in the LFL collection. While it is

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<sup>1</sup> Loranne Nasir (MLIS '13) served as intern for the Little Free Libraries during the summer and early fall of 2012. She developed this policy as part of her internship, and designed it to be a living document—to be adapted over time, and serve as a guide for LFLs into the future.

not the mission of the Little Free Libraries to act as censor, determining what is and isn't suitable for its collections is a subjective process, dependent on the individual judgment of caretakers and those hosting book drives. Books that a caretaker or partner determine to be purposefully lewd or obscene, with no artistic or scientific merit (when taken in context of the whole book) may be omitted from the LFL collections. This is a decision that will be made on a case-by-case basis, as donated books are processed individually or selected for purchase.

### **Age-Appropriate Content**

The LFL project recognizes that some material present in its collections may not be suitable for younger readers. However, it is at the discretion of the parent or guardian of these readers to decide what is appropriate or not for their children. The LFL will not police who may have access to which materials from its collections.

### **Textbooks**

Little Free Libraries collections will not include textbooks among its materials. Textbooks are expensive to purchase, and are relevant for very short periods of time, with new editions frequently released, which makes them hard to come by in donations before they become obsolete. Additionally, they are less likely to circulate.

### **Providing the Community With Accurate, Up-to-Date Information**

In order to best serve the communities in which they are situated, LFLs will make an effort to ensure that the information provided by the books in their collections is up to date. It is important to try to eliminate outdated information, particularly with regard to books in the Historic, Health and Wellness, and Technology categories. Specific guidelines as to how out-of-date status is to be determined can be found under the respective category subheadings.

### **Promoting Literacy Among All Ages**

In an effort to promote improved literacy in users of all ages, the LFLs seek to reach out especially to adult community members with lower reading levels. Materials geared toward these users are difficult to find in donations, so a portion of the purchasing budget should be set aside specifically for these items. Additionally special mention of a need for these items will be made in the chart in Appendix B, for hosts of book drives.

Similarly related to the goal of promoting literacy in all ages, special consideration should also be made for large print materials. Along with each classification, there has been an appended note that all items that fall within this category are also desired in large print format.

### **Selecting Books for Purchase**

Periodic contact with local public library branches can help caretakers stay up to date with where and how to find the best books for these users. Additionally, the LFL project can look to partner ProLiteracy to stay informed of opportunities and resources. Certain presses—such as Nox Press—are notable for particularly focusing their publications toward adult learners.

### **Serving a Multi-lingual Community**

Preliminary conversations with community members served by the LFLs on the Near Westside indicated a strong interest in materials in foreign languages, particularly Spanish. Much like appending large print formats to be added to all other classifications, so too are foreign language books—especially those in Spanish. Throughout this document, special mention will be made of the need for

materials in Spanish. Should the population of the community change and/or community members specifically request items in a different foreign language, this document should be amended to reflect those changes and requests.

### **Other Media**

The Little Free Libraries have not been collecting other media (VHS, DVDs, CDs, etc.) for a variety of reasons. Firstly, items in these formats are easily damaged and rendered unusable by wear and tear much more easily than print materials. Additionally, the LFLs were originally designed with an eye toward promoting literacy through reading, and therefore other types of media are outside the LFL mission. While other media are not included in this collection development policy, it may be worthwhile to reconsider the matter further down the line.

### **TOPICS TO BE COLLECTED**

The Little Free Libraries intend to collect written materials (both paperback and hardcover books) that fall into the following categories, in order of preference, from most desired to least. In all classifications, the collection should seek to provide a wide variety of materials within the classification itself, so as to appeal to as many community members as possible. Just as every book has its reader, so should every reader find their book in the LFL.

Examples of some genres are included to better illustrate the various categories listed here.

### **Popular Reading**

Publications designated as “popular” can be identified using best seller lists from reputable sources, such as the *New York Times* and Amazon.com, as well as the subjective consideration of the LFL caretaker as to books that are always popular. If there is a particular book or story that the caretaker observes being talked about, then that book is a good candidate for the Popular Reading category. This category encompasses both fiction and non-fiction works.

The *New York Times* Best Seller list<sup>2</sup> updates on a weekly basis. Amazon.com's best seller lists<sup>3</sup> are updated hourly, and also include immediately visible information with regard to how long a given title has been in the top 100 books.

Popular Reading materials should also be collected in large print format and Spanish.

#### ***Box Office Reads***

This sub-category encompasses books on which recent or popular movies have been based, as well as books written about—or with similar subjects and tie-ins to—current movies. These have been categorized under Popular Reading, because widely popular movies often generate books to go along with them.

Examples:

1. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* by Stieg Larsson
2. *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller
3. *Twilight* by Stephanie Meyer
4. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams
5. *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi

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2 NY Times best seller lists can be viewed at: <http://www.nytimes.com/best-sellers-books/overview.html>

3 Amazon.com's best seller list in books can be viewed at: [http://www.amazon.com/gp/bestsellers/books/ref=sv\\_b\\_3](http://www.amazon.com/gp/bestsellers/books/ref=sv_b_3)

## **Children and Young Adult**

This category comprises books intended for younger readers (children and teens), and often feature less and larger text, as well as frequently including illustrations (particularly in children's books). This classification also includes publications dealing with issues facing young people, for example: dealing with pressures at school, family concerns, etc.

Children and Young Adult books should also be collected in large print format, as well as in Spanish.

### ***Comics/Books in Comic-form***

These books consist almost entirely of pages illustrated in the paneled format popular in comic books. They are placed under the Children/YA classification, as the majority of comic books are intended for younger audiences.

Examples:

1. *The Reading Lesson: Teach Your Child to Read in 20 Easy Lessons* by Michael Levin, M.D. And Charan Langton, M.S.
2. *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak
3. *Twentieth Century* by Terry Deary
4. *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman

## **Activities/Crafts and How-To**

This category is focused on bringing the community together through more active engagement. Instructions and guides on popular activities that both children and adults can enjoy are preferred. Examples include gardening, sewing, painting, learning about science/nature, etc.

Activities, crafts and how-to books should also be collected in large print format, as well as in Spanish.

### ***Technology***

Books on how to operate modern technologies—spanning a wide range from software to hardware—help readers gain technological literacy, which is useful in many workplaces. These items need to be reviewed before adding them to the collection to ensure that the information they contain is still relevant, as technology today changes very quickly. To that end, anything in this category that was published more than four years ago should definitely be omitted from the collections. The caretaker should consider whether books in this subject published more than two years ago may also be obsolete.

### ***Cooking***

Books containing recipes and cooking techniques are also wanted. There is a slight preference for those by familiar or famous chefs (for example: chefs who have their own TV shows), as users are likely to gravitate toward books with a familiar face on them.

## **Health and Wellness**

This classification includes materials containing information on healthy eating and exercise, as well as living with diseases or ailments. The goal of this category is to provide the community with a way in which they can educate themselves about issues pertaining their own health, as well as possibly about health issues someone close to them might be living with. For reasons of accuracy, Health and Wellness books that are more than 10 years old should be omitted from the LFL collections.

Health and wellness books are to be collected in large print format, as well as in Spanish.

### ***Self-Help***

This sub-heading encompasses materials geared toward providing the adult reader with the tools

to navigate particular issues (the death of a loved one, for example). Self-help books can sometimes be based in certain religious views. These books are also perfectly welcome in the LFL collections and are included in this category, not in the Religion category.

Examples:

1. *What to Expect When You're Expecting* by Heidi Murkoff and Sharon Mazel
2. *Living with Cancer: A Practical Guide* by Dave Visel
3. *Yoga as Medicine* by Timothy McCall
4. *Chicken Soup for the Grieving Soul* by Victor Hansen
5. *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff—and It's All Small Stuff* by Richard Carlson

## **Sports**

This classification does not fall under Health/Wellness as it pertains directly to subjects such as particular athletes and sports teams, or histories of a certain sport. According to documentation surrounding the original Seed Collection for the LFLs, Near Westside community members have expressed an enthusiasm for baseball, so materials pertaining to baseball players, teams, etc. are of particular value there. Preference should be shown specifically to New York State and Syracuse-related athletes and teams.

This category should also be sensitive to including area-specific materials, such as including books about sports teams and players from the local area.

Sports materials should also be collected in large print format, and in Spanish.

Examples:

1. *Basketball History in Syracuse: Hoops Roots* by Mark Allen Baker
2. *Hockey in Syracuse* by Jim Mancuso
3. *The Nats* by David Ramsey
4. *The Captain: The Journey of Derek Jeter* by Ian O'Connor
5. *Pelé, el rey del fútbol* by Monica Brown and Rudy Gutierrez

## **Region-Specific**

This category includes materials pertaining directly and specifically to life in Syracuse, NY. Subjects may include accounts of historical events in Syracuse, information about the founding and history of the city itself, or its geography.

The category can be expanded to include subjects relating to Upstate New York, as well, such as information about life, history, etc. in the Finger Lakes region.

Region-specific publications should also be collected in large print format, as well as in Spanish.

Examples:

1. *Historic Photos of Syracuse* by Dennis Connors and Onondaga Historical Association

## **Historic**

Included in this category are biographies of famous people, accounts of historical events that do not fall under the Sports or Region-Specific categories, and accounts of social movements. Historic books should be given a quick check for accuracy. If a book is obviously outdated—for example, if the title refers to the current state of the U.S.S.R.—it should not be added to the LFL collection.

Historic materials should also be collected in large print format, as well as in Spanish.

**Art**

This is a very broad category, including books featuring images of works by a given artist, or focusing on a particular genre of art, be it painting, architecture or sculpture. It also includes books about music and composers, as well as poetry and drama. Efforts to collect materials in this subject should be geared toward artists who may be particularly notable in the area—not necessarily having lived in the area, but those who are popular.

Books pertaining to visual art/artists can have the added benefit of consisting largely of images, which may help to reach out to users who are at a lower reading level.

Materials about art should also be collected in large print format, as well as in Spanish.

**Religion**

Religious books, or books with a religious inspiration or tone should be collected.

This category also includes materials based on analysis or descriptions and histories of religions.

Books pertaining to religion should also be collected in large print format, as well as Spanish.

## **Appendix A: Description of Caretaker Responsibilities**

Each Little Free Library should have a caretaker. An individual caretaker may be responsible for more than one LFL location.

Ideally, the caretaker is someone who lives nearby, so they can observe their LFL frequently. Among the caretaker's responsibilities are the following:

- Check LFL locations regularly to see if more books need to be added.
- Restock LFL locations with new books.
- Receive boxes of books from book drives and Near Westside Initiative. The caretaker should be able to store a few boxes of books at a time, so they are not constantly retrieving more from storage.
- Using the collection development policy as their guide, select books to be purchased to add to the LFL collection. This should happen each fall in October/November. Caretakers should also take into account word-of-mouth requests from community members about what types of books they would like to see more of, and make an effort to purchase those books.
- Prepare purchased books for use in the LFL—currently, this includes stamping the inside cover of each book. Eventually, this stamp may be phased out.
- All caretakers collectively will have access to and be responsible for checking the [SyracuseLFL@gmail.com](mailto:SyracuseLFL@gmail.com) email address. Maarten Jacobs ([mjacob01@syr.edu](mailto:mjacob01@syr.edu)) will be in charge of handing off this email address to caretakers.
- Make mental note of categories of books present in their LFL. If there are types of books that the community doesn't seem to be reading, remove them, and inform Maarten Jacobs ([mjacob01@syr.edu](mailto:mjacob01@syr.edu)) that the particular LFL location should receive fewer of the less desired types of books.
- Clear out any trash left in LFLs, and report any structural damage to Maarten Jacobs ([mjacob01@syr.edu](mailto:mjacob01@syr.edu)).