

The Westport Library Display Policy

I. Purposes of the Display Policy

The purposes of The Westport Library's Display Policy are to:

1. Establish a framework for Library-approved displays curated by Library staff;
2. Inform the public of the principles and criteria guiding display decisions; and
3. Advance the Library's mission:

"The Westport Library empowers individuals and fosters a connected, inclusive community through welcoming spaces, open exploration, the free exchange of ideas, and equitable access for all."

II. Policy

Displays at the Library are dynamic expressions of the Library's commitment to education, cultural enrichment, and the open exchange of ideas. They are designed to support voluntary inquiry, foster free expression, and promote broad access to information and diverse perspectives. The Library recognizes the importance of displays and programs as resources for voluntary inquiry and the dissemination of information and ideas to promote free expression and free access to ideas by residents. Through thoughtfully curated displays, the Library seeks to spark curiosity, broaden perspectives, and invite reflection on the diverse experiences that shape the world. Library displays serve as living extensions of the Library's collection, offering residents opportunities to explore history, celebrate heritage, engage with current issues, and discover new voices. They are tools for lifelong learning, mirrors of community identity, and windows into the wider human experience. In honoring the values of intellectual freedom and inclusion, the Library's displays aim to not only inform but also inspire. The Library believes that when people encounter ideas—both familiar and unfamiliar—they grow in understanding, empathy, and civic connection. Displays serve as tangible expressions of the Library's dedication to the community and exemplify the Library's belief that a vibrant library contributes to a strong community. Library displays are provided for the interest, information and enlightenment of all residents, represent a wide range of varied and diverging viewpoints, and provide access to content that is relevant to the research, independent interests and educational needs of residents.

III. Intellectual Freedom and Censorship

In accordance with Connecticut Public Act 25-168, Sections 322–323, which safeguard the freedom to read and affirm library autonomy, the Library upholds the right of individuals to access diverse resources free from censorship or viewpoint discrimination.

The presence of a display does not imply Library endorsement of the ideas presented. All Library materials are evaluated and made accessible in accordance with the protections against discrimination set forth in section 46a-64 of the general statutes, including, but not limited to, discrimination based on race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability. Viewing Library displays is a matter of individual choice.

The Library recognizes that some displays may be controversial or unpopular; however, individuals may apply their personal values only to themselves. Selections are made on the basis of the display's merits, not anticipated approval or disapproval. Materials will not be excluded because they may be accessed by minors; parents and guardians are responsible for guiding their own children's use of Library resources.

The Library rejects censorship in all forms and affirms its commitment to intellectual freedom by endorsing the American Library Association's Freedom to Read Statement, Freedom to View Statement, and Library Bill of Rights.

IV. Principles and Criteria

The final responsibility for the display of Library materials is held by the Library's Executive Director, but day-to-day responsibility is shared by Librarians that are professionally trained to curate and develop displays.

The Library differentiates between Library displays that are created or curated by librarians or staff members of the Library and displays created by members of the public or community groups.

V. Library Displays That Are Created or Curated by Librarians

Library staff uses the following criteria in making decisions about display topics, materials, and accompanying resources:

- Community needs and interest
- Availability of display space
- Historical, cultural, artistic or educational significance
- Connection to other community or national programs, exhibitions, or events
- Relation to library collections, resources, exhibits, and programs

The Library may partner with other community agencies, organizations, educational institutions, or individuals to develop and present co-sponsored displays. The Library will strive to include a wide spectrum of opinions and viewpoints in Library-initiated displays. The Library will not exclude from Library-initiated displays any topics, books, media, or other resources solely because they may be considered to be controversial.

VI. Library Displays that Are Created by Members of the Public or Community Groups and Exhibited in the Library

The Library welcomes proposals for community-submitted displays from individuals. Submissions must align with the Library's mission and values and will be reviewed by Library staff based on space availability, relevance, and appropriateness for a public setting serving all ages. Anyone seeking to submit a display to the Library must submit the Library's Display Proposal form, which is accessible on the Library's website.

Submission of a Display Proposal form does not guarantee acceptance. All displays are subject to Library approval and must comply with Library policies. Acceptance of a display by the Library does not constitute an endorsement by the Library of the content of the display, or of the views expressed in the materials on display.

Submissions must:

- Be educational, cultural, artistic, or civic in nature
- Refrain from promoting commercial, partisan, or purely personal content
- Comply with applicable laws and library policies, including those that uphold inclusivity and intellectual freedom

The Library reserves the right to accept, decline, or remove submissions in its discretion, in accordance with professional standards and this policy. Community displays are offered on a temporary basis and must be retrieved by the date agreed upon.

VII. Procedures for Questioning Library Displays, Programs or Materials

The Library's Material, Program and Display Review and Reconsideration Policy limits requests to reconsider materials, programs or displays to Westport residents. For details, see the Library's Review and Reconsideration Policy and the Library's Reconsideration Request Form. Both are available on the Library's website. No program will be canceled, altered, or removed during the review process unless there is a credible safety threat or legal concern. Requests and decisions are not treated as confidential patron records. Final decisions by the Executive Director or Board of Trustees resulting from a reconsideration request will remain in effect for three years.

Adopted by the Library Board of Trustees on November 19, 2025

The Board of Trustees may revise this policy at any time and will review it at least once every five years.

The Westport Library – Display Proposal Form

Contact Information:

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Proposed Display Title:

Brief Description of Display:

Purpose of Theme Display:

Materials to be Displayed (please list types):

Books (own or library-owned)

Artwork

Posters/Photos

Artifacts/Objects

Other: _____

Preferred Dates (subject to availability):

Start: _____ End: _____

Special Requirements (if any):

Agreement:

I understand that display space is temporary and at the discretion of the Library. The Library is not responsible for damage or theft of displayed items. All displays must align with the Library's mission and policies, including the Library's Display Policy.

Signature: _____

Date: _____