

Bedford Borough Libraries

Stock Policy 2024

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1. Introduction

Bedford Borough Libraries aim to provide, within our resources, access a wide range of printed, electronic and audio-visual materials to support the information, learning, business, cultural and leisure needs of the whole community.

2. Policy framework

2.1. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964

“It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof.”

2.2. National Drivers

‘Finding the information to answer any question, books to satisfy the never-ending desire for pleasure, learning and knowledge, and the practice of literacy as one of life’s basic skills, will remain at the heart of what makes a library, and what will place the library at the heart of the community.’

Envisioning the Library of the Future, 2013.

2.3. The Strategic Aims of Bedford Borough Council

For details see:

- Bedford Borough website <http://www.bedford.gov.uk/>

2.4. A Vision for Leisure and Culture

‘Library services which are responsive to community needs and connects people and communities to knowledge, learning, creativity and imagination through a network of static, mobile and virtual libraries’

Adult and Community Services Service Plan, 2012-2016.

2.5. The Mission Statement of Bedford Borough Libraries

“Bedford Borough Libraries are a vital community facility, committed to providing excellence and value in enabling the whole community to participate in lifelong learning and providing access to information, knowledge, works of creative imagination and information technology with particular emphasis on social inclusion, citizenship and democracy.”

2.6. Libraries Connected: Universal Library Offers

“The new Universal Library Offers aim to connect communities, improve wellbeing and promote equality through learning, literacy and cultural activity.”

3. Aims of the policy

The Stock Policy provides a statement of overall stock philosophy in Bedford Borough Libraries together with general principles relating to the acquisition, selection and withdrawal of stock. It is an evolving document which will develop in response to the needs of local communities. It reflects statutory requirements and legislation and the requirement to provide resources within a best value framework.

4. Responsibilities

4.1. Manger for Culture & Heritage

The ultimate responsibility for stock rests with the Manager for Culture & Heritage to whom complaints and disputes that cannot be resolved at other levels must be referred. The overall standards of service and service provision are generally the responsibility of the Library Services Manager.

The allocation of the Resources Fund and partnership arrangements with Libraries HUB services are responsibilities of the Manager for Culture & Heritage.

4.2. Library Services Manager

Responsible for the coordination of stock selection and provision in all libraries and the allocation and monitoring of the Resources Fund.

Responsible for the presentation, appearance, good order and display of stock and the efficient operation of the inter-branch request and reservation service.

4.3. Stock & Digital Officers

Responsible for the selection and management of stock from acquisition to withdrawal within agreed stock policies.

4.4. Senior Officers

Responsible for the appearance, display, good order and presentation of stock within a specific library and for ensuring comments about stock are fed back to the appropriate librarian.

4.5. Library Support Officers

Individual library staff are responsible for the appearance, display, good order and presentation of stock within a specific library.

4.6. Libraries HUB Services

Libraries HUB Services staff are responsible for providing a stock support service through the Acquisitions and Cataloguing Services and also through Reserve Store and its associated collections, and the Inter-Library Loans service. The aim of the Libraries HUB Services is to bring economies of scale, specialisation and co-ordination to stock procedures.

5. Acquisitions

The Acquisitions policy will ensure efficient stock procurement for Bedford Borough Libraries to meet value for money objectives. Bedford Borough Libraries are part of a stock-purchasing consortium and wherever possible stock is procured through this consortium.

6. Stock selection

Stock selection for the Bedford Borough Libraries is carried out under the supervision of the Library Services Manager - who has overall responsibility for the selection of appropriate stock for all services and service points under their control. Stock is selected using a variety of methods including orders from suppliers, show room visits, standing orders & requests. Stock Selection Criteria are written for specific stock areas and are regularly reviewed.

The main criteria for stock selection are:

- Popularity of the author, subject or genre
- Anticipated demand
- Authority and content
- Currency
- Value for money
- Format
- Production quality
- The needs of diverse communities
- Addition of value to existing collections
- Addressing gaps in collections
- Policy priorities for the library service
- Legislative guidelines

For some areas of stock, such as local studies, other factors are critical e.g. geographical relevance.

Electronic stock will be selected using the same criteria as physical stock. In addition the following criteria will also be considered:

- Accuracy and currency of information
- Searchability and accessibility
- Technical quality of the site
- Maintenance of external links on the site
- Charges for accessing, downloading or printing data

Stock outside the scope of our normal collections policy will include:

- Books with additional objects (other than CDs, DVDs, maps)
- Items in a format unsuitable for our purpose, e.g. poorly bound or fragile items
- Academic material e.g. theses (these are available through inter-library loan)
- Expensive luxury editions (except where of local interest)
- Self published titles (i.e. items where the author has paid a fee to be published)
- “One-time” books i.e. those with pages intended to be filled in by a customer
- Some “print-on-demand” and other hybrid publishing

Bedford Borough Libraries do not endorse or promote any particular political, social or religious ideology, nor will we knowingly stock or display any material that incites religious or political hatred or any material that is legally defined by law as obscene or blasphemous. The nature of this material is defined in UK legislation (Appendix 1). At the same time we will assume that older works will reflect the morals and social attitudes of their day, and that adults can make reasonable and critical evaluation of the views and opinions expressed therein.

7. Stock Provision

7.1. Physical Stock

The amount of stock held locally in each library will vary according to its size and its catchment population. All stock at all libraries is regarded as an authority wide resource and is managed accordingly by:

- Co-ordinating purchases across the authority
- Co-ordinating automated stock rotation across the authority

We will not try to be fully comprehensive in providing stock in smaller libraries. There will however be a range of stock to stimulate wider reading habits.

Where possible, stock will be provided in different formats and languages to meet the needs of all sections of the community.

7.2. Digital Stock

Digital Stock will be purchased and will be given equal priority to physical stock.

8. Access to Stock

Each library acts as an access point to the whole library service.

Bedford Borough Libraries customers have access to a shared catalogue of resources with Central Bedfordshire Libraries and Luton Libraries as part of a joint working arrangement.

8.1. Lending Stock

A wide range of lending stock will be available to borrow from all libraries and may include books & periodicals.

8.2. Reference Stock

Some reference stock will be held but not available for loan.

8.3. Local Studies Material

The Local Studies Collections hold stock which is available for loan and also stock which cannot be loaned due to the fragility, rarity, value of the item or posterity and preservation.

Some material will be made available on the Virtual Library where copyright legislation and the items physical condition permits.

8.4. Sacred Texts

Once part of library stock, sacred texts are managed in the same way as other stock items. Bedford Borough Libraries will not undertake to display or store these texts in the manner in which they would be treated in a sacred environment - for example a church, mosque or temple. Holy books are shelved as they appear in the relevant classification sequence. They are treated with the respect of all stock but are in no way differentiated in positioning. This applies to all religions.

8.5. The Internet and World Wide Web

Bedford Borough Libraries provide access to the Internet in all static service points. The use of the Internet is subject to certain statutory restrictions and access is offered under the terms of the Internet Code of Conduct.

8.8. E-resources

E-resources are a shared resource between Bedford Borough Libraries and Central Bedfordshire Libraries.

Where licence agreements permit all electronic resources will be made available to Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire library members.

8.9. Censorship

The only censorship is that established by the law of the land, i.e. publications which have not incurred any penalties under the law will not be excluded merely because they are controversial but must be evaluated and judged using the selection criteria framework. Legislation which will inform a decision about stock selection is listed in Appendix 1.

8.10. Requests and Inter-library Loans

Items which are already in stock on the shared catalogue can be requested by a customer and will be sent to the specified library for collection. A charge may be made for this service.

Titles which are not in stock and have been requested will only be purchased where they match the selection criteria and enhance the overall content of the collections.

Where a title is not available from the shared catalogue and is not going to be added to stock, sources outside Bedfordshire may be approached with a view to borrowing the book or article, through the inter-library loans service. Inter-library loans are restricted to adult printed material, whether books or periodicals. An additional charge is made for this service.

A number of premium services are provided by the British Library - if use is made of these services all additional costs will be passed onto the user.

There is no guarantee that we will be able to supply all items requested, and customers should be aware that Inter-library loans can take longer to obtain than internal loans.

9. Donated stock

Donations are subject to the same selection criteria that apply to purchases and the library is not bound to add all donated material to stock, nor will it necessarily remain at the library to which it has been donated. The library service will dispose of unwanted donations through a variety of means including library book sales. The Library Service has a separate Donations

Policy.

10. Unsolicited Items

Unsolicited items which are sent to the Library Service are subject to the same selection criteria as all other stock and there is no guarantee that they will be added to stock. If a decision is made not to purchase the item, it will not be returned to the sender unless the cost of postage is provided in advance. The item will then be disposed of according to our Stock Withdrawal statement in Section 13.

11. Storing items in Private Ownership

Bedford Borough Libraries will not accept any items which remain in the ownership of organisations or individuals.

12. Re-circulation of Stock

Stock will be moved between libraries in order to maximise use and maintain and refresh stock.

13. Stock Withdrawal

Stock may be withdrawn if it:

- Is in poor physical condition
- Contains out of date or inaccurate material
- Is a superseded edition
- Individual loans on the item have declined
- Is no longer in demand

Stock will be re-allocated to Reserve Store, sold, recycled or discarded as appropriate. Requests from members of the public to purchase stock when it is withdrawn cannot be accepted.

14. Conservation and Repair

Materials from special collections and local studies collections will be conserved for the interests of future users. Methods may include binding, digitisation, facsimiles or removal to secure storage.

15. Stock Monitoring

Stock management will be assessed through a number of performance measures.

16. Services provided through other Organisations

School Libraries: The Schools Library Service is a shared service with Central Bedfordshire Council and enables contracted schools to borrow resources to support the curriculum.

Appendix 1 – Legislation Informing Stock Selection

- Obscene Publications Act 1959 (and amendments)
- Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964

- Public Order Act 1986 (as amended by the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 and the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001)
- Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988, Copyright (Visually Impaired Person's) Act 2002 and Copyright Act Guidelines 2003
- Children's Act 1989
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Terrorism Act 2000
- Terrorism Act 2006
- Incitement to Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- Local Government and Public involvement in Health Act 2007
- Equalities Act 2010
- Blasphemy common law

Appendix 2 – Related Policy Documents

- Donations Policy
- Youth Stock Selection Criteria
- Adult Stock Selection Criteria
- Information Stock Selection Criteria
- Local Studies Stock Selection Criteria