

Revision Date:	February 2024	Policy Type:	Public Service
Approval Level:	CEO	Distribution:	All Employees
Review Schedule:	5 Years (or as required)		

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## **1. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidelines and requirements for in-library displays and exhibits placed within Markham Public Library (“the Library”, or “MPL”) branches and locations. Such displays/exhibits provide educational opportunities and points of interest to the community that enhance MPL’s relevance and better serve the diverse population of the City of Markham.

## **2. SCOPE**

This Policy applies to all in-branch displays and exhibits placed within Markham Public Library branches and locations.

## **3. DEFINITIONS**

**In-branch Displays** – Visual exhibits of materials within Library branches used to promote materials, special collections, services and/or events of significance to the community. They can include books and other collection items, posters, other visual aids, etc. Displays are subject to various considerations including space availability, their topicality and/or connection to other community, provincial or national exhibitions or events, and their relation to Library collections, resources, exhibits and programs.

## **4. POLICY STATEMENT**

Markham Public Library is proud to serve a highly diverse community whose members have a range of views on many subjects and issues. The Library’s mission is to serve the entire community, enriching the lives of everyone in the City of Markham and engaging all members to explore ideas, express and celebrate their diversity and creativity, and to connect with others. This mission is accomplished through various means, including in-library displays or exhibits that inform and enrich the lives of people of all ages and diverse backgrounds.

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

- Community needs and interest
- Content that reflects the diversity of the community

- Subjects of topical interest
- Historical, cultural, or educational significance
- Connection to other local, provincial or national programs, exhibitions, or events
- Relation to Library collections, resources, exhibits, and programs
- Availability and suitability of display space

All in-library displays and exhibits, including their content, will be approved exclusively by the Library.

The Library will strive to include a wide spectrum of opinions and viewpoints in its displays and exhibits that appeal to a range of ages, interests, and information needs. Displays and exhibits should not exclude topics, books, media, and other resources solely because they may be considered to be controversial. Acceptance of a display or exhibit topic by the Library does not constitute an endorsement by MPL of the content of the display or exhibit, or of the views expressed in materials on display.

## **5. INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM AND CENSORSHIP**

The Library preserves the right of citizens to obtain information on all sides of potentially controversial issues so that each individual can decide for themselves the value of opposing ideas. In representing various sides of a question, the Library thus provides citizens with reliable sources of information on which to base informed decisions in their daily lives.

The Library has a responsibility to protect the rights of all customers. Displays which may be considered frank or offensive to some are permitted if they adhere to the terms of this Policy and contribute to the furtherance of MPL's mission.

Only parents and legal guardians have the right and responsibility to restrict the access of their children to Library resources. The display of materials is not inhibited by the possibility that particular works or objects may inadvertently be viewed by or come into the possession of children and young adults.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations' [Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries](#) and the Urban Libraries Council's [Declaration of Democracy](#) express and emphasize the importance of these values as a fundamental direction for public library service in the community.

## 6. CUSTOMER CONCERNS & REVIEW PROCESS

This section addresses situations in which one or more members of the public express concern about the presence or content of an in-library display or exhibit. It provides staff with guidance in terms of responding and outlines the review process that is available.

### 6.1 Verbal Complaint

Upon receiving a verbal complaint about or request for removal of a Library display/exhibit, staff should respond thoughtfully to the customer about the reasons for its presence. The explanation should be consistent with the principles outlined within this Policy.

### 6.2 Formal Complaint

Should the customer remain unsatisfied and wish to take the matter further, they must express their concern formally in order to escalate their complaint. This can include submitting a completed **Request for Review of In-Library Display/Exhibit Form** or expressing their request in an email or other written format. The formal complaint is necessary to provide the Library with sufficient details about the concern to convey a thorough understanding of the complainant's viewpoint(s) and thereby enable the Library to provide a meaningful response.

### 6.3 Staff Response

Staff should explain that the formal complaint will be used to investigate the matter further. In the normal course of events, no promise should be made that a display will be removed, withdrawn, modified, or amended in any way. In the normal course of action, no decision will be made pre-emptively on the matter – should a future action be undertaken, it will occur after the investigation and conclusion. In-Library displays and exhibits will remain in place in the meantime.

### 6.4 Responsibility for Response

Responsibility for responses to formal concerns/complaints lies with the appropriate Director or their designate as follows:

- In-branch Displays – Director, Service Excellence
- Art Exhibits – Director, Community Engagement

### 6.5 Investigation of Formal Complaint and Response

The investigating Director or delegate will communicate with the complainant in order to better understand their viewpoints on the matter. The nature of the investigation will be situational and may vary depending on the circumstances involved. The Library will respond to the complainant promptly upon completion of the investigation. Subject to the complexity of the issue, this timeline may be extended as required.

The investigating Director has the option of consulting with subject matter experts (either internal and/or external) who will review the display/exhibit in question and prepare a written recommendation. Among other considerations, the Director/delegate will review best practices

within the broader public library sector and any other information that they deem to be relevant to the issue at hand. This includes considerations related to the diverse community being served.

#### **6.6 CEO Role**

Should the complainant be unsatisfied with the Director's response, the customer has the option to escalate their complaint to the CEO, who will review the Director's decision and consider any additional factors that they deem appropriate. They will respond to the customer as quickly as practicably possible.

#### **6.7 Library Board Role**

Should the complainant be unsatisfied with the CEO's response, a final appeal of that decision may be made to the Library Board. The complainant's written statement on the matter will be forwarded to the Library Board Secretary who will communicate the matter to the Board Chair. The matter will then be addressed in the next Board Meeting and a response provided to the complainant within five (5) working days of that meeting. Library Board protocols, policies and by-laws must be followed in terms of these proceedings and with respect to all Board discussions on the matter.

### **7. RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **CEO / Directors shall:**

- Ensure that they and their employees are acquainted with, enforce and comply with this Policy and related policies.
- Ensure that decisions made with respect to this Policy take into consideration the diverse nature of the Markham community.

#### **Managers / Supervisors shall:**

- Enforce this Policy.

#### **Employees shall:**

- Comply with and enforce this Policy.

#### **Library Administration shall:**

- Develop and distribute this Policy;
- Update this Policy per the Review Schedule.

### **8. RELATED POLICIES / FORMS**

- *Art Exhibits Policy* (POL-Admin)
- Request for Review of In-Library Display/Exhibit Form