

## **Programming and Outreach Policy**

Programs are an extension of the services provided by the Harrisburg Public Library District and are offered for citizens of all ages. Programs are defined as planned activities or events that may be developed and presented by library staff or may be cosponsored by the Library and other community organizations. Library programs are open to the public without charge.

Public libraries are encouraged by our State Library and professional associations to partner with other community organizations and businesses in order to create relevant library programs, understand the needs of our communities, and create relevant services. HPLD staff may attend community meetings, serve on boards and coalitions, and partner with organizations and businesses to produce programs and resources within the library's mission to provide resources and services to support the educational, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of our community. Designated library staff may choose whether to produce or co-sponsor programs and participate in organizational opportunities at their discretion under the guidance and supervision of the Library Director, overseen by the Library Board, in accordance with the library's mission, policies, needs, time constraints, and budget. At times, library staff may need to limit their level of participation, and select which programs to host or co-host, within the parameters of those same constraints.

Speakers from community groups and businesses may be invited to present programs on topics of general interest or of a timely nature. Presenters may not directly solicit business before, during, or following the program, although cards and brochures may be left on display for attendees to pick up. Fundraising for a nonprofit project or organization may be an aspect of a program, but not as a price of admission or barrier to full participation. Likewise, an author or artist may be invited to provide books or artwork for sale in conjunction with a library program, but a purchase must not be required.

The library makes every effort to share accurate information, and professional advice may be offered as a public service. However, such advice is not an endorsement by the library, and the library is not responsible for any errors, omissions, or interpretations of information and/or advice garnered through library participation, nor for any actions taken in response to such advice or information.

Opinions expressed or implied by program speakers or within program content do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the library itself, its staff, Board, or other stakeholders. Likewise, opinions expressed by library staff do not necessarily reflect opinions of the entire institution.

The library strives to provide inclusive and equitable access to diverse viewpoints and, in doing so, cannot promise to avoid controversial subject matter in any context. In the course of community engagement library staff are not expected to avoid participation in groups that engage with issues that may be "politicized" in public discourse, in the colloquial sense.

Although library staff may learn about legislative issues and build relationships with legislators in the context of their work, they are prohibited from arguing for or against specific legislation while representing the library. While on the clock, or acting as a representative of the library, library staff are prohibited from attending political rallies and engaging in political activities; again, “political” is to be interpreted in the literal sense, rather than in the figurative, colloquial, or topical sense. However, staff are free to engage in such activities on their own time.

All library programs are subject to being photographed, and potentially recorded. Any participant who wishes to avoid being photographed or recorded by the library and/or press, with photos and recordings potentially posted online or elsewhere, should alert the library staff member in charge of the program. The library will then make an effort to avoid taking or posting those photographs or recordings of that person if possible, and will attempt to communicate the issue with any known members of the press present at the program. However, the library is a public venue and all library events, regardless of location, are open to the public. In the age of social media, the library cannot guarantee that no one will post photos and/or recordings of people present at any public venue or event at any given time.

In addition, the Harrisburg Public Library District has adopted the following statement as policy: American Library Association’s *Library Bill of Rights* and its interpretation Library Initiated Programs as a Resource which is included herein.

Strong objection to any library program should be made in writing on the form provided in this policy. Forms for registering complaints may be obtained from the circulation desk or the administrative office.

No program will be automatically cancelled because of an objection to it.

Requests for reconsideration may be made only by registered patrons, and shall be made in writing and given to the library director for a written response. Appeals are directed to the library board for the final decision.

(Adopted January 2023)



## **Library-Initiated Programs and Displays as a Resource: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights**

Library-initiated programs support the mission of the library by providing users with additional opportunities for accessing information, education, and recreation. Article I of the *Library Bill of Rights* states, “Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves.” Library displays increase awareness of programs, resources, and services.

Library-initiated programs include, but are not limited to, lectures, displays, exhibits, community forums, performing and visual arts,<sup>1</sup> participatory workshops, technology programming, creative learning programming, wellness programs, story times, continuing education, fairs and conventions, book clubs, discussion groups, demonstrations, and presentations for social, cultural, educational, or entertainment purposes. Library-initiated programs may take place onsite at the library, off-site at other locations, or online, and may be provided by library workers, volunteers, or partners. Libraries may also choose to promote their programs, services, and resources through displays and digital signs.

Library-initiated programs and displays utilize library worker expertise for community interests, collections, services, facilities, and providing access to information and information resources. They introduce users and potential users to library resources and the library’s role as a facilitator of information access. The library may participate in cooperative or joint programs with other agencies, organizations, institutions, or individuals to facilitate information access in the community the library serves.

Libraries should not discriminate against individuals with disabilities and shall ensure they have equitable access to library resources. Library-initiated programs and displays should comply with all applicable laws, including the standards and requirements of The Americans with Disabilities Act and state and local disability accessibility guidelines.<sup>2</sup> If a program is held in a location not controlled by the library, the library should assure that the space is accessible to all users. If users overflow designated event areas during library events, libraries should secure accessible public spaces (e.g., ramps, pathways, and emergency exit routes) to ensure access and safety for everyone. Reasonable accommodations should also be made to have interpretation or real-time captioning for the deaf or hard of hearing at library-initiated programs when needed or requested by library users.

“Socially excluded, marginalized, and underrepresented people, not just the mainstream majority, should be able to see themselves reflected in the resources and programs that libraries offer.”<sup>3</sup> Libraries should actively seek to include a variety of programming options representing diversity of genres, formats, ideas, and expressions with a multitude of viewpoints and cultural perspectives that reflect the diversity in our communities. Library-initiated programs that cross language and cultural barriers introduce community members to the library’s resources and provide access to information. Libraries serving multilingual or multicultural communities should make efforts to accommodate the information needs of those who speak and read languages other than English, including advertising for such events.

Concerns, questions, or complaints about library-initiated programs and displays are handled according to the same written policy and procedures that govern reconsiderations of other library resources. These policies should apply equally to all people, including, but not limited to, library users, staff, and members of the governing body. The policies should set forth the library's commitment to free and open access to information and ideas for all users.

Programs should not be canceled because of the ideas or topics of the program or the views expressed by the participants or speakers, nor should library workers censor or remove displays because someone may disagree with the content. Library sponsorship of a program does not constitute an endorsement of the program content or the views expressed by the participants or speakers, any more than the purchase of resources for the library collection or curation of a display constitutes an endorsement of the resources content or its creator's views. Libraries should vigorously defend the First Amendment right of speakers and participants to express themselves.

Article V of the *Library Bill of Rights* states, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." The right to use a library encompasses all the resources the library offers, including the right to attend library-initiated programs. Libraries create programs for an intended age group or audience based on educational suitability and audience interest; however, restrictions on participation based solely on the gender, chronological age, or educational level of users violate this right and should be enforced only when not doing so would adversely impact the safety of the participants or interfere with the intended purpose of the program. Parents and guardians may restrict their own children's access to library programs, but no person or organization can interfere in others' access and participation. A parent or guardian may discuss their child's access to and participation in library programs with their child, but may not impose those decisions on others, including other people's children.

Libraries should not deny access to library-initiated programs if patrons owe the library for overdue fines or other fees. If libraries charge program participants for supplies used, they should make every effort to reduce economic barriers to participation.

Any collection and retention of program participants' personal information should be on an opt-in basis only. While attendees may need to demonstrate their eligibility to attend the program by showing a library card or student ID, they should not be required to share their personal information in order to attend a library program.

(Adopted as part of HPLD Program Policy January 2023)

