PROGRAM POLICY

Purpose

As a free public association library serving the New Canaan community, New Canaan Library provides a diverse offering of programs for the interest, information and enlightenment of all residents that aims to represent a wide range of varied, diverging viewpoints and provides access to content that is relevant to the research, independent interests, perspectives, educational needs, and life stages of residents and community members. The Library recognizes the importance of programs as resources for voluntary inquiry and the dissemination of information and ideas and to promote free expression and free access to ideas by residents and community members. This Policy is intended to inform the public about the principles underlying the Library's program selection decisions, which are guided by the Library's Mission Statement set forth below:

> To be an essential place for lifelong learning and a vibrant hub for knowledge, culture, and connection for everyone in our community.

and the following:

- First Amendment of the Constitution;
- Library Bill of Rights as adopted and further revised by the American Library Association (ALA) (http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill);
- The American Library Association Code of Ethics (https://www.ala.org/tools/ethics);
- The Freedom to Read Statement as adopted and further revised by the ALA (http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement);
- The American Library Association's Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights regarding Library-Initiated Programs and Displays as a Resource (https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/programsdisplays);
- The Freedom to View Statement as adopted by the ALA (https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomviewstatement); and

- Public Act 25-168 Sec.322, 323
  (https://www.cga.ct.gov/2025/act/pa/pdf/2025PA-00168-R00HB-07287-PA.pdf).

Definition of a Program

A Library program is an event, virtual or in-person, planned by the Library staff for the benefit of those members of the public who opt to attend. It may involve outside presenters, facilitators, or performers and may be presented in cooperation with other entities. Note: Use of a public meeting room by an organization or individual to hold a public event is not a Library program.

Roles and Responsibilities

Ultimate responsibility for the Library's programs and its resources rests with the Library Director and CEO, who operate in accordance with this Policy and other relevant policies approved by the Library's Board of Trustees. Professional librarians serving children, teens, and adult audiences are responsible for the planning and presentation of programs. These librarians are professionally trained to curate and develop programs. Additional staff members and Library volunteers support this work.

Program Selection

New Canaan Library plans and delivers broad and extensive programming that supports the Library's mission and provides a core community service, offering free, open access to services, resources, programs, and spaces that foster literacy, learning, cultural appreciation, and personal growth. The Library strives to present programs that are educational, informational, cultural, and/or recreational and avoids programs that do not meet these standards. The Library provides programs created or curated by librarians or library staff members as well as programs created by members of the public or community groups.

Individual selections are based on the following criteria:

- accuracy, authority, effectiveness, and timeliness of presentation
- presenters' expertise, credentials, and credibility in content area
- educational and informational value
- available staffing and resources, facility limitations, and budget constraints

- connection to Library collections, resources, exhibits, and other programs
- relevance to local or global events, traditions, and news
- representation of a wide range of varied and diverging viewpoints

Programs of a purely commercial nature or those designed for the solicitation of business will not be offered by the Library.

Programs that support or oppose any political candidate or ballot measure will not be approved or offered by the Library. However, educational programs, such as candidate forums that include invitations to all recognized candidates, may be offered.

Programs that support or oppose a specific religion will not be approved or offered. Programs are planned to be inclusive of all cultures and of all religions and no religion. Library programs may address religious themes to educate or inform, but not to promote, observe, or proselytize a particular religious conviction. Holiday programs may be offered for the entertainment of Library patrons.

Library delivery or sponsorship of a program does not constitute endorsement of the program content, or of the views expressed by partnering organizations, presenters, or participants.

Program Development, Coordination, and Supervision

Library programs may originate from Library staff, partnering institutions, or members of the public. To ensure breadth of program content, the Library may contract content experts to lead programs.

The Library may partner with other community organizations to co-sponsor and/or present programs provided that these programs conform to the Library's selection guidelines and other policies. Library staff must be involved in planning and/or executing co-sponsored programs. The Library does not make solely financial contributions for programs in which it is not a significant partner.

In the event of a co-sponsored program, supervision of the program may be delegated to the co-sponsoring organization depending upon the timing and venue of the program. All programs sponsored or co-sponsored by the Library, however, must abide by this Policy regardless of where they are hosted.

The Library will promote Library-sponsored and co-sponsored programs in the manner it deems most effective. Promotional methods may include posting on Library website, e-newsletter, social media, press releases, flyers, posters, etc. The Library does not have responsibility to promote events that are not co-sponsored by the Library, even if the event takes place in the Library's facility.

Anyone interested in presenting a Library program may submit a proposal that will be reviewed according to the above criteria. The Library reserves the right to accept or decline proposals. The Suggest a Program form can be found on the Library's website: https://newcanaanlibrary.org/form/suggest-a-program.

In addition to Library-initiated programs, the Library regularly participates in events led by other local organizations. (Examples include but are not limited to school visits, technology training at local community centers, and stands at farmers' markets or street festivals). In developing these programs, the Library is guided by the aforementioned selection criteria. Host organizations may have their own guidelines for registration and participation, which will take precedence. Outreach activity by the Library at community events does not constitute endorsement.

Outside groups, presenters, and participants who book Library space neither represent nor are endorsed by the Library and must conform to the Meeting Room Usage Policy set out here: https://newcanaanlibrary.org/policies/meeting-room-usage-policy.

The Library reserves the right to cancel programming at any time for weather, emergency, or any reason and at the discretion of the Library Director or CEO. The Library reserves the right to take and use video or photographs of program participants for internal use, publication, and use in Library promotional outlets, and for evaluation purposes.

Gifts / Donated Time or Funding for Programs

The Library is grateful for offers of donated time and funds for specific suggested programs or events, and will apply the same guidelines of selection as above to determine whether or not to include any program. The Library will evaluate and select programs and presenters in accordance with criteria applied to Library-generated programming.

Monies donated for the purpose of funding Library programs or for specific departments do not confer any right to oversight, censorship, or selection authority for Library programming.

Program Access

The Library is committed to being welcoming and accessible to all. Any individual requiring special accommodation to participate in a program should contact the Library in advance with as much lead time as possible to discuss options.

Library programs are open to the public. Some programs may require advance registration or may be limited to New Canaan cardholders. Attendance may also be limited by age or grade level. Within programs for designated age groups, children and their parent, legal guardian, or caregiver are solely responsible for determining the suitability of any program offered for a specific youth. All registration information will be kept confidential unless explicitly noted. In rare cases, registration information may be shared with a co-sponsoring organization, which will be noted on registration.

At the Library's discretion, a fee may be charged for certain Library programs, including to cover costs. Fundraising programs by their nature will have fees for participation.

A presenter or organization shall not use Library programming for solicitation, politically partisan purposes, or for any commercial, religious, or other non-Library purpose.

Virtual Programs

Some Library programs may be offered using a Library-approved virtual meeting platform that registered patrons may use to access the virtual program from their own internet-enabled devices. This may include programs that are simultaneously run at the physical Library as well as programs that are offered only virtually. While hosting a virtual program, Library staff, partnering organizations, and program facilitators will follow industry standard best practices for virtual events.

Some virtual programs may be pre-recorded and broadcast via the internet or recorded as presented for later viewing. In the event an interactive program is being recorded, attendees will be informed of that fact at the start of the program.

Patrons attending virtual programs are expected to adhere to the Library's Code of Conduct and failure to do so may result in their immediate removal from said program.

The Library will make all reasonable efforts to ensure the digital security of virtual events, however attendees must understand that all online activity carries some degree of risk.

Patrons are required to provide their own equipment and internet connection to attend virtual programs. The Library will make a good faith effort to utilize platforms that will be compatible with the widest array of hardware and software, but makes no guarantee that every patron will be capable of accessing every virtual Library program successfully. Nor can the Library guarantee the quality of the audio, video, or internet connection of program presenters or attendees.

Program Materials

With advance approval and discretion from the Library, authors, presenters, or performers may offer books or materials for sale that are related to the content of the program. Co-sponsoring organizations may bring informational flyers to give away during the program.

Program Evaluation

To provide the highest quality, most useful, and inclusive programming, Library staff will gather information about program results to guide future programming decisions. Outputs, such as the number of attendees at a program, will be gathered for all or almost all programs. Outcomes, such as how well the content of a program helped attendees learn about the program's topic, will be gathered at times when such data is required for grant reporting or when it would be helpful in evaluating a new program topic or format.

Procedures for Questioning of Library Programs by Patrons:

Free and equitable access to information is essential to the Library's values and mission, as well as to the protection of First Amendment rights. The Library therefore may offer programs in keeping with this Policy, even though an individual or organization might find them offensive or controversial. The Library supports the American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom policy, which holds individuals (or the guardian of minors) solely responsible for the programs they choose to attend. All Library materials and programs are evaluated and made accessible in accordance with the protections against discrimination set forth in section 46a-64 of the general statutes.

The Library welcomes expressions of opinion concerning its programs. The Library limits consideration of requests to reconsider programs to individual residents of New Canaan, in accordance with Public Act 25-168 Sec. 322, 323, which states that only a resident with a vested interest who wishes that a specific program be reviewed may complete and submit a Reconsideration Form. An "individual with a vested interest" is defined as "any individual residing in the town in which the public library is located or the town in which the contract library is located at the time a reconsideration form is filed" per **Sec. 322 subsection (e)**. For further information about requests for reconsideration, please see the Library's Material Review and Reconsideration Policy.

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Board Approval: November 2025
Next Review Date: November 2028