



Collections Policy

Date Authorised by Chief Executive Officer or Council:	26 February 2026
Commencement Date:	February 2026
Review Date (4 years from authorised date):	February 2030
Responsible Department	Library Services

This policy has been authorised.

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1. Introduction

Merri-bek Libraries acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways in Merri-bek. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge that past government policies and acts were responsible for injustices whose ongoing effects continue to this day, and that sovereignty was never ceded. We acknowledge and celebrate First Nations Peoples of this land and their pivotal role in sharing, and keeping alive, heritage, history, stories, songs, dances and languages.

Merri-bek Libraries serve a diverse community with five locations – Brunswick, Brunswick West, Coburg, Fawkner and Glenroy. Merri-bek Libraries provide free and equal access to a wide collection of print, non-print and digital resources that is a significant community asset. Library collections encourage reading for entertainment and pleasure, inspire intellectual curiosity, foster lifelong learning for all ages, and document and preserve cultural memory.

The Collections Policy provides a framework for developing library collections, defining the principles and guidelines that inform how resources are selected, developed and de-selected to meet the informational, recreational, educational and cultural needs of the proudly diverse Merri-bek community. The Policy serves as a guiding document for decision-making and helps communicate Merri-bek Libraries' commitment to providing a relevant, inclusive and high-quality collection.

2. Context

The Collections Policy replaces the Library Selection and Collection Development Policy (2015-2025).

2.1. Alignment

The Collections Policy is aligned with the following Merri-bek City Council policies:

- Human Rights Policy (2016-2026)
- Library Loans Policy (2021)
- Library Services Strategy (2019)
- Library Use Policy (2024)
- Procurement Policy (2025)
- Social Cohesion Policy (2020-2025)

2.2. Legislative context

- Australian Classification of Films and Computer Games
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005
- Copyright Act 1968
- Local Government Act 2020
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014

3. Objectives

Merri-bek Libraries' collections:

- are accessible both physically and digitally
- are current, timely, accurate and relevant
- are responsive to community demand and include new, popular and best-selling works as well as enduring classics regardless of when they were first published
- appeal to a wide range of ages, educational backgrounds, reading abilities, interests, tastes and learning styles
- support early literacy and assist in developing a love of reading
- include materials in major languages represented in the Merri-bek community
- organise and preserve material relating to the history of the Merri-bek area
- represent, support and celebrate the priority groups defined in Merri-bek's Human Rights Policy:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
 - People with disability
 - LGBTIQ+ communities
 - Migrant, refugee and faith communities
 - Women, girls and gender diverse communities
- advance inclusion and social cohesion in the community
- represent a wide range of views, but do not attack, vilify or use insulting language with reference to people or groups of people because of who they are.

4. Policy details

4.1. Selection

Merri-bek Libraries use demographic information, the profile of library members as indicated by the Library Management System, loans statistics, stock turnover rates, survey results, current trends and priorities to assist in collection planning and management. We do additional consultation with priority groups defined in Merri-bek's Human Rights Policy (see Section 3) to ensure relevant resources meet community needs. Feedback and suggestions from library members also help shape collection development. Merri-bek Libraries' staff maintain awareness of new products, formats and technologies in the industry and may incorporate them into library collections in anticipation of community demand.

Merri-bek Libraries obtain collection materials from library suppliers and specialist vendors using a combination of standing order lists and collection profiles, supplemented by specific requests. We review standing orders, profiles and vendor performance regularly. We make purchases in accordance with local government procurement guidelines, using a variety of suppliers to ensure a wide range of high-value resources across the collections.

4.2. Selection criteria

Selection criteria help to ensure that library collections meet community needs, align with strategic objectives and deliver value. Primary criteria include:

- Popular interest, community demand
- Currency and accuracy of content

- Authority and reputation of author, publisher, creator and/or illustrator
- Quality of presentation and production, appropriate to the content and audience
- Literary merit
- Relationship to existing collections, including series already in the collection
- Availability and cost
- Accessibility for different age levels, audiences, reading abilities and formats
- Durability and physical suitability for sustained library use
- Relevance to Australian context and culture, particularly works by Australian creators and/or including Australian content
- Relevance to the Merri-bek area
- Relevance to and inclusion of the priority groups defined in Merri-bek's Human Rights Policy: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ community members, people who have come to Australia as migrants or refugees, members of faith communities and women, girls and gender-diverse community members
- Representativeness of diverse views without attacking, vilifying or using insulting language with reference to people or groups of people because of who they are.

Additional selection criteria may also apply to specific formats such as eresources, audiovisual materials, community language collections and the Library of Things.

4.3. Formats

Merri-bek Libraries select and provide access to whichever formats best meet community needs. Formats may include, but are not limited to, books, graphic novels, large print books, magazines, newspapers, audiobooks, DVDs and CDs; ebooks, eaudiobooks, emagazines, enewspapers and streaming media. Many items will be available in multiple formats, including physical and digital, but some titles may not be available in all formats.

4.4. General collections

Merri-bek Libraries' general collections support recreational reading, entertainment, life-long learning and information provision. The collection includes fiction and non-fiction for adult audiences, resources for those learning English as an additional language (EAL) as well as those learning languages at all levels of ability. We do not collect textbooks or academic works unless they appeal to a general audience.

4.5. Junior & YA collections

Merri-bek Libraries' junior and young adult collections are intended to foster a love of reading, broaden horizons and introduce new perspectives, support and facilitate language and literacy skills. The collection includes materials suitable for all ages and reading levels in a variety of formats and covering a wide variety of topics. Items for young adults may cover controversial themes or issues; parents, guardians or caregivers may wish to supervise or guide their children's selection of materials.

Merri-bek Libraries do not collect textbooks, curriculum materials or academic works unless they are likely to appeal to a general audience.

4.6. Community language collections

Merri-bek Libraries provide collections of library materials for all ages, in all formats, in thirteen community languages: Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, French, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Nepali, Polish, Sinhala, Spanish, Turkish and Urdu. Dictionaries and bilingual materials in a wider range of languages are also available.

After data from the Australian census is released every four years, Merri-bek Libraries assess the new demographic information about languages spoken in the community. We will consider establishing new community language collections if there are more than 1000 people in a specific area of Merri-bek who speak a particular language as their major language at home, as recorded in an Australian census.

Establishing a new collection is contingent on funding, space and materials being available, as well as demonstrated community interest in reading in their language, their literacy needs and culture of literacy.

4.7. Local History collection

Merri-bek Libraries collect resources relating to the Merri-bek area that represent both First Nations and colonial history and culture, from settlement to the current day.

Located at Brunswick, Coburg and Glenroy libraries, the Local History collection reflects Merri-bek's diverse communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with disability, LGBTIQ+ people, migrants, refugees and represents many faiths, languages, ages and socio-economic classes. The collection includes subjects such as society, business and industry, culture and the arts, politics, the natural and built environments.

The collection does not include fragile items, realia such as furniture, objects or costumes, archives or other large collections of material. Self-published items are included only where a significant part of the content directly relates to Merri-bek.

The Local History collection is shelved separately to the main collections and can be accessed for research purposes. Items in the Local History collection are not available for loan except for items in the Les Barnes collection, which may be loaned on a case-by-case basis depending on rarity and condition. The lending collection also includes a selection of items related to local history.

Merri-bek Libraries maintain ongoing access to physical and digital items, including preserving and digitising as appropriate given copyright constraints. Where we are unable to store or provide access to important historical items under safe and suitable conditions, we may relocate items to other appropriate collecting or cultural institutions.

4.8. Made in Merri-bek collection

The Made in Merri-bek collection celebrates Merri-bek's vibrant creative culture by showcasing the potential and work of creative artists who have a significant and public connection (past or present) to Merri-bek. Creative artists include, but are not limited to, writers, poets, artists, filmmakers, photographers, musicians and musical performers.

We select items for the Made in Merri-bek collection in accordance with general selection criteria. Not all works produced by local creative artists will be added to the collection. The

collection is intended to be actively used rather than preserved for history. Items acquired for the collection are not shelved separately, but are integrated into the lending collections at one or more service points, indicated by Made in Merri-bek labels on collection items. Works that substantially represent Merri-bek's current or past history may also be added to the Local History collection.

4.9. Library of Things

The Library of Things is a collection of non-book items that facilitate lifelong learning, professional growth, leisure activities, entertainment, education and sustainability. We prioritise items that are not available to the community elsewhere at low or no cost; items that are infrequently used to provide the community with a practical alternative to purchasing; and items that provide an opportunity to engage with technology.

4.10. ganbo marra collection

Located at the Glenroy Library, the ganbo marra / First Nations collection is a separate section that includes materials by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creators and/or centres First Nations cultures and points of view. At the other four libraries, we include First Nations material throughout the collection, easily identified by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on the spine. Merri-bek Libraries will continue to develop this collection in consultation with Wurundjeri and First Peoples communities.

While the ganbo marra collection emphasises and centres First Nations perspectives and cultures, the broader library collection includes a variety of depictions and perspectives by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including images, names and voices of people who have died, historically biased content and sensitive or offensive material.

4.11. LGBTIQA+ collection

The LGBTIQA+ collection supports Merri-bek's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning and asexual community. Works in the collection have affirming content, LGBTIQA+ characters and themes and are frequently by LGBTIQA+ creators. The collection includes all formats and age groups and is not shelved in a separate section but is indicated by rainbow flag spine labels throughout the collection. Merri-bek Libraries will continue to develop this collection in consultation with LGBTIQA+ communities.

4.12. Suggestions from library members

Merri-bek Libraries accept suggestions from library members and may purchase items that meet the overall collection objectives (Section 3) and selection criteria in this policy (Section 4.2). We cannot respond to individual suggestions to advise whether items will be purchased. We do not generally purchase items as a result of being contacted by individual authors. Exceptions may be made for works that are local or relevant to the Merri-bek area.

4.13. Donations

Merri-bek Libraries will only accept donations that relate to the local history of the Merri-bek area or are by an author or creator living in Merri-bek. Donations will not be accepted without prior discussion and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Any items donated must be undamaged and in excellent condition. We will not add unsolicited donations to the library collection but will dispose of them appropriately.

4.14. Self-published, self-printed and print-on-demand materials

Self-published, self-printed and print-on-demand titles can vary considerably in content and quality. Merri-bek Libraries does not typically collect these types of items, however we may make exceptions for material that meets our selection criteria and/or has special relevance or significance for the collection, particularly if it is related to the Merri-bek area.

4.15. AI-generated content

Titles with content generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) generally do not go through a typical editorial review process including accuracy checks. Additionally, these works are frequently poor-quality in terms of both content and physical form and do not meet general selection criteria. Therefore, Merri-bek Libraries does not collect these types of items.

4.16. Inter-Library Loans

Some items will not be purchased because they are no longer in print or do not meet selection criteria. Merri-bek Libraries may obtain these items for library members via the Inter-Library Loan system if the title is available at another library in Australia. Fees apply for this service.

4.17. Collection evaluation

Merri-bek Libraries regularly review collection materials by a variety of means including performance data, staff assessment and community feedback. Effectiveness of the library's collections is measured by criteria such as loans, eresource usage, age, availability of relevant materials, conformance to selection criteria, value for money and user satisfaction. We participate in annual statistical evaluations of collection composition and performance in order to benchmark with other libraries' collections across the state.

As technology changes and demand for different formats or specific resources increases or decreases, we may discontinue collecting some formats or add new and emerging formats in accordance with the selection criteria.

Merri-bek Libraries may consolidate, relocate or retire community language collections if the census indicates there are fewer than 1000 residents speaking that language in Merri-bek; if there is a lack of community support for the collection indicated by a low number of loans or if material in the language is no longer readily available.

4.18. Deselection

Deselection, also referred to as weeding, refers to the planned removal of unsuitable materials from the collection, and is a logical consequence of evaluating the collection. Merri-bek Libraries aim to meet demand "just in time" as opposed to "just in case" and will not retain items indefinitely if they are not in use.

Criteria for discarding, deselecting or "weeding" an item are:

- Poor physical condition and/or age
- Obsolescence (superseded by a new edition, better source, or more accurate information)

- Insufficient use (including borrowing)
- Subject matter is no longer of current interest or irrelevant to current needs
- Unnecessary duplicate copies
- Changes in the physical layout of the library
- Availability in another format, for example digital

We may replace some items if they are worn or in poor condition but the title is still popular. We do not accept replacement copies for lost items without prior discussion.

Some collections are not weeded as often or at all. The Local History collection is largely exempt from weeding (see Section 4.7). The Library of Things collection and community language collections are weeded less often due to the limited availability of these resources.

Experienced library staff review and approve all items identified for disposal. Where possible, Merri-bek Libraries will donate items to schools, seniors' organisations, charities and other not-for-profit organisations. Any items that cannot be donated will be recycled if possible.

4.19. Controversial materials

Merri-bek Libraries aim to represent a wide range of views on all subjects of interest to the community. Merri-bek Libraries upholds the Australian Library and Information Association's [statement on free access to information](#).

Our overall collection objectives (Section 3) and selection criteria (Section 4.2) emphasise the representation, support and celebration of the priority groups defined in Merri-bek's Human Rights Policy as well as the inclusion of material that does not attack, vilify or use insulting language with reference to people or groups of people because of who they are.

Some works are not controversial in terms of their content, but may become problematic due to the actions of authors, directors, musicians, actors or other content creators related to the works.

Merri-bek Libraries will not automatically remove specific items from the collection based on either the works or their creators having caused offence, but will review items' suitability as outlined below.

- If a library member has an objection to a particular title or creator, or if they consider the title is not suited to the specific collection (for example, in a junior collection), the matter can be discussed in the first instance with the senior staff member on duty.
- If the matter cannot be resolved, the library member will be given a "Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials" form to complete and submit, or they may submit a feedback form online.
- Objections will be treated on a case-by-case basis by one or more members of the Library Leadership Team, potentially obtaining advice from experts with relevant subject matter expertise or lived experience.
- Potential actions could include not promoting or actively recommending an author's works while a matter involving the author is an active police matter; removing authors from standing order lists; retaining works in the collection but not purchasing new ones by that creator.

- The result of this evaluation will be communicated to the library member.

Merri-bek Libraries is only obliged to withdraw material that has been recalled by the publishers due to legal requirements or material deemed illegal by Australian classification.

5. Roles and responsibilities

The Library Coordinator, Resources and Technology has overall responsibility for collection development, assisted by the Team Leader Multicultural Services and Team Leader Children's and Youth Services. Library staff at each service point are responsible for the day-to-day management of assigned collections at their location as well as providing feedback and input into the processes associated with collection selection.

6. Monitoring, evaluating and review

The Collections Policy will be reviewed every four years or sooner if there are relevant changes in government policies or legislation.

7. Definitions

Term	Definition
eresource	Electronic resource, collection material available in digital format such as ebooks, eaudiobooks, emagazines, streaming film
ganbo marra	First Nation / First Tribe in Woi-wurrung
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual and diverse communities

8. Associated and reference documents

8.1. Associated documents

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Human Rights Policy
- Library Loans Policy
- Library Services Strategy
- Library Use Policy
- Procurement Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Social Cohesion Policy

8.2. Reference documents

- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network \(ATSILRN\) Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services](#)
- [Australian Library and Information Association \(ALIA\) core values policy statement](#)
- [ALIA free access to information statement](#)
- [ALIA guidelines on library and information services for people with disabilities](#)
- [ALIA statement on libraries and information services and Indigenous peoples](#)
- [ALIA statement on information literacy for all Australians](#)
- [ALIA statement on online content regulation](#)
- [ALIA statement on public library services](#)
- [Australian Public Library Alliance-Australian Library and Information Association \(APLA-ALIA\) standards and guidelines for Australian public libraries](#)
- [Australian classification guidelines](#)
- [International Federation of Library Associations \(IFLA\)/UNESCO public library manifesto](#)
- [IFLA/UNESCO Multicultural Library Manifesto](#)
- [IFLA Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom](#)
- [UN strategy and plan of action on hate speech](#)

The collection policies of other libraries were also considered in the development of this policy.