

Library Programming Policy

(approved by the Clapp Memorial Library Board of Trustees on November 19, 2013; revised and approved on August 12, 2026)

Purpose

This policy guides planning and operation of library-initiated programs and events to support the Clapp Memorial Library's mission and service goals. It does not apply to non-library groups using the activity room (see Activity Room Use Policy). This policy covers in-person, offsite, and virtual programming, including livestreams hosted on third-party platforms.

Responsibility

Responsibility for program development rests with the Library Director, who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Library Board of Trustees. Program planning and facilitating is delegated to staff members based on their job responsibilities and areas of expertise. Library staff are guided by this policy and utilize professional skills, collections, equipment, facilities, and feedback from the community in planning and delivering library programs.

Definitions and Scope

A program is a single event, short series, or recurring activity developed to meet educational, social, cultural, recreational, or informational community needs. Programs may be held onsite, offsite, or online; delivered by staff, partners, or external presenters; and may be live-streamed or recorded.

Examples of program types include lectures; forums; performances; workshops or classes; story times; discussion groups; continuing education; music; fairs; library tours; exhibits; visual and performance art; technology sessions; outreach events; presentations for social, cultural, educational, or recreational purposes; and similar activities.

Selection Criteria

When making decisions regarding program content, presenters, and related resources, staff will consider the following:

- Alignment with the Library's mission, strategic plan, and service goals
- Community needs and interests, including feedback from Belchertown residents
- Potential to promote library collections and resources
- Presenter qualifications and presentation quality
- Educational, historical, or cultural significance
- Space, staffing, and budget availability
- Balance with existing programs offered at the Library

- Connection to other community programs, exhibitions, or events
- Safety, security, and accessibility
- Relevant national/local observances or commemorative months

Access and Attendance

Programs are open to the public and free of charge unless a fee is authorized by the Library Director for fundraising or cost-recovery. Some programs may target specific audiences (e.g., children, teens); such restrictions will be publicized. Adults attending children's programs must be accompanied by a child; tween/teen programs are restricted to those age groups except when an adult assistant is required. To ensure safety and program quality, attendance may be limited by venue capacity, cost, or presenter requirements; registration may be required. For highly popular programs, preference is given to Belchertown residents and registrants are chosen via lottery. Confirmed registrants who cannot attend must notify the Library at least three hours in advance of the event. Patrons who have three or more no-call, no-shows within a six-month period will be placed on a waitlist for future registration-required programs for six months from the date of the third no-call, no-show occurrence. The Library may deny admission to disruptive individuals or those violating the Appropriate Patron Behavior Policy.

Parents and guardians are responsible for overseeing their minor children's use of the Library's collections and services. The Clapp Memorial Library does not stand in place of a parent and is not charged with a parent's rights, duties, and responsibilities.

Accessibility and Non-Discrimination

The Library strives to provide reasonable accommodations. Requests for accommodations may be submitted to the Library Director by email, by phone, or in person. Contact the Library at least two weeks before an event to request modifications. The Library will make reasonable efforts to provide auxiliary aids when requested.

The Library is committed to diversity, equality, and the free and open exchange of ideas. The Library will make reasonable accommodations to ensure programs are inclusive for people with disabilities and will proactively consider accessibility in venue and virtual platform selection.

Intellectual Freedom

The Library supports intellectual freedom and offers diverse viewpoints to support its mission of providing cultural and learning opportunities to all and in accordance with the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights (Appendix A) and Freedom to View Statement (Appendix B). Sponsorship does not imply endorsement of content or presenter viewpoints. The Library will not censor materials or programs because they

may be controversial. Library sponsorship of a program does not constitute an endorsement of the content of the program or the views expressed by participants or speakers.

Presenters and Partnerships

Staff present programs as part of their duties. The Library also engages community members, organizations, and institutions as presenters or partners. Individuals may propose programs by submitting proposals via email; proposals will be reviewed against selection criteria and scheduling availability. The Library may decline proposals for reasons including staffing, budget, space, or scheduling. Selection in one year does not guarantee future bookings. Partners must comply with library policies and, when co-hosting, will receive acknowledgement in promotional materials.

Commercial Activity and Sales

Library programs are non-commercial and must not be used for solicitation, advertising, recruitment, or partisan political campaigning. Presenters may offer brochures or business cards for attendees to pick up but may not distribute materials as part of the program without approval. Sales of presenter-created works (e.g., books, recordings, merchandise) may be allowed with prior approval from the Library Director; the presenter is responsible for managing sales. Fundraising by the Friends of the Library or charitable partners to benefit the Library may be permitted with approval.

Funding

Program funding may come from the library operating budget, the Friends of the Library, grants, donations, and partner support. Programs are generally free; the Library Director may authorize fees for certain programs or fundraising activities. Sponsorships must be transparent. Promotional materials will disclose sponsors and sponsored content must meet selection criteria.

Program Cancellations

Programs may be canceled for reasons such as weather, presenter absence, or low registration. Cancellations will be posted on the Library's event calendar and announced through appropriate channels when possible. Canceled programs are not automatically rescheduled. Non-emergency cancellations will be communicated at least 24 hours in advance when possible; registrants will be notified by their provided contact method.

Scheduling and Observed Holidays

The Library will not schedule programs on days the Library is closed for observed holidays. In addition, as part of its inclusivity efforts, the Library will avoid scheduling programs on work-restricted religious holidays of the following faith traditions:

Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. These faith traditions were chosen based on local demographics and include any faith tradition followed by at least 1% of the population. The Library maintains a list of dates associated with work-restricted holidays (Appendix C) that is reviewed and updated annually. If demographic data changes or additional holidays should be considered, the Library will revise this policy accordingly. Exceptional scheduling for critical community needs may proceed with Director approval and reasonable staff accommodations.

Appendix A: ALA Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019. Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Appendix B: ALA Freedom to View Statement

The FREEDOM TO VIEW, along with the freedom to speak, to hear, and to read, is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. In a free society, there is no place for censorship of any medium of expression. Therefore these principles are affirmed:

1. To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

This statement was originally drafted by the Freedom to View Committee of the American Film and Video Association (formerly the Educational Film Library Association) and was adopted by the AFVA Board of Directors in February 1979. This statement was updated and approved by the AFVA Board of Directors in 1989.

Endorsed January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council

Appendix C: Work-Restricted Religious Holidays for Current Fiscal Year

Based on the most recent demographic data available at the time of the latest policy revision, the Library observes work-restricted holidays associated with the following faith traditions: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. If demographic data changes or additional holidays should be considered, the Library will update this list accordingly.

Both Islam and Judaism follow lunar calendars, with each day spanning from sunset to the following nightfall. The Islamic month depends on local moon-sighting so the exact religious observance may vary by one day. The Library makes every effort to accommodate and respect local observances.

The Library avoids scheduling programs on the following holidays:

Christmas Day

Easter Sunday

Eid al-Adha

Eid al-Fitr

Ramadan (first day)

Rosh Hashanah (two days)

Yom Kippur

FY2027 Work-restricted Holidays

Rosh Hashanah: September 11 (sunset)–September 13, 2026 (nightfall)

Yom Kippur: September 20 (sunset)–September 21, 2026 (nightfall)

Christmas: December 25, 2026

Ramadan, first day: February 7, 2027 (expected, subject to local moon-sighting)

Eid al-Fitr: March 9, 2027 (expected, subject to local moon-sighting)

Easter Sunday: March 28, 2027

Eid al-Adha: May 16, 2027 (expected, subject to local moon-sighting)