

Ridgewood Public Library

Policy on Acceptance and Recognition of Private Gifts

I. Introduction

The Ridgewood Public Library's Policy on Acceptance and Recognition of Private Gifts covers gifts made directly to The Library, gifts made through The Ridgewood Public Library Foundation and gifts made through The Friends of the Ridgewood Library.

The policy rests on these fundamental principles:

- Public libraries are independent American institutions that enhance learning, provide culture and ensure access to information for all. Therefore, libraries must protect their educational, informational and cultural integrity and reinforce the accurate perception that they are independent.
- The Library acknowledges the importance of gifts and donations to the Library's continuing development and future growth and is eager to recognize the generosity of donors.
- The diversity of funding sources is becoming a necessary element in the preservation of independent public library service. Therefore, these guidelines should encourage funding from both the public and private sector.
- Private support shall supplement municipal funding, not replace it.
- The Library must operate in compliance with all governmental mandates and laws including any pertaining to the acceptance of gifts.
- A public library's nonprofit, noncommercial status contributes to its independence. Libraries also enjoy certain financial and other benefits by virtue of that status. Therefore, this nonprofit, noncommercial character must be preserved.
- Unrestricted monetary gifts will be used at the discretion of the recipient organization's governing board.
- Restricted gifts will be accepted on the condition that the specific use requested is consistent with the mission and goals of the Library. Restrictions shall not impede the ability of the Library to acquire gifts from other sources, shall not place undue financial or administrative burden on the Library's resources and shall not subject the Library to adverse publicity.
- Gifts may be tax-deductible as provided by law.

A. Definitions

For the purposes of these guidelines, donor (funder, underwriter, grantor) is a third party that has voluntarily contributed donations (gifts, bequests, substantial in-kind services) to finance in whole or in part a program (collection, cultural or educational program, service or facility improvement).

B. Objectives

Based on the fundamental principles listed above, the Trustees of The Ridgewood Public Library (The Trustees) have developed guidelines for the acceptance and recognition of donations from third parties, including individuals, corporations, and organizations. These guidelines are intended to ensure that:

- Donations shall promote the mission of the Library;
- Donors will receive appropriate recognition for their support;
- Editorial control of programs and operational control of all library services remains in the hands of the Trustees;
- Funding arrangements will not create the perception of inappropriate influence by funding sources;
- The noncommercial character of public libraries is protected and preserved.

C. Policy Procedures

Full Disclosure: The Library must identify all donors and donations. (Exception: individual donors who wish to remain anonymous). The purpose served by donor identification is to identify the donor in the interests of full disclosure, and to recognize the donor's generosity, not to promote the donor or its products and services

Right to Decline: Donations that do not conform to these guidelines may not be accepted. The Trustees reserve the right to evaluate each donation/gift on a case by case basis and to decline any donation. Any individual donation exceeding \$5,000 in a particular month will be brought to the Library Board of Trustees for specific approval.

Note: The Trustees believe that children are a special audience with fewer critical skills and greater vulnerability with respect to corporate donor recognition. In addition, public libraries have a special place in the minds of the public with respect to children's services. Therefore, every effort must be made to avoid even the possibility that children are being exploited by corporate donor recognition.

Gifts in-kind, Personal Property, Library Materials, Real Estate: Because the Library's needs evolve with time, donations that support the Library's mission and are compatible with Library policies and appropriate laws consisting of gifts in-kind, personal property, library materials and real estate will be accepted on the same basis as items purchased by the Library; that is, at some point in the future the Library may choose to sell, lend or gift (generally to another charitable or Village organization) various books, materials and other holdings (including furnishings and art). Donations become the property of The Library, The Foundation, or The Friends and will be used in the best interests of the Library as determined by the Trustees. The Library will not appraise or estimate the value of such donations. The responsibility for such assessment lies with the donor. [Note: Real estate can only be accepted by the Ridgewood Public Library Foundation or The Friends of the Ridgewood Library. The Library cannot own real estate per se.]

II. General Principles for Determining the Acceptability of Donor Support

A. The Library must retain Editorial Control.

The Library is committed to providing services that are produced in accordance with the very highest ethical and professional standards. The Library must guard assiduously against abusing the trust placed in it by the public. To allow program content judgments to be controlled by donors would be to breach the public's trust. Therefore, The Library will not accept funding if the donor has asserted, or has the right to assert, editorial control over a service or program.

In general, a donor's participation in the development of broad proposals it might wish to fund is not considered an aspect of editorial control. On the other hand, the Library will not accept funds where the potential donor has removed the Library's control and discretion by specifying in detail what the resulting program or service should be, or by pre-ordaining the conclusion the patron should draw from the materials presented.

B. Steps must be taken to avoid the public perception that donors have influenced professional judgments.

Public libraries provide programs and services resulting from good faith professional judgments that are free from inappropriate restraints or controls. This commitment has enabled public libraries to earn the trust and respect of their patrons. Therefore, the Library must guard against the public perception that editorial control might have been exercised by donors.

The most important factor to be considered is the character and directness of the perceived connection between the donor and the subject matter of the program. The reputation of a continuing program series; the number of donors; the actual funding arrangements; the existence, character and role of any independent panel of experts; any disclaimer; whether or not the program was produced before the funding relationship was established; and any other factors that may appear to be relevant to the circumstance will be considered as well.

C. The Library must protect its non-commercial character.

Because of their noncommercial, nonprofit status, public libraries receive special treatment from various taxing authorities, and receive funding from federal, state and local governments. Public libraries are also eligible for special rates from

vendors, and have privileges for the use of copyrighted materials. Most important, public libraries, because of the character, quality and integrity of their programs and services, have received a unique place in the public's mind.

The Library will carefully analyze the relationship of the donor and its business interests to the subject matter of the program or service. The interest to be protected here is both the fact and the public perception that the Library's selection of programs and services is responsive solely to the perceived needs of the public which it serves -- not to the commercial interests of corporations or other entities that may provide funds.

Any funding arrangement where the primary emphasis of the Library program or service is on products or services that are identical or similar to those of the donor is prohibited. If, however, the product or service depicted is merely incidental or of secondary importance, the funding would be allowed. Prominent displays will be prohibited *i.e.*, the deliberate or gratuitous appearance of a donor's product or service in a way that draws attention to or features that product or service.

For example, the Library could not feature a class on "How to Program your iPod" funded by Apple Computer Inc..

III. Guidelines for Donor Recognition

The purpose served by recognition is to identify the donor and to acknowledge the charity of the donor, not to promote the donor or its products and services.

A. Donor Acknowledgement:

Donors will be formally acknowledged by letter. Gifts, bequests, grants and endowments will be appropriately recognized. Such recognition may include book plates, newspaper articles, mention on Library website or in quarterly newsletter, annual report, or on wall plaques, in accordance with the significance of the gift.

B. Donor Statements:

If donor messages are to be included, those that seek primarily to promote The Library generally or align with its mission are acceptable. If children's programs are being funded, a message that promotes reading, learning and education may be appropriate.

Examples:

- *Rockwell Bank supports the Library's Reel Voices Film Festival..*
- *English as a Second Language is made possible in part by a grant from Toastmasters' to share the skill of conversation.*
- *Wireless internet service is made possible by grants from XYZ Bank through The Ridgewood Public Library Foundation.*
- *Major funding for the Children's Easy Reader Collection is provided by The Smith Family. Additional funding was provided by The Friends of the Ridgewood Library.*

In any event, in reviewing proposed donor messages, the Library Director may suggest appropriate revisions and shall have final judgment regarding acceptability.

C. Donor Privacy:

Individual donors may, if they choose, remain anonymous. A corporate or organizational donor may not be anonymous.

D. Order of Donor Recognition

When there is more than one donor for a program or service, donors should be credited in descending order of the amount of their grants.

E. Number of Donors, Size of Gift

More than one donor may contribute to a program.

There is no minimum limitation on the size of an underwriter's contribution. In general, any donor providing less than 5% of the funding for a program or service cannot be assured of receiving identification, but may be subsumed in a generic credit.

F. In-Kind Goods and Services

Recognition may be given for in-kind goods and services that have been provided at no or nominal cost. Sample phrases...

"Assistance provided by . . ."

"(Item/service) provided by . . ."

"Special thanks to . . ."

Such recognition may not incorporate or prominently display the donor's corporate or brand logo(s) or any other identifying information.

G. Other

Any ambiguity created by this Policy or any donations whose acceptance may not fall within the guidelines of this directive should be brought to the attention of the Library Director.

H. Contact Information:

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Approved by The Ridgewood Public Library Board of Trustees on March 28, 2006