

## An Analysis of Library Exhibit Policy Statements

The library stands as an open ground between the public and education, enabling the public to decide, to a certain extent, what should be visible inside of a library. As a result, libraries must be an available resource for the public in all aspects, serving the public in their need for literature, education *and* art. In order to maintain a respectable level of professionalism, however, it is important that libraries set standards to what they will allow to be shown. These standards are not an issue of censorship, as it is important to note that each and every public proposal is put through a fair and equal process of judgment. Policies outlining which works of art may or may not be shown inside of a library for an extended period of time are integral to maintaining the goals of the individual library throughout its interactions with the public.

The University of Utah J. Willard Marriott Library states that “exhibitions support and enhance the Marriott Library’s mission to ‘inspire the creation, discovery and use of knowledge for Utah and the world.’” (University of Utah, 2014) The policy, overall, adheres to this initial claim by discussing the University of Utah’s perspective on what types of exhibits are allowed and what they must accomplish. As per their mission statement, these exhibits must be inspiring and educational so that the students and staff who encounter the exhibit will benefit from it being there. Without this educational value, the exhibit may not pass initial approval. Additionally, the University of Utah’s J. Williard Marriott Library policy for art exhibits goes into great detail about what library levels may hold certain types of exhibits, as well as what the typical application process is like and what standards the applicants may use to check and see if their exhibit aligns with the University’s beliefs.

For the University of Utah, the primary purpose of their policy statement is to inform the university staff and visitors of what is to be expected by art exhibits. These exhibits must be considered appropriate to the university environment that the J. Willard Marriott Library wishes to extend to all visitors, and the applicants must be knowledgeable of these standards in order to have their exhibit align and be approved to be shown within the library.

As the policy for the J. Willard Marriott Library makes it clear that the ethics of the university are very important when the application team reviews specific applications, the library most importantly considers the exhibits adherence to their mission statement (“to inspire...the use of knowledge for Utah and the world”). (University of Utah, 2014) A librarian that wishes to create a similar policy would simply need to refer to the mission statement and standards of appropriateness that the library puts forward in all of their endeavors. If the exhibit does not adhere to these guidelines, it should not be able to gain approval for showing within the J. Willard Marriott library.

To contrast with the relatively straightforward manner that the University of Utah explains their library policy for art exhibits, the guidelines for Washington University delve into a greater extent of detail over what is found to be appropriate for their library. Similar to the University of Utah, the Washington University Library finds exhibits to be integral to their function as an educational entity. The policy states that “exhibits are a valuable part of the University Libraries’ public services outreach and user education program. Exhibits inform, educate, and promote the Libraries’ information resources and services,” which leads the reader to understand that great importance and interest is placed on art exhibits by the library. (Washington University, 2014) Delving into greater

detail of what is expected, the Washington University lists a number of goals that an art exhibit should meet if it is approved for showing within the library. These goals, for example, only serve to further indicate how important art exhibits are to the Washington University Library. They outline that exhibits should “promise diverse holdings, nourish intellectual, aesthetic, and creative growth, educate the community on particular topics,” and so forth. (Washington University, 2014) In order to create a similar policy, a librarian must consult the professional standards of their specific library and relate the policy to their mission statement; the art exhibits that would be approved through the policy must always be in relation to the educational goals of the university library.

The Washington University policy states that exhibits are valuable to their public service and educational programs and goals, and presents a great deal of information for potential applicants to read prior to presenting an application for an exhibition. In addition to the goals of an exhibition, which the University has created, the criteria for selection, space available, best practices and publicity conditions are outlined in detail in the policy statement. All of this information is primarily meant to allow the reader to understand what the goals of the library are, what they would require and expect if the exhibit is accepted, and to promote their educational program. The exhibit expectations themselves, as outlined in the policy, are steeped within the ethics that the Washington University Library finds to be most important. The preeminent ethic that is valued that is presented within the outlined goals of the exhibit indicate that the library places a great deal of importance on the promotion of diversity, education and projects that involve the staff, artists, student body and community. The exhibits must be an extension of the

education that the Washington University feels is supreme within all of their duties and goals.

To analyze an art exhibit policy that does not belong to a state university, the public library of Pasadena will be taken into account. The policy of the Pasadena Public Library differs from the policies of the Washington University and University of Utah in that educational goals are not at the extreme forefront. While every library must place a great deal of importance on education as a whole, the public library does not have the same level of educational politics engraved into it. The Pasadena Public Library states their mission, and the bane of their policy, is to “encourage the free expression of ideas essential to an informed citizenry...The offering of exhibit space in the library is one method used to foster greater free expression and free access to ideas representing various points of view on diverse subjects.” (Pasadena Public Library, 2014) The policy also goes into detail about which spaces are available for use, the stipulations of the use of library space, as well as general information on liability so that the public has the full scope of what is expected from an art exhibition.

The purpose of this policy, in addition to outlining the goals and expectations that the Pasadena Public Library holds, is to inform the public of the equal opportunities that every community member, or art producer, has in getting their exhibit approved as long as they withhold boundaries of respect and appropriateness. The values that the Pasadena Public Library places importance on differ slightly from the University libraries previously analyzed. The Pasadena Public Library values equal opportunity, free expression, respect and free access to the community in addition to expanding the community’s range of education. To create a policy such as this, a librarian would have

to be aware of the different scope of public and university libraries. After taking in the different goals of the public library, the librarian can use the general public library goal of being free access point for the public in order to create a detailed policy for any art exhibit to explore prior to approval and showing.

The policies for art exhibitions in the University of Utah's J. Willard Marriott Library, the Washington University Library, and the City of Pasadena Public Library all focus on the overall issue of maintaining integrity and safety of their library. In light of this, each library chose to focus on the unique goals that their libraries have in order to differentiate between each policy. These goals overwhelmingly aim to aid the public in their quest to have work shown within the walls of the library so that their needs for art, education and, in a sense, education, are met with fairness.

References:

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