

Columbia County Board of Commissioners
September 3, 2024

Fund: _____	Department: <u>Commissioners</u>
Revenue: _____	Contact: _____
Expenses: _____	Phone: _____
Line Codes(s): _____	

ITEM: Columbia County Library Guidelines for Determining Book Placement

BACKGROUND:

When determining a library book's classification, staff relies upon several factors such as author and publisher recommendations, professional reviews, language and vocabulary, format and length, educational and developmental considerations, and feedback and usage patterns of the title. There are currently no recognized standards that define age-appropriateness of content for books. Members of the Columbia County Library Advisory Board have proposed guidelines that present more objective criteria that may be considered along with the existing determining factors.

The Columbia County Library Staff is encouraged to consider the following guidelines when determining the appropriate placement of books.

Easy/Children (Ages 0-8)

Picture books are chiefly illustrations; basic concepts; designed for parents to read to child; usually oversized. Easy books are illustrated but less so than picture books; language is basic and generally controlled vocabulary; designed for children to start reading on their own. Usually under 100 pages. **No profanity; No violence; No content of a sexual nature.**

Juvenile (Ages 8-11)

More words, fewer pictures; usually chapter books. New vocabulary introduced. Concepts more advanced. Some books contain more complex concepts and vocabulary, and higher page count. **Rare uses of mild profanity, if any. Profanity used only in humorous context. Light action, minimal violence; Story intensity and action or violence should not be too scary, the level of a G-rated movie; Stories may be very action-oriented or include emotionally intense moments. No content of a sexual nature.**

Middle Ground (Ages 11-14)

Reading level appropriate for grades 6-8. Protagonists are usually age 12-15 years old. School Library Journal review lists with grade range of 5-10. Contain themes appealing specifically to middle schoolers, such as friendships, believing in yourself, and fun-filled adventure. **Scarce or no swearing; Some humor may be on the slightly naughty and gross side, with mild potty humor. Light, non-graphic violence; Violence level similar to Star Wars movie; Scare factor similar to a Harry Potter movie. No content of a sexual nature other than age-appropriate instances, such as a brief kiss on the lips and/or hand-holding; No simulated sex acts; No partial or full nudity.**

Teen (Ages 14-18)

Characters are usually teenagers. Subjects dealing with adolescent issues. Humor and reading level more complex. Usually feature characters ages 12-18. Contain themes appealing to high schoolers, such as self-discovery, finding your voice, bullying, acceptance, and coming of age. **Light, if any, instances of swearing; Minimal questionable language. Rarely graphic violence, as opposed to vivid descriptions; Some violence and blood, with an action/violence level similar to a PG-13 movie. Sexuality may be alluded to or referenced but not depicted or described in explicit detail, and pursuant to GA Code O.C.G.A 16-12-80 described below; May have some non-sexual, partial nudity or sexual content but nothing portrayed graphically; Minimal sexual content similar to a PG-13 movie.**

Adult (Ages 18+)

Written with adult readership in mind. Usually includes characters 20+, however, characters may be any age. Themes often contain mature content. **No limitations.**

Sexually Explicit Content

For the purpose of shelving and labeling books in a manner that recognizes age-appropriateness, the Columbia County Board of Commissioners has determined that books containing sexually explicit content are suitable for adults (ages 18+) and should not be cataloged or shelved in any location targeted to or labeled for minors (ages 17 and below). Sexually explicit content includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Acts of sexual intercourse, heterosexual or homosexual, normal or perverted, actual or simulated;
2. Acts of masturbation;
3. Acts involving excretory functions or lewd exhibition of the genitals;
4. Acts of bestiality or the fondling of sex organs of animals; or
5. Sexual acts of flagellation, torture, or other violence indicated a sadomasochistic sexual relationship.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends adoption of the Age-Appropriate Guidelines, as proposed by the Columbia County Library Advisory Board.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS: This item did not go to committee.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION / MOTION: *I make a motion to approve the presented Columbia County Library Guidelines for determining book placement.*