



Program Policy

Purpose of Program

The purpose of programs at Otis Library (the “Library”) is to promote lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, civic engagement, and the dissemination of information through accessible and inclusive programming. Programs support the Library’s mission by reflecting a broad spectrum of community interests and providing opportunities for voluntary inquiry and the dissemination of information and ideas, the promotion of free expression, and the free exchange of ideas.

Library programs are evaluated and made accessible in accordance with the protections against discrimination as set forth in Section 46a-64 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Definition of a Program

A program is defined as any event, class, presentation, workshop, exhibit, performance, or other organized activity that is sponsored, co-sponsored, curated, or facilitated by Otis Library staff for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all members of the community. Programs may involve outside presenters, facilitators, or performers and may be offered in person, virtually, or in hybrid formats. They may be held onsite at 261 Main Street in Norwich, Connecticut, or they may be held offsite.

Please note: Events or meetings held by organizations that use the Library’s public rooms and spaces are not Library programs and should not be considered endorsed by the Library.

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for program planning, development, and implementation lies with the Library’s professionally trained staff. The Executive Director holds ultimate responsibility for all Library programming decisions and ensures alignment with Library policies, strategic goals, and legal obligations.

Staff are tasked with curating programs that meet the informational, educational, and cultural needs of a diverse population and that foster access to a wide range of varied and diverging ideas and viewpoints.

All program attendees, presenters, and performers must adhere to the rules of this Policy and the Library’s rules of conduct.

Program Selection

Programs are intended to provide access to a wide array of content relevant to the research, independent interests, and educational needs of community members. A program will not be excluded because its topic may be considered controversial or may be viewed as objectionable, unorthodox, or unacceptable by some members of the community.

Library programs are selected using the following criteria:

1. Relevance to community needs
2. Support for the Library's mission
3. Diversity of viewpoints and interests
4. Timeliness and significance of topic
5. Presenter qualifications
6. Potential for public engagement or impact
7. Availability of budget and resources
8. Suitability for intended audience
9. Requests from the community

There are certain topics that are not considered suitable for the Library's mission and are not permitted by the Library. Those programs include, but are not limited to:

- A. Programs and information that support a specific political candidate or party. However, programs such as a panel or forum that includes invitations to all recognized candidates or parties and is held for the benefit and education of the public, may be offered.
- B. Programs and information that support or oppose a specific religion will not be offered by the Library or approved for public use of the Library's spaces or meeting rooms. However, the Library may hold holiday programs for the entertainment of community members.
- C. Gambling activities not legally permitted for a public library.
- D. Fundraising events by any individual or group other than the Library or the Friends of Otis Library.

Program Development, Coordination, and Supervision

All Library programs are developed under the supervision of qualified Library staff. Staff ensure that program content, presenters, and materials align with the Library's values of inclusion, equity, and intellectual freedom. External presenters and performers may be invited based on their subject-matter expertise, community relevance, or ability to meet learning objectives.

The Library may collaborate with outside organizations or individuals, but all content must be vetted and approved by staff to ensure consistency with Library policies and standards.

Programs are not used to promote commercial products or services and must remain nonpartisan in nature, although diverse and potentially controversial topics may be explored in a neutral and respectful context.

Programs may be held in person, virtually, or there may be a hybrid, with or without a co-sponsor. In every situation, the rules of this Program Policy and the Library's general rules of conduct must be observed.

Program Access

Programs are open to the public and are provided without discrimination based on age, race, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, political or social views, disability, or any other protected class under Connecticut law.

Some programs may be designed for specific age groups, interests, or learning levels, and may require registration due to limited space or materials.

Accommodations will be made when possible to ensure access for all patrons. Any individual requesting an accommodation to participate in or attend a Library program should contact the library at least two weeks in advance.

Virtual Programs

Otis Library offers virtual programs as part of its commitment to accessibility, flexibility, and technological inclusion. Virtual programs must meet the same standards for quality, content, and accessibility as in-person events. All digital platforms used will comply with applicable privacy and accessibility standards. Not all programs can be offered virtually, and the Library honors the position of presenters who do not allow their programs to be recorded for online viewing.

It is the responsibility of parents or caregivers to monitor and decide on the suitability of virtual content for minors.

Program Materials

Any materials distributed as part of a Library program, such as handouts, digital resources, or recordings, are subject to the same standards of quality, relevance, and inclusivity as physical collections and must be in accordance with rules for programs as set out in this Program Policy. Program materials are intended to supplement learning, spark interest, and provide context for further inquiry.

Materials are selected to reflect a broad range of perspectives and to promote free access to ideas and voluntary exploration of topics.

Program Evaluation

Programs are regularly evaluated based on attendance, participant feedback, staff observations, and alignment with Library goals. Feedback may be collected via surveys or informal input and is used to inform future programming decisions.

The Library recognizes that some programs or topics may be viewed as objectionable by individuals or groups. The inclusion of a program does not constitute endorsement of its content by the Library but reflects a commitment to the principles of intellectual freedom and the Library's role in supporting voluntary inquiry.

Reconsideration of Programs

Otis Library values the right of individuals to express concerns about specific programs. However, the Library limits requests to reconsider programs to individual residents of Norwich, Connecticut.

Norwich residents may visit the Library's website at: otislibrarynorwich.org/policies/ to review the Request for Reconsideration Policy and access the Request for Reconsideration of Program Form.