LawMatters
A Courthouse Libraries BC Program

Selection Guidelines for Law Books for Libraries

The criteria listed below guide our decision making in curating our recommended list of titles for public libraries. These guidelines have been created in support of the Courthouse Libraries BC (CLBC) Strategic Plan as well as the BC Library Association Values Statement. We share this document to assist our public library partners select materials for their communities that are not included on the Law Books for Libraries list. Titles can be purchased for libraries' in-house or circulating collections or print-based special projects and initiatives that increase access to justice and understanding of the legal system.

Selection Criteria

If you would like to purchase materials not on the recommended list, they should meet these criteria. Please share your selections with the LawMatters program coordinator **before ordering them** for review and approval. If you have any questions about these criteria or the rationale used in applying them, please contact us.

1. Jurisdiction: BC/Canadian law.

To ensure the quality and reliability of legal information in public libraries, all content must be relevant to residents of British Columbia and/or Canada. Selecting materials created for this jurisdiction is of critical importance as resources created for other jurisdictions (e.g., USA, etc.) could contain information that is inaccurate and misleading.

2. Currency: Published within the last 5 years.

Like jurisdiction, currency is critical to ensuring reliability and quality of legal materials. Keeping your selections current to the last five years will help reduce the likelihood of someone finding misleading information. However, keep in mind that this is a general guideline, not a fixed rule. Depending on the topic and content, some older legal materials are still reliable (e.g., dictionaries, historical texts). See our Retention and Weeding List for a more detailed explanation.

3. Practical: Legal resources for individual citizens rather than legal theory and analysis.

To ensure the accessibility of legal collections, we prioritize plain language, practical resources intended to help reduce barriers in understanding and applying legal information. However, this is an ideal and not always possible. Where practical plain language material about this jurisdiction is unavailable, it is best to select material that is more advanced from BC or Canada versus something written in more accessible language for another jurisdiction (e.g., USA, etc. (e.g., USA, etc.).

4. Legal: Resources must include significant legal content for example:
    - For non-profit organizations and small businesses, there must be a significant legal component and **not** be a resource for a specific business such as *Start and Run a Bed and Breakfast.*
    - Estate planning (primarily law based) but **not** wealth planning (accounting based).

Remember ***legal*** includes a range of 'everyday' sorts of things like dealing with contractors or filling out government forms, to more significant life events like adopting a child or getting divorced. Ensuring significant legal content in each source works towards establishing a carefully curated and relevant collection that will better inform users of the legal dimensions of any given topic, and better empower them to avert or seek solutions to legal issues they may face in their lives.

5. Foundational: Resources that promote a greater understanding of the Canadian justice system overall, with particular focus on truth and reconciliation, equity, inclusion, and social justice.

In the interest of equity, lifelong learning and social responsibility, we encourage a focus on materials that inform BC residents about our fundamental charter rights and freedoms, when they have not been recognized, and how past and present systemic racism manifests in our justice system. Titles that highlight efforts made to redress these injustices and build a more equitable and accessible model of justice are also prioritized.

6. General Reference: Legal research/legal procedure/legal dictionaries.

These resources can help explain the basic building blocks of the legal system and the language used within it. As such, they are an important part of reducing barriers to understanding and therefore accessing the justice system.

7. Varied: Where possible avoid duplication of similar titles by several publishers.

If you have suggestions to add to the core list, or comments and questions about these selection guidelines, please contact me anytime.

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