

Pasco County Library System Policy Manual

Section: Public Services

Policy Title: Holiday Displays

Effective Date: February 2005

Revised: November 2005

May 2005

Philosophy:

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution provides that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” This amendment applies to all governmental entities, not merely the federal government or Congress, and has been interpreted to mean, in its most basic form, that government should neither sponsor nor endorse any religious activity, nor discriminate against religion or religious expression.¹

Holiday displays in or on public property implicate both of these First Amendment principles. In order to respect both principles, library personnel observe the following County and Library guidelines concerning displays in libraries and on library property during the holiday season.

¹ Pasco County, Florida Interoffice Memorandum, dated November 22, 2005 issued by Kristi Wooden, Assistant County Attorney, entitled Holiday Displays on Pasco County Property.

Duration of Displays:

Holiday displays should coincide with the holiday season and be of limited duration as determined by Libraries Administration.

Specific Holiday Display Policies:

In public areas inside the library (except meeting rooms, see section below) and in staff break rooms or staff common areas:

- Displays in these areas are owned and erected by Libraries. The overall nature of the display must celebrate the secular facets of the season and must not be seen to endorse the religious aspects of the holiday. Because of the difficulty involved in making a judgment about the “overall nature” of such displays, the following policies will apply:
- The displays will be limited to holiday items that are purely secular in nature.

For example, in the winter season, garlands, wreaths, snowflakes, Santa Claus, gingerbread houses, reindeer, snowmen, lights, etc. may be used. A traditional evergreen-type tree may be displayed, but the ornaments may not be of a religious nature. Angels, nativity scenes, and menorahs may not be used.

In the spring season, bunnies, chicks, baskets and eggs may be used. Symbols of a religious significance, such as a cross or crucifix, may not be used.

Secular decorations may be displayed for holidays such as Halloween, 4th of July, St. Patrick’s Day, Thanksgiving, and Valentine.

- Signs or publications created to spotlight a book display or library event(s) may not contain religious symbols.
- Members of the public will not be permitted to add to the displays or to erect displays inside the buildings except as described in this policy.
- At times members of the public may offer to donate decorative holiday items for use by the Library. All such donations are to be made to the Friends of the Library. Items of a

religious nature will not be accepted. All donated items become the property of the Friends and will be displayed or discarded at their discretion.

- A minimal amount of County time and resources should be used in erecting a holiday or seasonal display.

In private offices, cubicles, private lockers assigned to individual employees or other similar spaces see Pasco County Personnel Policy and Procedure Manual.

In public meeting rooms:

- These are spaces that can be utilized by the public and fall under the Libraries' [Meeting Room Policy](#).
- Groups reserving the rooms may use their own holiday decorations for their purposes within the guidelines of the Meeting Room Policy. In addition, they may not attach decorations to any part of the room or to Libraries owned furniture and equipment that marks or damages that portion of the room, furniture, or equipment. Decorations must not create a health or safety hazard. All decorations must be removed immediately after the meeting. Any decorations left in the rooms will be discarded.

In public display cases:

- The policy for holiday displays in public display cases does not vary from the Exhibit Area policy, which can be found [here](#).

On Library property outside the Library building:

- Libraries has identified one or more areas at each public location that may be utilized by private individuals or groups to erect holiday displays of any nature during a limited time coinciding with the holiday season.
- Buildings that are under construction or renovation may not be utilized for displays. Buildings where the surrounding property is extremely limited may not easily lend themselves to displays.
- Persons wishing to erect a display must notify Libraries Administration prior to erecting the display. Libraries Administration will notify the appropriate County Department so

that displays can be inspected for safety. Displays that are erected without proper notification will be removed and discarded.

- Space for displays will be allocated on a “first come, first served” basis. The amount of space available for each display may be limited to allow equitable access. The total amount of space available for public displays may be limited.
- Displays erected in areas other than those designated for that purpose, will be removed and discarded.
- Libraries will erect a sign with the following information: “Display created, erected, and sponsored by private citizens. Not endorsed or sponsored by Pasco County” in the area utilized for public displays.
- Displays may not be illegal, defamatory, or obscene. Determination of this status will be referred to appropriate legal authorities.
- Displays may not present a health or safety issue. They must be securely anchored to prevent both property damage and personal injury.
- Displays that present a safety hazard to the public or which are not removed in a timely fashion after the expiration of the display period, will be removed at the expense of the person erecting the display.
- Displays may not be erected on sidewalks, in parking lots or on public rightofway. They may not block or hamper ingress or egress from any portion of the building or grounds. Displays may not block visibility for vehicles entering, leaving, or parked in the library parking areas.
- Displays may not be erected in areas that would interfere with the maintenance of buildings or grounds including irrigations systems or where landscaping would be damaged or destroyed by the display.
- Any damage occurring as a result of erecting a display will be repaired at the expense of the person erecting the display.
- Libraries will not provide electrical, or other utility access for displays erected by members of the public.
- No sound amplifiers may be used as part of any display.

- Littering is prohibited on Library property.
- Libraries assumes no responsibility for the preservation, security, or possible damage or theft of any item displayed.