



**The National Railway Historical Society,
Washington, D.C. Chapter, Incorporated**

Martin F. O'Rourke Railroad Library



POLICY STATEMENTS

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The National Railway Historical Society, Washington, D.C. Chapter, Incorporated, ("the Chapter") established the Martin F. O'Rourke Library ("the Library") in 2006, in memory of a long-time member and former Chapter President. These statements describe the Chapter's policies for the development, management, and use of the Library and its collections. The Library is housed in the Kensington Row Bookshop, 3786 Howard Avenue, Kensington, Maryland. The Library is expected to open at this location in September 2026.

[Note: Previously the library was located at Bowie Tower, Bowie, Maryland, from September 2007 to August 2025. Historically, this location was known as Bowie Railroad Station/Huntington Library.]

I. General Policies

1. Purpose

The Library's collection is a general reference collection on railroad history for our chapter members and the general public. The Library is part of the Chapter's efforts and mission to expand the public's appreciation of railroads and their history through education and preservation. The concept of such a library is also in keeping with our by-laws' educational objectives and our articles of incorporation as a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization. Our articles of incorporation specifically include the following statements about our scientific and educational purposes:

- To procure and dispense information to the public in general
- To encourage and promote an interest in railroad history and development, past and present

2. Governance

Policies governing the development, management, and use of the Library are approved by the Chapter's Board of Directors. The Chapter's Library Committee is charged with developing and executing procedures for the acquisition, processing, and maintenance of the collection. The Chapter shall establish an annual library budget identifying expenditures and projected income. This budget shall be managed in accordance with Chapter financial procedures and by-laws.

3. Access and Services

A. Audience and Hours of Operation

The Library is open to Chapter members and the general public who visit the Kensington Row Bookshop. The Library is open on a schedule established in conjunction with the Kensington Row Bookshop; normal hours are usually 11:00am to 5:00pm, Tuesday through Sunday (holidays excluded).

B. Services

- The Library is a **non-circulating** collection. Materials may be used in the Library building but may NOT be taken out of the facility without prior permission of the Chapter President and/or the Chairman of the Library Committee.
- The Library is staffed by volunteers, who will provide visitors with access to the collection. Since the Library is a "self-service" operation, bookshop staff are not able to provide reference or other library services.

II. Collection Policies

1. Nature of Ownership

Although the collection resides in the Kensington Row Bookshop, all collection materials in the Library remain the property of the Chapter. Items may be added to the collection by means of gifts, bequests, purchases, exchanges or any other appropriate transactions by which full title for the materials is transferred to the Chapter. The Chapter shall not accept items "on deposit", on "long-term, indefinite, or permanent loan", or in any manner whereby the Chapter is not the owner of the items, except in unique instances and with the prior approval of the Board of Directors, and where such arrangements would further the Chapter's mission.

2. Criteria for Acquisition

A. Scope of the Collection

The Washington, D.C. area has played an important part in railroad history, both in the early development of the industry and as an important hub for railroad traffic up and down the East coast of the United States. In support of the Chapter's educational mission, the Library's priorities are to acquire materials which document, first of all, the history of railroading in the Washington metropolitan area, followed by the Middle Atlantic states, the East generally, and then the rest of the country.

The Chapter owns and operates the *Dover Harbor*, a 1923 original Pullman sleeper-lounge-buffet car and thus has a special interest in materials related to the Pullman Company and cars from its *Dover* series, as well as issues related to Pullman private railroad car operation.

In support of these priorities, the Library seeks to acquire material in the following areas:

- a. Steam, diesel, or electric railroads that did or now originate in, terminate in, pass through, or had their corporate headquarters in Washington D.C. area. These include but are not limited to the following railroad companies and their predecessors and successors:
 - Amtrak
 - Baltimore and Ohio Railroad
 - Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad
 - CSX Transportation
 - Norfolk Southern
 - Pennsylvania Railroad
 - Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad
 - Southern Railway

- Washington and Old Dominion Railroad
- Washington Terminal Company
- b. Interurban, streetcar, and commuter railways serving Washington and the surrounding jurisdictions, including:
 - Capital Transit, DC Transit, and predecessors
 - Chesapeake Beach Railway
 - East Washington Railway
 - Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC)
 - Metrorail (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority)
 - Virginia Railway Express
 - Washington, Baltimore and Annapolis Railroad
- c. Pullman Company history
- d. Private railroad car ownership and operation
- e. Railroads serving the East Coast that did or now connect to Washington area railroads
- f. Other railroads in the United States
- g. Railroad technology and industries, including but not limited to locomotive, passenger car, and freight car manufacturing; railroad service companies (such as the Pullman Company and the Fred Harvey Company); labor organizations; engineering; signaling; safety; maintenance.
- h. Railroad travel and tourism

NOTE: Martin F. O'Rourke was the principal caretaker of the Chapter's Library collection for many years. Due to the nature in which the founding collection was acquired (mostly through donations from members and the general public), initially the Library contained a significant amount of material pertaining to general interest U.S. railroading history from all over the U.S. and in a few instances foreign railroads. Over time, the general interest material may be reduced or eliminated as the portion of the collection focused on Washington, D.C. region railroading expands. This will be managed by the Library Committee in keeping with the overall Library policy.

B. Formats Collected

In the subjects listed above, the Library collects the following types of materials:

- Books and pamphlets
- Maps
- Timetables (both public and employee) Directories
- Memoirs and first-person accounts Railroad company publications Technical manuals

C. Formats not collected

At the present time, the Library is not collecting the following materials, unless of unique interest or value as determined by the Library Committee:

- Periodicals, including railroad-related magazines Company or business records
- Sound recordings
- Films, videotapes, DVDs
- Photographs, slides, prints, posters, postcards
- Family papers
- Artifacts (railroad collectibles, *etc.*)

D. Gift Policy

The Chapter welcomes and encourages gifts in support of its Library collection. Indeed, the vast majority of the current collection came from donors, both members of the Chapter and the interested public. The Chapter can accept financial gifts to benefit the Library, as well as "gifts-in-kind" of books, library material, or equipment (such computers, CD or DVD players, *etc.*).

Financial gifts of any size or amount are always appreciated.

In preparation for donating books or other materials, the Library encourages donors to provide where possible a list of materials including the name, dates, and general condition of the material. Donors should also note the following considerations:

- Materials should enhance existing collections, according to the guidelines in this document.
- Donated materials become the property of the Chapter, which will determine retention, location and cataloging procedures.
- When donated materials do not meet the Library's collection development guidelines, the Chapter may arrange to donate or exchange them with other institutions, sell them and use the income for the benefit of the Library, or otherwise dispose of them.
- In general, gifts to which the donor has attached conditions, such as those concerning retention, housing, classification and access, will not be accepted for inclusion in the Library collection.
- Federal regulations do not permit the Chapter to give appraisals or estimates of value. Upon request, the Chapter may assist the donor by providing Internet addresses for services that sell used and rare books, as well as information about professional appraisers.
- The Chapter will issue a letter of acknowledgment describing the quantity and type of materials donated at the time of the gift.
- The Chapter will assist donors by picking up their donations, if such a pick-up is feasible.
- When the type of material makes it feasible, bookplates, or other acknowledgments of the name of the donor will be affixed to the items donated.