



106 Washington Avenue, Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901-4985

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 18, 2015
TO: Oshkosh Public Library Board of Trustees
FROM: Jeff Gilderson-Duwe
SUBJECT: Appeal of decision to forego purchase of book Fierce convictions

Mr. Steve Barney requested that the library add the following book to its circulating collection:

Fierce convictions: the extraordinary life of Hannah More – poet, reformer and abolitionist, by Karen Swallow Prior. It was published in 2014 by Nelson Books, a division of Harper Collins.

More was an English playwright and abolitionist who lived from 1745 to 1830.

Following library procedure, the Materials Selection Librarian sought out reviews of the work and assessed whether there would be enough interest among Oshkosh's general reading public to warrant a purchase. Her judgment was that the book is "fundamentally an academic book with a limited appeal to our general public" and she communicated to Mr. Barney that the library would not be purchasing the book.

Mr. Barney has taken issue with the description of the book as "academic." He has corresponded with its author, who rightly points out that it is issued by a trade publisher and has not been subjected to peer review, as is customary with academic monographs and journal articles.

Granting that the book may not strictly be called academic, I believe our judgement that this biography would be of limited appeal or interest to the general reading public of Oshkosh is correct.

To be helpful, our staff suggested that Mr. Barney seek to borrow the book through the inter-library loan service when it will become available through that service in November. A search of the OCLC WorldCat database reveals that several Wisconsin libraries – including three public libraries – have added the book to their collections. It should be easily borrowed for Mr. Barney's use at that time.

I ask that the Library Board uphold the decision of the Materials Selection Librarian to forego purchase of this book.

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