

## ***Power Shelving - The McMillan Experience***

Our movement to power shelving was heavily influenced by the PLA presentations of Richmond (B.C.) Public Library. There are significant differences in our implementation. We are not a suburban branch, but a rural medium sized library. Though we are part of a very active shared system, our situation is not quite that of a branch.

This is Power Shelving (taking steps to fully promote new materials) rather than a move to complete display shelving or to an alternative to Dewey. We consider complete display collections possible only with smaller collection. BISAC based alternatives to Dewey are not yet mature. Even if we used a Dewey alternative, we would want to highlight new materials.

Almost all new adult books are placed into display categories (see below). Some items, such as repair manuals, dictionaries and reference related books, do not lend themselves to display. We have not yet implemented a similar display system in our Children's Room.

All display collections have their own collection codes. Items in the display collections appear in the catalog with the location DISPLAY-Collection name.

Books are processed into their permanent collection, then temporarily placed in the display collections. They return to their permanent collection after 12-18 months, depending upon the number of new books being purchased for that collection.

Round ¾ or ½ inch labels are used to distinguish display collections and to keep track of when the item entered the collection. A Suspense book would use a ¾ inch label (SU 8/08), while a Mystery would use a ½ inch label with just the date (8/08), since the spine label already denotes it as a mystery.



Most display collections contain 200-400 books, arranged on three shelves, with two display shelves above. Some smaller collections have three shelves of display. Since many of the titles are in circulation, that is enough space for that many titles. In some collections, only 25% of the items are on shelf, though most collections are closer to 50%. Some collections require more than one unit and are correspondingly larger.

Some collections were tried and abandoned after tepid patron response (e.g. Foreign Authors, Family Fiction, Literature, Chick Lit). It is important that collections have critical mass and a

sufficient flow of new materials. Even if you achieve that, a collection may just not be a good fit for your public. Mileage will definitely vary. The current categories are the result of several years of trial and adjustment.

One of the important features of a display area is simple space. Our Lower level AV area uses six foot aisles. Putting display style shelving in a stack like arrangement negates much of their value. Create as many collections as possible that don't force patrons into 42 inch aisles.

## **Advantages of Display Collections**

- About 18% of Fiction and 15% of Non-Fiction are in a display collection. This is a significant portion of both collections, but fully utilizes all the space we choose to dedicate to these collections.
- The fiction displays generate 54% of all adult hardcover fiction circulation, more than the 80% of the fiction that is in stacks and genre collections.
- Genre collections (Mystery, Christian Fiction, Fantasy, Science Fiction, Graphic Novels, Classics) are mainly in non-stack units, either on the edges of the room or edges of the stacks. Overall we have 18 display units, 26 other non-stack units and 90 stack units.
- The non-fiction displays generate 30% of all adult hardcover non-fiction circulation. This lower figure reflects that currency matters less with non-fiction, non-fiction bestsellers are not as "hot" as fiction bestsellers and the large "backlist" of non-fiction.
- Display collections reward patrons who physically visit the library, as opposed to those who use the library remotely. This is especially true in large shared systems, where the on-line catalog contains millions of items.
- Display collections reward regular users. They will find all the new titles in their favorite collection.
- Display collections are persistent and can build a following, unlike temporary subject based displays.
- Display collections gather titles that would be separated in a Dewey or alphabetical arrangement. For example, the Library does not maintain a permanent Suspense or Thriller genre collection. Home repair and interior design books are spread throughout a range of Dewey numbers.
- Display collections do not unduly burdening staffers who are looking for specific titles. (Note: McMillan annually performs over 100,000 loans within its shared library system.)
- Each book still has a specific place on a shelf (between this book and that book), unless it is being displayed face out on the shelves directly above that place.
- Every new book has a chance to find an audience. Alternatively, if a book fails to find an audience while in a display collection, it is unlikely to do so when moved to the stacks. This significantly assists staff in weeding and ordering.
- Non-fiction display categories have influenced our cataloging. We have paid more attention to gathering like materials and not letting the default Dewey numbers split

similar materials. Cover letters and resumes are now in one area, as are computer programs, word processors and graphics software.

- Display collections are a compromise between critical mass (enough similar items to attract attention and reward repeat visits) and granularity (Dewey is maintained within the display collections and the stacks).
- By displaying only recent titles, display collections are much more physically attractive than temporary subject-oriented displays and contain items that are not familiar to regular patrons. Surprisingly good service and patron delight are important goals.
- Display collections should lead patrons to the permanent genre collections and to the correct Dewey location. McMillan has no empirical evidence to support this theory.

### **Adult Non-Fiction Display Collections**

20 <sup>th</sup> Century History	Hot Topics (2 units)
Around the House (includes decorating, home repair and parenting)	Memoirs / Autobiographies
Art & Art Instruction	Pop Culture
Biographies	Religion & Spirituality
Finance & Business (including office software applications)	Science/Nature/Technology
Crafts	Self-Help/Psychology/Relationships
Food & Celebrations	Sports & Recreation
General History	Travel and the World
Health (includes fitness and medicine)	

All items in these collections become Adult Non-Fiction after 12-18 months, depending upon the number of new items purchased for that collection.

## Adult Fiction Display Collections

<b>Display collection</b>	<b>After 12-18 months becomes</b>
New Fiction (five units)	Adult Fiction
Suspense	Adult Fiction
Thrillers	Adult Fiction
Crime	Adult Fiction
Romance	Adult Fiction
Historical Fiction	Adult Fiction
Rental Books	Moved to a display collection when there are no longer holds on the title
New Mysteries (three units)	Adult Mysteries
New Christian Fiction	Christian Fiction
New Science Fiction	Science Fiction
New Fantasy	Fantasy
New Graphic Novels	Graphic Novels