



How to make genres accessible



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Faced with shelves filled to the brim with books, will, for most people, be a challenge to find something to read, especially for reluctant readers. Why not help them a bit?

Filing genres separately may well enhance the accessibility and user friendliness of your collection.

How to determine genres for separate filing

The need for separately filed genres should be determined by the preferences of the users. Some users read certain categories exclusively, for example, *Westerns* or *Romance*.

Some genres may be very popular and if your library has a good collection, it could be filed separately, for example, *Fantasy*, *Horror* or *Science Fiction*.

If your library has a reading circle or readers who like short stories or classics, and you have enough titles in stock, it would make sense to keep them separately and well-marked.

Large prints and normal prints have always been kept separately and this works

very well. Even the *Mills & Boon* titles filed separately from other books in the same genre will assist users with their choice.

Children enjoy popular books in a series to be kept together as it makes it easy for them to see which titles are available.

Librarians are taught about user-oriented filing in a library, but this rarely works effectively with large collections. A library may have multiple copies of a title in stock and users may still not find it or know about all the copies because one NF title could cover a few subjects (for example, *Fantasy* or *Science Fiction*) and could be filed in either of these categories. It is sometimes difficult to decide where it should be filed. Besides the lack of accessibility to a specific title, this could create confusion amongst staff.

A solution for popular non-fiction genres would be to have regular displays of popular and new acquisitions in a genre, for example, *Biographies*, *Readable Non-Fiction* or *Christian Fiction*. Remember to make use of SN to request block loans on subjects, languages, et cetera.

Some libraries keep hard cover titles and small paperbacks separately, but this can be confusing to the public as well as making stock building and weeding more difficult.

In older libraries, the size of the

non-adjustable shelving would also determine the separation of larger (Q) non-fiction titles from the smaller non-fiction books which is normally done to give a neater appearance to the libraries. Large and smaller books look very uneven and if all non-fiction shelves were adjusted to fit the size of the largest books, there would be fewer shelves available. Some of the smaller non-fiction books may also not be noticed by users if they are filed inbetween the larger books. Most libraries therefore choose to keep the sizes apart.

Filing of picture books

There is no right or wrong way of filing picture books as long as there is some kind of order and the filing system makes it easier for users to use. You may decide what works the best for you.

▶ According to colour

The advantage of this method is that the children's shelves look beautiful and filing the books is easy. It may be more difficult to find a specific title, though.

▶ According to Dewey

This style makes it easy to find specific titles, but is a nightmare for staff to keep in order.

▶ *According to size*

This is pleasing on the eye but does not make finding specific titles easy.

▶ *According to subject*

Most children have a favourite subject, or parents or teachers may want to cover a subject like *seasons, bears or grandparents*. However, some books on certain subjects have been read so often that they fall apart, or not enough titles have been received on the subject. A shelf with only one or two books does not make a good impression and certainly does not provide a wide enough choice.

▶ *Series*

This is very popular with children. A series should be kept complete, though. Ensure that parts of the series are not misfiled amongst the general collection.

Important principles

- ▶ If genres are filed separately, you have

to keep to a predetermined pattern otherwise it will frustrate users and not make sense

- ▶ Keep the separate categories simple, well defined and not too numerous, because it can add to the staff's workload
- ▶ Make sure that the books in a category are well marked or that staff responsible for the filing understand what exactly, for example, a *Fantasy* or a *Western* is when they have to file it
- ▶ Do not create a separate category if you do not have enough books or if there is no real need
- ▶ Mark the shelves clearly with printed labels or posters
- ▶ When new members start using the library, make sure that they know where their favourite category, as well as the rest, is located. Inform them through leaflets or bookmarks about the 'special collections'. You may find that avid

readers of a genre such as *Fantasy* will donate titles to add to this collection.

Alternatives

- ▶ If your fiction collection is too big to make separate filing of genres workable, the titles in a genre can still be marked by spine labels with colours and symbols. Charts clarifying these labels could be displayed throughout the fiction collection. Spine labels should be maintained otherwise the collection will appear tatty.
- ▶ Another alternative is to make genre lists available. As new material is acquired, it can be added to the specific genre lists. Advertise this very clearly.
- ▶ Do regular displays of new acquisitions in specific genres.

Bibliography

http://www.warriorlibrarian.com/LIBRARY/genre_split.html



DID YOU KNOW?

The Central Reference Section (SN: Sentrale Naslaan) of the Western Cape Library Service provides an information service to all public libraries in the Western Cape. Library users, librarians, library workers and members of the public may borrow library material via their public libraries for a specific loan period. Central Reference has a comprehensive collection of library material, which includes reference works, art, film, audiovisual material and music.

Central Reference's extensive information databank includes library material in the following formats: books, DVDs, CDs, videos, 16mm and 35mm films, language cassettes, foreign fiction, audiobooks and Africana.

A Ready Reference service is also available and is very popular amongst scholars and students. Items may be requested via SLIMS/ Brocade, fax, e-mail, telephone and post.

CONTACT DETAILS

Reference Librarian: Vacant

Responsible for collection development. Also responsible for all title and subject requests from public libraries and regional libraries.

Telephone: 021 483-2324
Fax: 021 419-7541
E-mail: Not available

Chief Library Assistant: Gerda Theron

Responsible for all ready reference requests (delivery within 24 hours), SABINET requests and the compilation of the statistics of the section.

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Senior Library Assistant: Sandra Kingswell

Responsible for all lending tasks via PALS/ BROCADE library system: issuing, (books, CDs, audio books, language courses) reminders and renewals, as well as the current awareness service of professional journals to public libraries and Library Service staff.

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Responsible for the issuing of all audiovisual library material requests (DVDs, Art prints, videos and 16mm and 35mm films).

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