Shifting Priorities: Unlocking Your Library for 21st Century Learning Spaces

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Gather Data

- Linear inches of available space
- Linear inches per classification
- # of volumes added/withdrawn during last 5 years

Assemble No-Budget Tools

- Excel (or free equivalent) for planning document
- Painter’s tape for numbering shelves in filing order
- Nylon rope, knotted to serve as standard measure
- 6”x6” lumber, cut and sanded to create standard shelf spacers (We used 3”, 6”, 8”, 9”, & 12”)
- Bucket and rags for cleaning

Create Your Plan

1) Create a Collection Map [Excel].
2) Number your available shelving in filing order [painter’s tape]. Double check against Collection Map.
3) Calculate available linear inches of shelving space for collection.
4) Create a standard measure [knotted rope]. Tie a knot in one end, then tie a second knot so that the space between the knots equals the length of your shelving.
5) Use standard measure to determine linear inches of books by LC subclass. Measure at least 2x. Compare measurements, and remeasure any subclass that is off by more than 10% (or less for large subclasses).
6) Use acquisition/withdrawal stats from ILS to determine growth rate for each LC subclass [Excel].
   a) # of books added during previous 5 years x 1” = estimate of linear inches of growth. Calculate % increase by comparing linear inches of growth to linear inches of actual collection.
   b) If appropriate, use the same formula with withdrawal stats to determine contraction of collection. Subtract from % increase to get a more accurate growth rate. Skip this step if you have purged the subclass within the last 5 years.
7) Use % increase to identify % of growth space per shelf of LC subclass [Excel].
8) Calculate # of shelves needed per LC subclass. [Excel]
9) Calculate running total to determine where LC subclasses should begin/end. [Excel]
10) Create planning document that designates begin shelf/end shelf and which standard shelf spacer to use for each LC subclass. Include space for shifting crew to note actual begin/end. Review actual numbers daily, and adjust shifting plan as needed.
Lessons Learned

- Use uniform spacing of shelving within sections and ranges. This makes planning easier and ensures neater results.
- Partner with acquisitions/collection development staff during the planning stages. This is critical for the long-term success of the full collection shift.
- Place shelf # labels at the end (right side) of shelf instead of the beginning (left side) to reduce confusion when recording progress.
- Measure collection during the summer or another low circulation time.
- Use a standard measure and hash marks to measure each subclass. Then multiply the length of the standard measure by the # of hashes to determine linear inches for each subclass. This will reduce the number of measuring errors and will also make the measuring process go much faster.
- When using the standard measure, round up to the nearest ¼ rope length.
- When measuring the collection, break down large subclasses (such as PR and PS) into smaller segments (e.g., PR1-PR1799). This will make recording more accurate, as well as reducing time spent during the inevitable re-measure.
- Plan to leave empty shelves at end of literature subclassifications to accommodate newly published literature and criticism.
- Once the planning document is complete, test your plan on a small subclass to see if measurements and calculations are on target.
- Take advantage of empty shelving to wash off dirt and dust. Use a damp rag, and always leave adequate time for shelving to dry before shifting books to that area.
- Schedule two student assistants at the same time so that they can measure or shift in teams.
- Limit the amount of time student teams work continuously on shifting.
- Track progress at small intervals to leave time to make adjustments in the plan.
- Have a trusted shelf-reading team following the shifting team, checking for problems before too much additional progress is made.
- Re-train student assistants after semester breaks.

Email sarah.copeland@chattanoogastate.edu to receive a sample Excel file to help you create your shifting plan.