



Topics

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In a small community, the public library is often the only source of information and recreational materials available to the public. A children's collection in a small library is important because it encourages children to read and satisfies their curiosity and need for information about the world around them. For children, the library should be a place to explore, a place to return to time and again, a place where they will always be welcome.

Children's services are as important a component of the library as any services offered to adults. In order to provide library services to children, a number of things should be considered -- potential audience, facilities, collection, and services.

AUDIENCE TO BE SERVED

There are a number of different user groups to be served including:

1. Children

Children are the primary user group of children's services and materials. The material can be for infants, pre-schoolers, and elementary children to about grade six or seven.

Different children can use the various types of material at different times. For instance, a baby enjoys the sound of voices and responds to rhymes and rhythms; this is the time to introduce lullabies and nursery rhymes. By about six months, an infant is able to focus attention on pictures and is attracted to books with bright primary colours and simple shapes. At about one year, children point to familiar objects and board books are a good choice. Between the ages of three and five, children enjoy stories that feature aspects of the real world such as people at work, vehicles and animals. Picture books, however, are suitable not only for pre-schoolers and primary grades but also for upper level students, perhaps as a discussion book.



2. Parents

Parents are the first access point for library service to infants, toddlers and pre-school children. In addition, parents need activities which involve them with their children. Parents themselves may need information on a variety of topics such as parenting, child development and special concerns (e.g., hyperactivity, divorce, adoption, etc.).

3. Professional groups

Professionals who work with children often use the resources of the public library. Teachers, staff members in day-care centres, camp leaders or Scout/Guide leaders often need songs, games, read-aloud books, storytelling materials, and puppetry ideas.

4. Special interest groups

There are a number of special interest groups who may require special formats and materials including:

- children with disabilities
- children doing remedial work
- ethnic groups
- literacy groups may wish to use appropriate reading material
- adult students of childhood education classes

5. Library staff

Library staff are also users. Resources are needed to generate ideas and support programmes in the children's department. These include songs, games, crafts, books, films, magazines, puppets, etc. In addition, staff require tools to assist in the selection of materials.



THE CHILDREN'S AREA

Whether the children's area is an entire floor within the library, a separate room or a section designated for the children's collection, it should be comfortable, colourful, welcoming and warm to children. A well-planned children's area in the library is an invitation to young patrons to explore the library materials and services.

Size

There are a number of factors to consider in determining the size of the children's area including:

□ Population

In each library, a decision must be made about what age group is to be served in the children's area. In most cases, children to about grade 6 are included.

□ Collection

The standard 36" shelf holds approximately 36 "regular" books or 75 tightly packed picture books. An accurate count of the total book collection will determine the number of shelves needed, and consequently, the wall or floor space needed. It is best to inflate the number of shelves by 20% to avoid jam-packed shelves and, if possible, add another 20% to allow for future expansion.

The arrangement of the collection will affect the size needed. For example, if the adult and children's non-fiction materials are integrated into one collection and housed in a separate area, the size of the children's area would be reduced accordingly.

□ Building design

Although such permanent architectural designs as story pits may be attractive, they can reduce long-term flexibility. Creating an alcove or other architectural feature will contribute to clearly defining an attractive children's area.



Location

Children's areas are no longer places of silence. However, the need of adult users for some quiet space should be considered. To respond to the requirements of both adults and children, the children's area is best located:

- near the circulation desk or service desk for staff assistance and supervision
- near the adult fiction or browsing area so parents can share in the selection of materials
- as far as possible from the adult reference or study area
- close to washrooms

In addition, it should be possible to bring a stroller or wheelchair into the children's area.

Lay-out

In most small libraries, the children's area will share the same room as the adult area. Children should be able to distinguish their own area of interest from the rest of the library. Directional signs are important, and for pre-schooler or those unable to read, pictorial signs may be needed. Visual indicators can also be used to establish the area's separateness. For example:

- the colour of the carpet or floor tiles can be changed
- the walls can be painted a contrasting colour from other areas
- a barrier between areas can be created using low bookshelves
- decorative elements such as ceiling-hung signs, mobiles, or sturdy lattice screens, can be used to mark the area
- raised platforms can be built although they should be able to be easily moved out of the way as needed



Furnishings

Floor cushions are very useful in the children's area. If space is available, child-size tables and chairs can be included in the children's area. Other useful furnishings are children's coat racks and at least one bulletin board.

When selecting furnishings, colour, textured fabrics and good design are as important as utility. The furnishing should be sturdy, washable and painted with non-toxic materials. All of the furnishings in the children's area should be designed with children in mind. The height of shelves, chairs, tables, and catalogues must correspond to the height of the users.

Shelving

While most children's material will fit onto standard library shelves, there are a number of exceptions. Special shelving units may be required to accommodate the various material formats found in children's collections. For picture books, the ideal shelving is 42" high and 12" deep with plenty of dividers to support the books. For other materials in the children's area, the ideal height of the shelving units is 48". The height of these units should not exceed 60 inches.

Consideration should also be given to the disabled. Ideally, the shelves should be placed far enough apart to allow a person in a wheelchair to see all the material and to reach the top and the bottom shelf.

Decoration

Displays, posters, and other decorative elements help to define the children's area, promote library materials and programmes and make the library inviting. Another important decorative element should be the availability of clean, attractively displayed books. Puppets and toys can both decorate the library and amuse small children while adult users browse. A few non-toxic green plants, especially hanging plants kept out of the way, can add a nice touch to the children's area.

A cluttered look can be avoided in small areas by confining displays to one or two bulletin boards or display areas by renewing them often. In some cases, the children themselves might contribute to the displays by offering their art for showing. Often there is a staff member or volunteer who has an artistic flair who can help to maintain the display area. The collection is the heart of a library. Great programmes, extensive publicity, good relationships with teachers and a well laid-out building do not mean very much if the collection is not appropriate.



Children's materials come in a wide variety of formats: hardcover books, paperback books, book and cassette packages, board books, talking books, cassettes, videotapes, magazines and pamphlets. A children's collection should contain classics and favourite authors, as well as Canadian materials and new titles. Material in both official languages as well as other languages and formats should be acquired as needed.

Selection

Selection is the process of choosing materials. Many stories are written for children but adults are usually responsible for buying them. Editors decide on manuscripts, reviewers state whether or not they liked a story, library staff make recommendations and parents or caregivers often select material for the child. How can one know which stories a child is going to enjoy and which ones should be selected for the library's collection? After all there are more than 2,000 new children's books published every year.

To do a good job of selection, the staff member assigned to this task must know the existing collection, the community and the audiences to be served. There are three main elements to consider in selection:

- selection policy
- selection criteria
- selection aids

Selection policy

Materials for children are chosen in accordance with a written collection development policy which includes information about selection aids to be used and selection criteria. A selection policy for children's material should define what will be purchased and held in the library's collection. That policy should be a prominent feature of the library's overall collection development policy and mission statement. Several sections which relate to children have been taken from another *Sourcebook* called *Collection development and management 1: Policy and planning*. These sections are reprinted as Sample 1 at the end of this *Sourcebook*.



Selection criteria

Adults must become very familiar with books and other materials in order to choose them for children. The best way to know books is to read them. Book selection lists and lists of award-winning books are helpful selection aids, but are only a first step.

Selection guidelines are only suggestions because in the end, books for children should be chosen on the basis of knowledge of a particular child or group of children. Some children, for example, enjoy classic children's material, while others prefer newer titles.

Each book must be examined closely for a total effect as well as to look at the individual elements that produce that effect. The individual elements are plot, characters, setting, style, point of view and theme. The format of the book is also a good indication of the intended audience of the book. Books for beginning readers, for example, usually have only one rhyme per page while versions for more advanced readers may have several rhymes on each page.

Be aware of materials with stereotypical representations of people and prejudices.

Selection aids

A good way for library staff to get to know a collection and identify strengths and weaknesses of the present children's collection is to check established lists. Check to see how many items from a particular list are in the library's collection. The same list can be used as a selection tool for the collection. If a list is being used to check non-fiction materials, ensure that the list is very current.

Evaluative lists are a very important tool of selection. Evaluative lists are those which appraise materials and state whether they are recommended for purchase. Such lists are available from a variety of sources such as books or reviewing journals. They are usually prepared by professional librarians, professional book reviewers or educators. Evaluative lists may be retrospective or may examine current material.

Retrospective lists are useful in assessing the collection and determining appropriate titles to be acquired. Lists may be of a general nature or may specialize in particular subject areas or formats. A **core collection** list suggests titles that should be held in all libraries.



At the time of publication for this *Sourcebook*, helpful resources were:

Children's catalog. New York: H.W. Wilson Co.

Cianciolo, Patricia J. *Picture books for children*. 3rd edition. Chicago: American Library Association, 1990.

Freeman, Judy. *Books kids will sit still for: the complete read-aloud guide*. 2nd edition. R.R. Bowker, 1990.

Gagnon, Andre and Ann Gagnon. *Canadian books for young people: livres Canadiens pour la jeunesse*. 4th edition. Toronto: U. of T. Press, 1988.

Gillespie, John T. and Corinne J. Naden. *Best books for children: Preschool through Grade 6*. New York: R.R. Bowker, 1990.

Our choice: your annual guide to Canada's best children's books and *Too good to miss: Classic Canadian children's books*. Canadian Children's Book Centre (35 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON M5R 2S9 Tel: 1-416-975-0010).

Sinclair, Patti. *E for environment: an annotated bibliography of children's books with environmental themes*. New York: R.R. Bowker, 1992.

Thomas, James. *Play, learn and grow: an annotated guide to the best books and materials for very young children*. New York: R.R. Bowker, 1992.

The National Library of Canada has an annual campaign to promote Canadian books and reading, called "Read up on it". The resource kit for the campaign contains the National Library of Canada's reading lists of children's material, a poster, bookmark, colouring sheet as well as copies of *Our choice* and *Abracadabra*. The address of the National Library of Canada is 395 Wellington St., Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N4 and the telephone number for this campaign is 1-613-996-7375.

Some of these resources appear annually while others are updated frequently. A professional collection is maintained by the Ontario Library Service from which such bibliographies can be borrowed.

There are also a variety of reviewing journals to assist with the on-going development of the children's collection. It is helpful to check reviews from time to time to see what material is new and recommended. Good choices would be:

CM: a reviewing journal of Canadian materials for young people. (Canadian Library Association, 200 Elgin St., Suite 602, Ottawa, ON K2P 1L5)

Emergency librarian. (Dyad Services, P.O. Box 46248, Station G, Vancouver, B.C. V6R 4G6)

School Library Journal (Bowker, Box 1978, Marion, OH 13305-1978, USA)

Booklist (American Library Assoc., 50E Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611, USA)



Lists of **award-winning books** can also be used as aids to the selection of materials. Prizes are awarded for excellence in various fields. Each year, the best works by children's authors and illustrators are recognized and honoured with several awards. Examples of Canadian awards are the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Illustrators Award; the Canadian Library Association Book of the Year for Children; the Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award; the Governor General's Literary Award; the IODE Book Award; and the Ruth Schwartz Children's Book Award given by the Ontario Arts Council. The Ontario Library Association has introduced the Ontario Silver Birch Awards as both a reading and an awards programme. After reading books from a list of approximately twenty titles, children in Grades 3 to 6 are eligible to vote for the most popular fiction and non-fiction books.

The two best known American awards are the Caldecott Medal and Honor Awards and the Newbery Medal and Honor Awards; in Britain, the Kate Greenaway Medal and the Carnegie Medal are well-known.

Non-book materials should also be selected from reviews or recommended lists. For example, a committee of the Association for Library Service to Children (U.S.) compiles an annual list of *Notable Children's Recordings* and in 1990, the American Library Association produced a video entitled, *Choosing the best in children's video*.

A list of selection aids for French language material is found on pages 9 and 10 of the reverse side of this *Sourcebook*. A list of awards for French language material is also found on page 10 of the reverse side of this *Sourcebook*.

Collection components

Well-written, recommended books on a variety of topics should form the core of the children's collection. These books can then be supplemented with other materials depending on the needs of the community.

Readers should be encouraged to broaden their interests and to move to higher levels. The collection, both fiction and non-fiction, must provide for a wide range of tastes and abilities and yet a balance must be achieved among the genres. A balanced collection includes both easily read, very popular and more serious literary materials. If the material in the collection continually fails to meet the needs of individual children, a review of the collection development policy and the selection methods is necessary.



Fiction

The materials in the fiction collection must interest and encourage children to read.

The picture book is an important element of the fiction collection, especially for those children who are encountering books for the first time. For very young children, picture books are available in a sturdy board book format. In addition to storybooks, the picture book collection could include the following themes:

- concept books (e.g., alphabet, counting, colours, shapes)
- books for special situations (e.g., going to school, doctor)
- books about family life (e.g., new baby, adoption, single-parent families)
- books about feelings (e.g., anger, fear, loneliness)
- books about behaviour and conduct
- books about stressful situations (e.g., death, divorce, handicaps)

First readers (or I-can-read books) are ideal for beginning readers. High-interest-low-vocabulary books are useful for reluctant or slow readers. Part of the collection should include material for children reading at a grade 4 to grade 6 level. This material should cover a wide variety of genres including classics, fantasy, mystery, sports, humour, historical fiction, animal stories, and realistic, popular, award-winning and honour books.

Non-fiction

Non-fiction for children should include material both for information (e.g., history and geography) and recreational interests (e.g., sports, crafts, jokes, magic). It should include rhymes, fables, fairy tales, folklore, and poetry at both the picture book and independent reading levels.



Non-book materials

Children's materials do not need to be restricted to book format. Non-book material can provide an alternative format and should not always be considered a frill. Non-book material includes audio recordings in a variety of formats (records, cassettes and compact discs), filmstrips, films, videotapes, computer software, realia (e.g., toys, games, puppets, musical instruments) and material in the CD-ROM format.

For example, the collection of spoken word recordings could include retellings of folk and fairy tales, myths and legends; readings of picture books and stories for older children; poetry; and book-recording packages which include a book and a recording that allows children to listen and follow along in the book. The collection of musical recordings in a library does not have to be restricted to recordings made especially for children and could include classical music, jazz, folk or religious music.

Films, or now more commonly videos, whether animated or live-action, can present information which is both interesting and instructive for children. The cost of acquiring video has prompted a number of libraries to pool their resources and acquire jointly-owned collections.

An increasing number of reference materials, including encyclopaedias, are available in CD-ROM format. In this format, the material is easily searched and often serves as an interactive way for children to find the answer to a question.

Other components of the collection

When considering the components of the collection, it is important that the library board and staff understand and respond to individual needs within the community. The policies and procedures for collection development should be based on these identified needs.

Issues which are often neglected in developing the components of a children's collection include:

- multiculturalism
- First Nations



- multilingual
- French immersion
- special needs children
- high-interest-low-vocabulary

To serve the multicultural community, library staff must work with the groups in the community to identify each group's priorities for collections. For example, one group may need material in their own language while another expresses a preference for books in English about their culture. The community as a whole should be exposed to books which show the multicultural diversity of the country even if this is not the situation in the individual community.

Depending on the individual community, practical applications could include:

- providing materials and services in heritage languages
- providing language learning materials, including English or French as a second language
- providing materials and programmes on other cultures and cultural groups

Awareness of the needs of exceptional children is greater today than ever before. Over the years, public attitudes have changed from hiding or ignoring children with disabilities to the point where legislation has been passed to allow such children to have equal opportunities.

Depending on the community, material about specific subjects such as hearing loss, blindness and Down's Syndrome, or material in other formats may be needed. A collection of materials for children unable to benefit from the traditional book format may be needed in the library. Other formats include:

- Blissymbolic books
- talking books for children



- ❑ Braille books
- ❑ large print titles
- ❑ picture kits
- ❑ “signed” books

By having materials in a variety of formats, children with disabilities are given the same literary and learning opportunities as other children. The children and their parents can select the format which is most appropriate for them.

Another component of the collection is to provide material which might be of interest to parents. This collection might have material on such topics as childhood diseases, nutrition, behaviour problems and child development. Parents and teachers may want books for reading aloud, cassettes for a car trip or information to share with a child. Some adults may want a children's book for an easily understood explanation of a subject for themselves or for a child. As well, such books may also provide illustrations or information unavailable anywhere else. The collection should also contain information on children's reading.

Library staff can try to help parents who are already interested in their children's reading to know more about children's literature. Book lists are valuable for parents who often wonder what they should read to their children. Lists of recommended books for various age groups can be distributed in the library.

Collection maintenance

To maintain a good collection, materials, particularly non-fiction material, should be examined regularly to assess both the currency and accuracy of information and the physical condition of the item. Outdated, tattered and worn materials should be thrown out or set aside for the library's booksale. Replacement copies of withdrawn but still relevant materials should be ordered.



At the library, children of all ages can choose and read a book, or have it read to them, just for the fun of it. Mystery stories, science fiction tales, adventure stories or sometimes even records, cassettes and CDs are available for borrowing.

In the beginning though, the library can be overwhelming, with many different areas to explore and so much to choose from. Just as children need help when they first learn to ride a bicycle, they will need encouragement from library staff, parents or older siblings to feel comfortable in the library, and to become independent lifelong readers. Children often need help to make the best use of the collection. Readers' advisory service, reference service and children's programming provide the opportunity for immediate contact with those children and adults who use the children's collection.

Reference and readers' advisory service

Reference and readers' advisory services are the major responsibilities of library staff working with children. Children ask lots of questions and many are as challenging as those posed by adults. It is important that staff understand how to deal with children.

Staff working with children should examine all new children's books closely. They should read the dust jacket, glance at the table of contents and look at a few chapters to get a sense of what the book is about. It is important to examine every new book by a known author and to read unfamiliar or new authors.

When looking for information, children frequently refuse an offer of assistance, particularly if closed questions are used. For example, "May I help you?" is often answered by "No". Be sure to use open-ended questions such as "Let me know if there is something I can help you with" or "What, in particular, are you looking for?" These questions may encourage children to ask for help or make them feel comfortable about coming back for help another time.

Library staff can conduct reference interviews to help understand what the child wants and needs and often can help the child clarify for themselves what they want. Children may ask for general information, when what they want is very specific. More detail on reference service is included in the *Sourcebook* entitled *Reference and information service*.



Readers' advisory service involves the process of connecting readers (and viewers) to materials they want or need -- "the right book for the right child at the right time". It is providing and sharing knowledge of materials that make up the collection. It is taking the time to help each child find books he or she will enjoy reading. It requires a broad collection of material selected with children's interests in mind.

Readers' advisory questions and information questions require different approaches. Children may have specific requests or just want something good to read. Taking time to talk with children about specific books they have enjoyed may help.

Preparing booklists on various topics is another form of reader's advisory work. Book lists are useful to help identify good books by subject or type. For example, a list created under the title, "If you liked Kenneth Grahame, you might like to read Roald Dahl" would provide a list of titles by the author. As well, a marketing product has been created which can be distributed to patrons as a helpful guide or to non-users to show the types of great materials which are available in their community public library. More detail on readers' advisory work is covered in the *Sourcebook* entitled *Readers' advisory service*.

Programming

Well-planned programmes that reflect the library's goals also promote the use of the library and its collections. Successful programmes can bring children and their parents into the library.

Examples of programmes are:

- pre-school programmes with finger games and songs
 - story times for different ages
 - summer reading activities
 - class or club visits
 - puppet shows
 - films/videos
 - library clubs
- Public Library Week activities

More detail on library programming is provided in the *Sourcebook* entitled *Programming*.



With respect to children's services, the term "access" takes on two meanings. Access refers to the idea that, like adults, children can use the full range of services that the library provides. They should also be able to understand the organization of the library's collection, thereby gaining access to the collection.

Use of the library

Libraries should be organized in such a way as to "facilitate" easy use by children. In its document, *Children's rights in the public library: Guidelines for service*, the Ontario Library Association recommends that children have open access to materials, information, facilities and services throughout the library. This document is reprinted as an appendix at the back of this *Sourcebook*.

Children need to know what they can borrow and how to borrow materials from their local library. For example, the children should know that anyone may use the library, but if they wish to take books or other library materials home, they must have a library card. They should know that the card is free to residents of the community; any restrictions such as a non-resident fee should be explained. They need to know the number of items which can be borrowed on one library card and what the loan period will be.

By poster, brochure or verbal explanation, children should know what materials can be borrowed. In some libraries, there are restrictions on the material which a child may borrow; for example, they may not be allowed to borrow videos. In the ideal situation and using the guidelines of the Ontario Library Association, when it is necessary to restrict access to materials (e.g., rare or special collections), the restriction should be based solely on the need for protection of the materials.

There are several possibilities for creating a public awareness of the open access policy. In Sample 2, two ways of reaching patrons to explain the open access policy are presented -- the first way of doing it is to explain the policy on a registration form while the second explanation would be included in a letter sent to parents.

(Sample 2: Open access policy)



Collection organization

The way the materials in the library are organized is often perplexing to adults as well as children. Young children often have difficulty distinguishing between non-fiction and fiction - the most primary division of library materials. The Dewey Decimal classification (DDC) numbers can be a real mystery to children. Although most become aware that the books are organized in some manner, it is often difficult to determine the relationship between the Dewey number and the book's subject.

In making any decision about the organization and arrangement of material in the collection, it is best to think about the people who use the collection and how to encourage, rather than discourage, the use of material. In addition, the location of every item in the library should be clearly marked in the catalogue.

Fiction material

Picture books must be arranged for the child's convenience. The child should have the freedom to pull any book from the shelf. For this reason, these shelves should, ideally, not be more than 3 rows high. Instead of a strict alphabetical arrangement as one might find in the adult section, picture books might be arranged in general alphabetical order, i.e. shelving together all those with author's last names beginning with A-B, C-D, etc. A perfectly ordered picture book area is not a child's place.

Beginning-to-read books and fiction for reading levels to Grade 6 should be in fairly strict alphabetical order. It is helpful to children to know how children's material is marked, for example, that all children's material has a "J" on the spine.

In some libraries, the fiction collection may be arranged into interest areas, such as mysteries, animal stories and fantasy. If special collections need to be identified, special stickers can be put on the book spines to assist the casual browser. One disadvantage of dividing the fiction collection into genres is that some titles are difficult to categorize and a new user may be confused by the arrangement. The shelf location of each item must be clearly marked in the catalogue and on the spine of the item.



Fiction material is often separated by format -- that is, the paperbacks are on one set of shelves or "spinners" and the hardcover books are on another set of shelves. With the addition of talking books or audiocassettes, yet another format, and often another location, has been introduced into the library's arrangement of material.

Separation by format does have its advantages because some children only like to read books in a particular format. With some spinners designed for paperback books, the cover of the book can be face-out, thereby attracting readers. The disadvantage of organizing the collection in this way is that children may not see all of the authors in the collection and may miss some good authors. By integrating the collection, the children can choose the format -- paperback, hardcover or even an audiocassette -- for the particular title they want to read (or listen to!). The decision to separate materials into formats should be carefully considered.

Non-fiction material

In most public libraries, non-fiction material is organized according to the Dewey Decimal Classification System (DDC). As this system can be difficult to learn, it is important that the users know that they can ask the library staff to help them find material. In teaching children about DDC, it is helpful if the child thinks of the DDC number as an **address** for a particular item.

It is helpful to highlight often-used subject areas within the non-fiction section. For instance, areas such as astronomy, dinosaurs, animals, crafts and history can be clearly labelled with signs or markers. Such an arrangement also represents a good marketing opportunity. The product can be labelled with visual clues and eye-catching attractive displays. For instance, the geography books can be labelled using a row of flags and the animals labelled with a large bear.

Another consideration for arranging non-fiction materials is to integrate or interfile the juvenile, young adult and adult materials into a single collection. In some combined collections, children's folklore, poetry, biographies, or non-fiction below the fourth grade level have been removed from the integrated arrangement. Library staff seem to be divided on the effectiveness of this arrangement. It seems to work best when the staff are committed to the arrangement, and if the size of the collection is under 40,000 volumes.



The integrated approach benefits adults and young adults who need easier materials but may not want to go into an area designated for children. It benefits bright, confident children who need more challenging material. In addition, it saves space and avoids unnecessary duplication of material, thus saving money in the budget. For staff, it means looking in only one location for material.

Conversely an integrated arrangement may be a bit confusing for children if there are too many titles in one subject area. A large integrated non-fiction collection may be intimidating for children who prefer non-fiction for leisure reading. Books shelved on stacks for adults are not easily accessible to children. Some adults may resent children in the stacks, particularly noisy ones.

Bibliographic access

Bibliographic access to library collections is usually a compromise between what is desirable and what is affordable within the existing technologies. One of the difficult issues is subject access to fiction materials. In the past, when creating a card for a fiction title, only the author and title were included. Current practice encourages the use of subject headings in the bibliographic records (catalogue entries) of fiction titles.

To provide better access to the collection, it is actually quite helpful to have entries by series and by subject as well. If a child needs a book about divorce or going to the hospital, often a fiction title is the best choice. With new technology, it is now actually quite easy to have good access to the bibliographic records, and thus to the collection itself.

Most OPACs (On-line Public Access Catalogues) have a keyword searching capability. If the bibliographic record has a descriptive note about the book, the user of the OPAC just searches for the topic and a list of titles on that topic, both fiction and non-fiction, will appear. If the descriptive notes and/or series information is not included when the bibliographic database is created, then this improved access may be sacrificed.



There are several issues associated with the provision of public library services for children. It is important that both the library board and staff be aware of and prepare to deal with those issues as may be required. It is always to the library's advantage to establish a policy which:

- ❑ provides a clear statement of the library's position on the issue
- ❑ ensures that staff is provided with a course of action that will be supported by the library board
- ❑ ensures that all patrons are served in a fair and equitable manner
- ❑ ensures that complaints will be dealt with promptly and responsibly

Access to the collection is one issue related to children's services which was discussed earlier in this *Sourcebook*. Other issues to consider are intellectual freedom, confidentiality, unattended children, and finally, public library-school liaison.

Intellectual freedom

Material in the children's collection may be challenged on the grounds of suitability (e.g., stereotypes, sexuality, language, sexism). Such challenges should be dealt with through the regular complaint procedure in place in the library. The Canadian Library Association has developed a "Statement of Intellectual Freedom" which is included as part of Sample 1 at the end of this module.

You may also want to prepare a statement for parents who are concerned with intellectual freedom. A sample statement on this subject is printed at the end of this *Sourcebook*.

(Sample 3: Some words for concerned citizens)



Confidentiality

Library staff may be questioned about a child's use of library materials. In such an instance the child's right to confidentiality regarding circulation records and materials selection should be upheld.

Unattended children

Library staff may encounter patrons who regard the library as a babysitting resource. In instances where children are "dropped off", responsibility for the children (e.g., safety, confidence, activity) falls unfairly to the library staff. Where this problem is chronic, it may be necessary to adopt a policy which specifies the circumstances where accompaniment is required. Such a policy should be posted strategically to ensure that the public is aware of it. As well, the policy can also be:

- ❑ included in programme advertising
- ❑ announced at the start of library programmes

Library procedures should provide for a further course of action (e.g. contacting parents, policy, Children's Aid Society) if the problem persists. A sample policy dealing with unattended children is included in the samples at the end of the module.

(Sample 4: Child accompaniment policy)

Public library - school liaison

The information needs of school-aged children are influenced to a large extent by their school studies. Although the school library holds primary responsibility for the provision of curriculum-related support material, the public library is frequently called upon for additional resources and assistance. A co-operative and communicative relationship between the public library and school staff ensures that the best interests of the children are served by the library staff.

In its capacity as a resource, the public library can best acquaint students, teachers and school librarians with its true capabilities by inviting classes to the public library for orientation visits.



Such visits allow public library staff to:

- ❑ introduce themselves
- ❑ establish the library's location, hours, lay-out, regulations, etc.
- ❑ review the library's collections, programmes and services
- ❑ promote interest in and enthusiasm for literature and reading through book-talks, storytelling, puppetry, etc.

Where time and staffing permit, visits to the school by public library staff can further reinforce the public library's informational and recreational relevance to the child.

To ensure that the public library is able to provide children with the best possible curriculum-related service, school staff should advise the public library staff on an on-going basis of any major or new curriculum-related initiatives, as well as of upcoming assignments and projects. Similarly, to facilitate school support of public library activities, public library staff should keep the school informed of forthcoming child-oriented programmes and events.

There are many additional ways in which the public library and schools can interact to their mutual benefit. Some examples are:

- ❑ public library display of school artwork
- ❑ school hosting of public library programme
- ❑ joint programme planning for special occasions such as Canadian Children's Book Week (helpful resource kits and materials organized by the Canadian Children's Book Centre)



Curriculum support

The public library staff are constantly approached by children who require information for curriculum-based projects. The demand for resources frequently exceeds the available supply due to the:

- large number of children assigned the same or a similar topic simultaneously
- limited time period during which projects must be completed

Guidelines should be established which clearly define the extent to which the:

- public library will acquire materials in support of school curriculum
- public library staff will devote time to the assistance of students in school-related research

(Sample 5: School project support)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to the resources listed throughout this *Sourcebook*, there are several other titles which might be helpful.

Benne, Mae. *Principles of children's services in public libraries*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1991.

Connor, Jane Gardner. *Children's library service handbook*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1990.

Fasick, Adele. *Managing children's services in the public library*. Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 1991.

Kids are patrons too! Chicago: ALA Video/Library Video Network, 1987 [video].

Walter, Virginia A. *Output measures for public library service to children: a manual of standardized procedures*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1992.



Appendix

Children's rights in the public library: Guidelines for service

Samples

1. Selected sections from the Trillium Public Library's Collection Development Policy
2. Open access policy
3. Intellectual freedom: Some words for concerned citizens
4. Child accompaniment policy
5. School project support