

Dewey, Retailing and Library Learning Spaces

By Anne Whisken

How should we arrange our book collection to best serve the learning needs of our patrons: students and teachers at a secondary 7-12 school? Such a collection most usually consists of non-fiction which is Dewey classified and traditionally arranged by form then Dewey, and fiction arranged by form then alphabetically by author. Should this arrangement be changed to reflect the way bookstores and retailers organise their stock to maximise sales (or in library parlance, usage and loans)? And if we do, can we also cater for that other key purpose of the school library: a learning space where people come to use the resources as part of their learning journey?

Exploration of this question continues my Learning Landscape discussions about how we pre-emptively evolve our library spaces and collections to meet the changing learning needs of our school. It acknowledges conversations and examples within the library world about using arrangements based on bookstore and retail models. This includes BISAC (Book Industry Standards and Communications Subject Headings List) modes of arrangement, and concerns expressed about the consequences of 'ditching Dewey'. Discussion and examples of school library variations on that theme are particularly referenced. This is placed into the broader context of libraries as providers of a particular type of learning in schools: that which emphasises use of the wisdom of others in the shared and reflective processes by which people build new knowledge.

The genesis comes from exploration of ways of arranging collections in new buildings which seek to cater for changed expectations and uses of the place we call 'library' as well as maintain collections of books and community-valued activities such as research, study and reading supported by skilled staff in a digital age.

A curated online collection of reports about new library buildings around the world at National, state and local government levels; at universities, special libraries and schools, shows increasingly a wish to make the idea of a library building meet many needs (Whisken, 2014b). There is a trend to have the building serve as a symbol of progression and future-thinking. Such buildings and their staff can be expected to:

- enable the ongoing, free self-education necessary for a healthy democracy that is provided by free access to information;
- give explicit support and spaces for members of groups disadvantaged by mobility, income, social status, education, skills;
- provide expertise, collections and study areas for students of all ages;
- provide, support and foster digital technology expertise;
- provide services for general community-building;
- and incorporate those additional services appropriate to particular demographics such as advice and co-working 'nests' for small business start-ups and freelance specialists.

Previous articles in the Learning Landscape series explain how these elements are considered in the design process for a secondary school (Whisken, 2012).

These changed expectations create a tension between the space required to provide additional or different functions and services, and the space needed for the traditional role of book storage and display. For some, the solution lies in replacement of book collections with digital collections of fiction and non-fiction, and online resource databases. That enables the stacks of non-fiction to be either removed, or stored in remote locations creating space for other activities. And for fiction to be removed entirely and replaced with eBook collections. Even if we accept that as a future likelihood, there will be, for some time, for most libraries, a period where we still have the dual hard copy and digital collections. That brings continued, and maybe increased, responsibility to care for and display our book and journal collections in such a way that our patrons are aware of their presence, can find them easily, and are attracted to use them. A model often suggested is that of the arrangements used by bookstores and in retail generally.

What can we learn from bookstores?

Publishers know that bookstore shelf placement arrangements are crucial to sales. In a bookstore popular and new release titles are placed in feature locations at the front.

Can the right book placement produce a bestseller? Probably not, but sales can jump if a book is displayed face-out near the cash register – considered the absolute best spot in the store. Sales can also surge if a title has an enthusiastic hand-written staff recommendation tacked to the shelf. (Rinzler, 2010)

What publishers count on from bookstores is the browsing effect. Surveys indicate that only a third of the people who step into a bookstore and walk out with a book actually arrived with the specific desire to buy one.

'That display space they have in the store is really one of the most valuable places that exists in this country for communicating to the consumer that a book is a big deal,' said Madeline McIntosh, president of sales, operations and digital for Random House . . .

'For all publishers, it's really important that brick-and-mortar retailers survive,' said David Shanks, the chief executive of the Penguin Group USA. "Not only are they key to keeping our physical book business thriving, there is also the carry-on effect of the display of a book that contributes to selling e-books and audio books. The more visibility a book has, the more inclined a reader is to make a purchase. (Bosman, 2012)

That title display location is important is recognised also by relationships between publishers and bookstores where payment is made for prime placement. ('Some ideas for publishers that will help bookstores', 2013; Rinzler, 2010)

Impact is added by stacking the titles, with the top book on a stand often at eye level. Throughout the store, the

arrangement intent is to both make it easier for buyers to find their area of purchasing intent but also to encourage browsing and engagement and consequent sales. So there are arrangements of books about the stuff that people do: travel, health, personal mastery and physical development, career skills, cooking, gardening, sport, hobbies and games, deeper interest areas such as biographies, history, etc., as well as fiction reading categories. Books are placed face out whenever possible to maximise the of investment for publishers. Systems have been developed for classification and arrangement to support such bookstore collection management: BISAC (Book Industry Standards and Communications Subject Headings List) is one of the most used.

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Pile 'em High and Watch 'em Fly

'That's bookseller lingo for building those towering monoliths of stacked bestsellers you see near the entrances of the biggest bookstores. Other coveted placements to increase visibility and sales include the end caps of bookshelves and book posts with all the titles facing out.

Face-Out or Spine-Out?

What author wouldn't rather have their book turned face-out, with the cover visible to bookstore browsers? That placement decision, it turns out, is up to the store staffer who shelves the books. It's usually a factor of how many copies are on the shelf; if there are more than a few, there's a better chance the stack will be turned face-out. An eye-catching book jacket helps too.

The Kiss of Death

Sales will suffer, on the other hand, if – horrors – a book is shelved away in Sociology – a catchall section for ambiguous titles, and the kiss of death for book sales. Even worse and most frustrating of all, is if a store clerk mis-shelves the book to begin with. Then the book is doomed. It's impossible to locate, even if a customer requests the book and the store shows it's in inventory' (Rinzler, 2010).

What can we take from this for libraries? Obviously, there are ideas here about promotional placements of newest, most popular, genre and author themes to follow, but the main one to consider is the action itself: of ensuring we have the appropriate shelving, furniture and spaces for promotions and then doing it. Broader than

that, and of particular interest for this discussion is the question of how we arrange our collections within the building? Do we create browser interest area collections? Does Dewey cater well for that? Is it better to stick with Dewey, a system library patrons around the world have come to expect – or are there better ways to do it? Should we follow the bookstore system? Are there broader ideas in retailing layouts?

What can we learn from retailing about layouts to cater for patron behaviour?

Beyond bookstores, the broader idea of using retailing layout ideas for libraries has been presented by Kevin Hannah:

"... merchandising strategy involves placing the right category, in the right location and then focusing on making it look great. A clever layout should direct traffic flow and expose people to as much of the collection as possible with a view to helping them find what they want and importantly, creating opportunities for additional impulse loans" (2007).

Koontz (2014) also sees much to be learned:

My favorite grocery store offers a wonderful space of orientation upon entry. The wide doors open, and to the immediate right is free coffee plus copy and soft drink machines. To the left is check cashing, an ATM machine, and, for better or worse, Florida lottery tickets. Several yards ahead to the right are specialty foods (organic), and to the left, seasonal promotional items. The wide right-hand turn (that favors a world of right-handed people) sweeps you to toiletry and cosmetic items, dairy foods, and aisles of canned and packaged goods. The tour finishes with frozen foods and fresh bakery items, then checkout. The store offers convenience while communicating daily and seasonal products to customer markets. This grocery chain effectively employs the principles of retail interior layout. Why don't libraries? (Koontz, 2014)

She looks at things that libraries and retail outlets have in common, including organisational goals, means of attracting customers, customer satisfaction tools, shopping behaviour and customer traffic patterns. In terms of the latter of interest for our purposes, in gaining ideas for book collection arrangements, she sees three categories of shopper (user) traffic: browser, destination and beeline.

Related to libraries: the browser '... might seek interesting or useful materials by surfing the Internet, browsing shelves and examining items, and moving around slowly while assessing how valuable items are to her.' Destination users move '... with regular speed and direction, concentrate on the job, and cannot be distracted. They have a specific purpose or errand and are not deterred from it by surroundings or other library materials. It is difficult to convert destination traffic to shopping behavior.' Beeline users concentrate on '... goals external or unrelated to personal use of the library. These people could be messengers, delivery men, school safety inspectors, or maintenance workers. These people will not be users while they are performing their regular duties.' (Koontz, 2014)

She says those traffic patterns vary according to the way retailers categorise their goods into convenience, shopping and specialty. Applied to the library world, those categories look like the table provided below:

Convenience	Shopping	Specialty
Ready reference	Reference materials	Computer stations
Local newspapers	Leisure books	Assigned reading
Popular magazines	Popular subjects	Reserve materials
Online catalog	Specific Web sites	Study carrels

(Koontz, 2014)

Destination traffic behaviour can be associated with all the categories, but most persistently with convenience and specialty. Applying this combination of traffic flow and goods category location to a school library brings some

interesting ideas, such as locating:

- at the right hand side of the entrance, items for impulse (because most people are right handed), that fulfil special needs, that require repeated exposure;
- on the left, items that won't be used unless they are very close to hand, such as reference tools, and items in heavy demand;
- and at the rear, items which hold high user motivation so they will make the effort to get there.

Referencing such traffic patterns, retailers have developed guidelines to use when designing store interiors and Koontz applies these to school library situations, pointing out that it often doesn't require an expensive new library to achieve many of these goals. She invites school librarians to use these to 'Categorise your goods and services, consider user behavior and current traffic patterns, and scan the guidelines. Now walk inside the front doors of your library and assess how your layout may or may not be bolstering customer satisfaction.' (Koontz, 2014)

Do we mess with Dewey?

A good layout recognises user intent behaviours, and a good collection arrangement is intrinsic to that idea. So, do we ensure easy traffic flow to areas containing collections arranged strictly according to Dewey or do we maybe

A good layout recognises user intent behaviours . . .

combine Dewey's rigour with retailing ideas? Discussions in the library world around the idea of changing collection arrangements to enable better user browsing and improved marketing and promotion of books show explorations which combine Dewey and bookstore ideas. Barnett focuses on this in 'Dewey and BISAC: A Middle Path to Developing a Display-Oriented Library' (2010), and 'Merchandizing your Collection' (2010); as do Phelps and Qin in 'Organizing Information in the Digital World: Traditional Classification Systems or Bookstore Browsing?' (2010). Martínez-Ávila, Segundo and Olson look particularly at classification systems in 'The Use of BISAC in Libraries as New Cases of Reader-Interest Classifications' (2014).

Grabow's 'Dewey Versus Bookstore Shelving' (2009) research paper explores:

' . . . the differences between Dewey and bookstore-style classification, the changes made by those using bookstore shelving, and the advantages and disadvantages of changing to a bookstore-style shelving system'.

It provides coverage of some of the frequent arguments brought up in the bookstore versus Dewey debate, including the different purposes of libraries and bookstores:

A bookstore is a for-profit business whose main goal is to sell books. A library, on the other hand, is a not-for-profit organisation meant to provide free information for reference or loan. Each establishment organises its inventory for its respective purpose. Bookstores shelve items according to current commercial status to increase sales and profits (Stauffer 49). Libraries shelve items according to subject to increase accessibility of information (Grabow, p. 8).

In summation, Grabow finds,

Advantages of using bookstore shelving include subject categories that are easier for patrons to understand and find, increased library approval and use, and creative collocations. Disadvantages include inconsistency among libraries, use limited to smaller libraries, and conflict of purpose using bookstores as models (2009).

Decision-making for Melbourne's Bayside Libraries' move to a changed collections arrangement involved questioning tradition.

It seems to be a truth universally acknowledged by public libraries that if a book has a number on it, and the catalogue record for that book has the same number on it, then library users will be able to join the dots and locate the book that they want. It is also a truth universally acknowledged by anyone who has worked on a reference desk that this is not the case and that many people find navigating the nonfiction collection difficult--and some find it impossible.

Why do people have so much trouble finding things in libraries? Their difficulty may be partly caused by having to negotiate a large collection in order to find the small part in which they are interested. Research shows that the larger the collection a user has to deal with the higher their chance of suffering information overload. Observational research on shopping behaviour also indicates that shoppers have extremely limited tolerance for obstacles placed between them and the object they desire. Their time is precious and they are not willing to work too hard for something they may be able to get more easily elsewhere. (Hopkins, 2007)

After investigating a variety of options, they settled on six nonfiction collections which ‘... combine Dewey sequences within subject areas that are meaningful to a contemporary Australian audience’ (Hopkins, 2007).

... the book arrangements follow user interest areas with sub-arrangement of Dewey shelf order.

A visit to Melbourne’s new Docklands library shows a similar arrangement idea. In an exciting and innovative building with inviting coffee shop entry area, interactive screens, gaming and makerspace studios, the book arrangements follow user interest areas with sub-arrangement of Dewey

shelf order.

A section of Zickuhr, Rainie and Purcells’ 2013 *Library Services in the Digital Age* explores ‘The present and future of libraries’, presenting survey results which include library staff members’ opinions about the layout of libraries, in which a number felt ‘the current layout of most libraries was an impediment to patrons, who are often confused by the Dewey Decimal system and may have difficulty finding or browsing for books’. That included comments such as:

Allow for straying from the Dewey Decimal system and even [alphabetise] by author. I know a lot of libraries have done this but ours hasn’t. As a librarian, I love [the Dewey Decimal system] because I can find most any particular item right where it is supposed to be! But as a patron and a mom I find it cumbersome.

We need to be more focused on user experience. Users don’t care about Dewey numbers, they want to be able to find things themselves easily and our online catalogs, building layouts and database vendors need to help patrons easily. We as library professionals need to focus on user experience as well.

Other comments disagreed:

We are losing the concept of browsing and the new bookstore model adopted by some libraries is not the answer. I have worked in a library with it and when it was new patrons thought it was a good thing. The more they had to use it the less they liked it and it was eventually changed back (Zickuhr, Rainie & Purcell, 2013).

School library arrangement choices

‘Make sure you have clearly documented reasons for your changes and that they sit within key policy guidelines’ (Braxton, 2014b). This advice is provided in much of the literature and very specifically by key figures in the Australian school library world, including Barbara Braxton in her section on ‘Questioning Change’, at *500 Hats: The Teacher-Librarian in the 21st Century Site* (2014a). Some school librarians are tracking their changes online, such as ‘Bookstore Model in the School Bibrary’ (2011) and ‘To Dewey or not to Dewey, Articles to help you in your library’ (2014)

Recent discussion on OZTL_NET following the thread prompt ‘To Dewey or Not to Dewey’ in July this year provided some very relevant points and reflections for those of us operating in school libraries. After the initial prompt from a fellow teacher-librarian and some responses, I added a section (below), which generated further comments.

OZTL_NET posting 16 July 2014 from Anne Whisken on the topic ‘To Dewey or not to Dewey’⁷

I first noticed ‘collectionising’ (is there a better word for this?) when I visited St Ignatius Sydney for the ALIA conference three years ago, and gained a very positive impression, one area of the history section being memorable for its inclusion of artefacts and memorabilia in displays alongside the collection.

Reflecting on this with Susan La Marca at Genazzano, Melbourne, we both embarked upon developing 'collections' or 'rooms' for particular collections, and in both we started with history or in my case modern history.

How do we 'collectionise'?

It means sticking to Dewey order, but putting all the books about modern history together in a collection. So for example, the books about the Cold War as an international phenomenon – usually at 909.825 – maintained the Dewey number, but were physically shelved with the Modern History collection (stuff that happened after the fall of Constantinople pretty much!), with a green spine stripe attached. A catalogue search would show that their location was in a particular collection.

Additional to that has been putting QR codes at relevant locations to indicate that there are online database resources on the particular topic. And we are also putting small posters about those databases in appropriate places.

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In this way we are trying to collectionise in both physical and digital senses.

Another approach is to move the collection out of the stack situation where you walk between fairly narrow shelves and to put the books on wall shelves so that groups can stand and look, the teacher can point out books of particular relevance, students can sit at tables near the books and see them.

Where else are we doing this?

Currently we have completed collectionising the 900's, each with a different coloured strip:

- People and Places (Geography pretty much as well as the titles of that name)
- Ancient History
- Middle Ages
- Australian History.

Next big challenge is the 800's – and so on.

Our fiction is largely collectionised – still in alphabetical author order – into Senior Fiction, Fantasy, Gothic, Historical, Classic, LOTE, Relationships, Graphic Novels, Manga, Movies and Biographies (not fiction, but fits into the popular reading usually attributed to fiction) and maintaining still a big run of non-collectionised titles.

Physical challenges?

It is challenging not only in the sense of deciding what belongs where, but also because while we have had the space to do either wall displays or free standing displays (a shelf presentation which is not in the aisle formation of stacks) for much of the collection, we can't do it for all.

All our fiction is either in wall or free standing shelf displays. We have wall and free standing shelving for 800's and 900's, and Reference, but we don't really have the space for wall shelving for the rest of the non-fiction. What we will do is continue with our collectionising in preparation for our new centre into which we'll move in 2016, which is designed to have the collection in mostly wall shelving display.

Why do this?

- To replicate the way the books are used by our curriculum areas.
- To enable students to walk up to the collection they will use for a topic and see it in front of them on the shelf in Dewey order.
- To replicate the bookshop presentation style, with many of the books face out, making the collection as physically attractive as possible.

How do we use it in teaching research skills?

In a research skills lesson in the library we use the screen to show the students the layout of the library homepage with its Catalogue and particular resource link areas (eResources - databases, eBooks, online encyclopedias,

reference generators, etc.) as well as the Pathfinder for the topic. Then we follow the Pathfinder to take them to the particular eResources most useful for this topic, then use the Catalogue to show them how to look up resources using the most relevant search terms, then take them to where the books are physically located in the particular collection. We are trying to move from having a trolley of books selected for them, with its increasingly random arrangement as it is attacked by students in repeated sessions, to keeping the books on the shelves in strict order. That means mega reshelving! But it also means that students who are searching the catalogue on their mobile devices can find the book at the location listed - and it is a very satisfying experience for them which brings real confidence in the library's ability to support their learning.

Who Else is Collectionising?

Contributor responses to this thread included:

16 July 2014a: Barbara Combes

Dewey is essentially a management tool for librarians. We turned it into a user education tool when libraries lost staff to help users find information. Think - how do students search for information now? Via the OPAC of course. You can organise/display the collection any way you want if you include the location information in the OPAC or even use QR codes to locate the information. The Dewey number then retains its original purpose - a management tool for the librarian.

Too often students enter the library and have the collection presented to them as two disparate images - physical as a dichotomy of fiction (not true, and not really important for academic success) and nonfiction (not not true, whatever that means but more important for academic success) with everything else via the OPAC an electronic device that moves beyond the physical.

Think outside the square and take the library into a new era by organising the physical any way you like and using the technology to access it. Keep the Dewey numbers for your own management purposes and to conduct reports in the catalogue for collection development. (For further detail, see Combes & Valli 2009)

16 July 2014b: Nicola Martin

I have seen a number of articles on ditching Dewey and arranging books more like a bookshop. These articles make me wonder if the author knows anything about Dewey as if they did they would realise that Dewey also arranges books into categories. Think about it, we go into a Dymocks or other book store and they put history books together. Guess what, so does Dewey. Same for sports books, books on health, science, arts etc.

Where book shops differ from the way libraries traditionally sort books is in the fiction section where books in the shops are organised in genres. This has been shown to increase lending as students can quickly find similar books. Of course a good librarian will be talking to the students and making suggestions and filling their requests quickly.

We can also catalogue to suit our clients' needs, there are always choices with Dewey. A book on castles can go in with history/historical buildings or architecture/historical buildings.

Books dispersed throughout the library like biographies can be shelved together and keep their Dewey numbers and just changed on the OPAC to let the clients know that they are in the biography section. Biographies are one of the few types of books that are split up by Dewey and it suits schools to bring bios together as it makes them easy for students to find and peruse when they have to study a biography for English.

My suggestion is to have some fun with fiction genres and just put good signage on your non-fiction so students feel like they are walking into a bookshop!

17 July 2014a: Barbara Braxton

Whether you organise your library according to Dewey or genre or some other methods there are some critical questions that have to be asked and answered and I have listed these at <http://500hats.edublogs.org/questioning-change-2/> (If you think of others, then let me know and I will add them) But if a library chooses to make a change after examining those questions then it is imperative that the procedures are clearly documented and the criteria for placement explicitly explained in the Procedures Manual.

Two things Dewey does allow for are consistency and objectivity so that it does not matter who is the teacher librarian, the placement of resources remains constant and predictable both for library staff and its users. Apart from anything, else who has the time to invent a new system?

Each time this issue is raised on LM_NET, usually in relation to organising the fiction section by genre, the posts include stories of teacher librarians moving into an unconventional arrangement with no paperwork to explain the why, the where and the how and the hours and hours of work spent restoring it to the more familiar Dewey arrangement.

. . . my experience with kids is that they do NOT use the OPAC as their first port of call when seeking a resource. They go to where they know the books they like are, they browse or they ask.

17 July 2014b: (Contributor)

I have decided to stay with Dewey for two main reasons:

1. One of my aims as a Primary TL is to develop independent readers/ researchers. As most local libraries, high school and higher education libraries are organised using Dewey I want our students to be effective learners after they leave Primary school.

2. Consistency enables even the younger children to find the area on the shelf where the books they like to read can be found, whether that be zac power, dinosaurs or pets. It supports ease of use for ALL library users. Also deciding on a genre for many books these days is a personal choice due to the mix within one book.

Younger children can't all read or spell well enough to use Web Enquiry but will remember where their favourite books are. Dewey is not a stand-alone. It needs to be taught and integrated into learning programs.

Above all, a library organised under Dewey has the best chance of maintaining some order during extended absences where non librarian casuals are used out of necessity.

My approach meets our staff, student and parent needs and fits with our school plan. For me that's my bottom-line.

18 July 2014a: Bronwyn Hughes

I like this idea . . . It could be a great way forward for us here, keeping us relevant and making things easier to find for some areas. I can see some subjects being tricky though as there are crossovers in some areas. Would also mean an overhaul of the LMS to reflect areas.'

18 July 2014b: Margaret Simkin

' . . . there is a fine balance required between display, ease of access and easily replicable patterns that will educate students to use any library.' At one library using a new unsigned layout ' . . . patrons are demanding that the Dewey numbers be displayed on the bay end panels (currently colour coded to show that the shelves hold non-fiction) to provide greater ease of access . . .' while at another new library the choice was made to leave bay end panels entirely unsigned ' . . . just having 'non-fiction' on them.

Library collections as the Third Teacher

When we worked with the architects at my school, we looked at how we could create a warm inviting learning environment which used the books as part of the learning space – so that they could become a *Third Teacher* (2010). So in future, when a student sits to study an aspect of the Middle Ages with her peers in the library, she will be in a space where books which support her learning sit on shelves lining the book walls nearby. The librarians have created a special collection which holds books from a variety of Dewey categories gathered together for this particular curriculum learning purpose. The teacher and teacher-librarian model how to search, access, select, take notes, synthesise, create, acknowledge, share and evaluate. They reach for the books nearby and refer to reasons for using books and online resources at different stages of the research process, and also what works best for them and why. The student follows a clear path on her learning device to search for books and online resources. She explores the various formats of information provision and finds the best for her learning purpose.

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