

# USE OF DISPLAYS TO INFLUENCE BOOK CHOICE IN AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY

Sumit Kumar Manna,  
 Librarian, Vidyasagar Metropolitan College,  
 39, Sankar Ghosh Lane,  
 Kolkata – 700 006  
 West Bengal; INDIA

**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to explore book selection in academic libraries by utilizing book displays. Zoned Book Displays and Collection Presentation Standards were both used to collect data on book display circulation statistics. Students' choices of books were the subject of quick observations and interviews. The results highlight the significance of appealing book displays for boosting sales. Increasing circulation mostly depends on two things: the height of the shelves and front-facing book displays. A further strategy to improve book selection is to use a Zoned Book Display that includes a range of authors, subjects, and genres to go along with different lesson plans. The book selection, the shelving, and the fixtures must all be visually appealing in order to positively impact book choice.

**Keywords:** Academic Library, Circulation, Circulation Statistics, Collection Presentation Standard (CPS), Motivation, Zoned Book Display.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The goal of this study is to find a method to enhance the circulation of books within academic library environment.

## 2.0 Objectives

The objective of this Action Research was to investigate the influencing factor in book selection method. The research also tries to find a correlation between the way books are displayed and their circulation rates both using Collection Presentation Standards (within the shelving run) and Zoned Book Displays (grouping books by themes).

The following table shows research questions and data gathering methods.

Research Question	Data Gathering Method
Is there any effect if we display books in a front facing manner?	Circulation record
What is the optimal shelf height of books?	Circulation record
Is there any correlation between verbal promotion of books based on lesson plan and the book selection?	Circulation record
Does chapter related books on a shelf increase book selection?	Circulation record

## 3.0 Review

Reading is an important ingredient to develop the students both academically and also for personality development.

Books assist students in gaining an understanding and empathy towards others and aid in the moral reasoning process. Reading gives a sense of discovery about the world around them and a glimpse into their own heritage and the culture of others.

Reading forms the building blocks of success. Trelease (2001) points out that knowledge is gained in every subject from reading. If a student struggles in reading, he or she will do poorly with word problems in math and

feel incompetent in social studies and science reading assignments. Reading is a critical factor in determining success.

Book displays are much more than just setting out a book on a display table. “Library merchandising is showcasing your entire collection in the most appealing and organized manner possible with an artistic eye for detail. This is accomplished through thoughtful merchandise selection and placement, appealing displays, and housekeeping” (LaPerriere & Christiansen, 2008, p. xx).

To motivate readers, the library should be a welcoming place for the students. “Whatever marketing tools are used, when students believe they are welcome and feel the library is a fun place to be, they will become the marketers” (Speas, 2007, p. 11). Reluctant students will start to come to the library when they hear others talk about the positive experiences they have had at the library (Burkman, 2004).

To increase the marketing mechanism eye catching display may take a leading role. “where a display can focus attention and advertise what your library has to offer” (LaPerriere and Christiansen, 2008, p. 28).

These zones or areas can include such things as point of entry, point of check out, or a place for new titles, fiction, or nonfiction. To give the display a unified look, the most important element is to select a theme by choosing a group of books that share a common theme. The books chosen “can feature a subject, a series, a genre, a celebration, an author, an award – anything as long as you have several books to support the promotion” (Braxton, 2002, p 43).

LaPerriere and Christiansen (2008) give numerous suggestions for displays when it comes to fixtures and furniture. These include tables, such as a set of nesting tables, or those that feature adjustable shelving and multilevel surfaces. Another suggestion is slat wall, which is “made up of rows of boards with gaps between them. These gaps create a slot for hangers to support shelves or Plexiglas accessories” (LaPerriere and Christiansen, p. 48, 2008).

Books should be displayed with covers facing out as students show more interest in books with visible covers (Oliver, 2001). LaPerriere and Christiansen (2008) suggest that retail techniques work well in a library. One of these techniques includes setting your display in a pyramid shape with the larger items in the middle and smaller items on the ends.

Collection Presentation Standards or CPS “incorporates presentation techniques you can do within the shelving run to create interest” (LaPerriere and Christiansen, 2008, p. 13).

In Other words this is how books can be displayed for maximum visual impact, while still abiding by the Dewey Decimal System so your patrons can easily find their items.

To make optimal viewing, the viewing angle should be 15 degree below eye level (Hitt, 1996). This optimal viewing enhances if the placement of books, there should be fewer books on top and bottom shelves and more books in the middle level.

LaPerrier and Christiansen (2008) explain this process as aligning all of your books to the front edge of the shelf. Oversized books that don't fit the arrangement should be put on a display holder on the appropriate shelf or if necessary on the spine out on the bottom shelf. This provides for a clean, crisp look and makes the titles and call numbers easier to read.

The last guideline is to face as many books as possible with the cover facing out. The key to selling is visibility (Langhorne, 1987). “The research confirms that books displayed circulate significantly more than books not displayed.

## 4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data gathering techniques I chose consisted of collecting circulation statistics, student interviews and student observation.

### 4.1 Circulation statistics

A close watch was undertaken towards circulation records for the students.

### 4.2 Student Interviews

Because of both time constraints and the young age of the students, the interview consisted only of one open ended question as to why they chose the book they did. To the students, I wanted the question to be just a casual conversation. I took notes of the answers in a log.

### 4.3 Student Observation

A random selection amongst students was undertaken as they were checking out books. All close watch was given as to which books were ultimately chosen by the students.

## 5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The circulation statistics emphasize the importance of displaying books in an attractive way to increase circulation. Both the shelf height and the method of display are key factors in boosting circulation. Displaying books with their covers facing out was a significant factor in increasing a book's checkout rate. Unfortunately, it is not possible to display every book with the cover out. Using display bins within the shelving run, offers a more space efficient alternative.

Utilizing a zoned book display with a variety of genres, themes and authors to go with a lesson plan is another way to enhance the choice of books. Having a display of those books for students to check out will definitely increase circulation.

## 6.0 Summary & Conclusion

In conclusion, there are multiple ways which can influence book selection choice amongst students. Using both Collection Presentation Standards and Zoned Book Displays can sway book choice amongst students.

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