

Halve your shelving and grow your lending rate

John Stanley, John Stanley Associates

Save money and grow your library business, how can this be? Well, in how many libraries is the user confronted by rows and rows of bookshelves and little space to linger and browse?

The population is made up of hunters and gatherers, according to UK research. Hunters have a target in mind and are not seduced by a great library experience. They want easy navigation and the space to see what they came in for. Gatherers, on the other hand, will spend a lot of time enjoying the experience; they will browse for pleasure and the librarian is part of the experience. If the library navigation is difficult or signage is weak, they enjoy the search for the hidden treasure.

Many libraries are designed with gatherers in mind, and especially older gatherers. More clients will use your library if its design appeals to all generations and to both hunters and gatherers. But how to achieve this? The guru on the science of shopping is Paco Underhill, and his book *Why we buy: the science of shopping* (Touchstone Books) is a must-read for any librarian who wants to improve their lending rate.

Paco's research (and our own) shows that the consumer needs 60 per cent of any floor space to browse comfortably. So 40 per cent is available for shop fittings or bookcases. This is the fundamental point. Many libraries we've worked with allocated space wrongly. They had too many bookcases for the space available.

But where will we put the books?

This is an obvious first reaction, but our experience shows that if you reduce the bookcase units you'll reduce stock levels. You need less shelf space if your lending rate is increasing: books are in the community, not the library. This is an opportunity to cull the collection. Get rid of the old book stock. Old books may be damaging your image and keeping potential customers from using your library.

In today's library, flexibility is the name of the game. Space in the library needs to be flexible, you should be able to move book units around easily to create different 'space zones'. To achieve this, as many book units as possible should be on wheels. Suppliers can provide you with industrial wheels which are suitable for book units in libraries. Moving units around becomes very easy.



Remember that position affects borrowing. Many libraries rotate books on the shelf, or place purpose books on the lower shelf and impulse books on the sight-and-take shelf.

Position	Units borrowed (over same time period)
Stretch shelf	70
Sight-and-take	100
Bend shelf	55
Floor level	20

Source: Just About Everything a Retail Manager Needs to Know, John Stanley, ISBN 0 975 01180 4

So there you have it, you can increase your lending rate by reducing your shelving...give it a try, I know you'll be pleasantly surprised.

John Stanley is a retail consultant. He has worked with libraries in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. His company website is <http://www.johnstanley.cc>.

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Muswellbrook Shire Council

Read yourself into a whole new life of books

Reference and Reader Education Coordinator

Upper Hunter Regional Library

You'll be a highly motivated and customer-focused person to join our small team of Library staff in the provision of Library Services to the Upper Hunter. This position, while a senior member of the team, is also very much a 'hands-on' role and will be based in Muswellbrook.

Situated in the Hunter Valley NSW where the housing prices don't give you apoplexy, you have easy access to the breathtaking beauty of National Parks.

You enjoy the unique charm and culture of small towns and villages while still having access to modern education, retailing services, sporting and cultural facilities. Witness the changing colours and textures of the seasons.

Enjoy exploring NSW premium wine-growing and horse breeding area.

Obtain an information package which contains selection criteria and full salary package details by telephoning Joblink Plus on 02 6542 5822 or accessing Councils website www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au

Upper Hunter Regional Library supports the principles of EEO, OH&S and provides a smoke free workplace. This is child related employment; therefore, 'Prohibited persons' are not eligible to apply.

Applications must be in writing and addressed to the Chief Executive Officer. Applications must address the Essential and Desirable Selection Criteria and include details of 2 recent referees.

Applications will be accepted up until 2nd September 2005.

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