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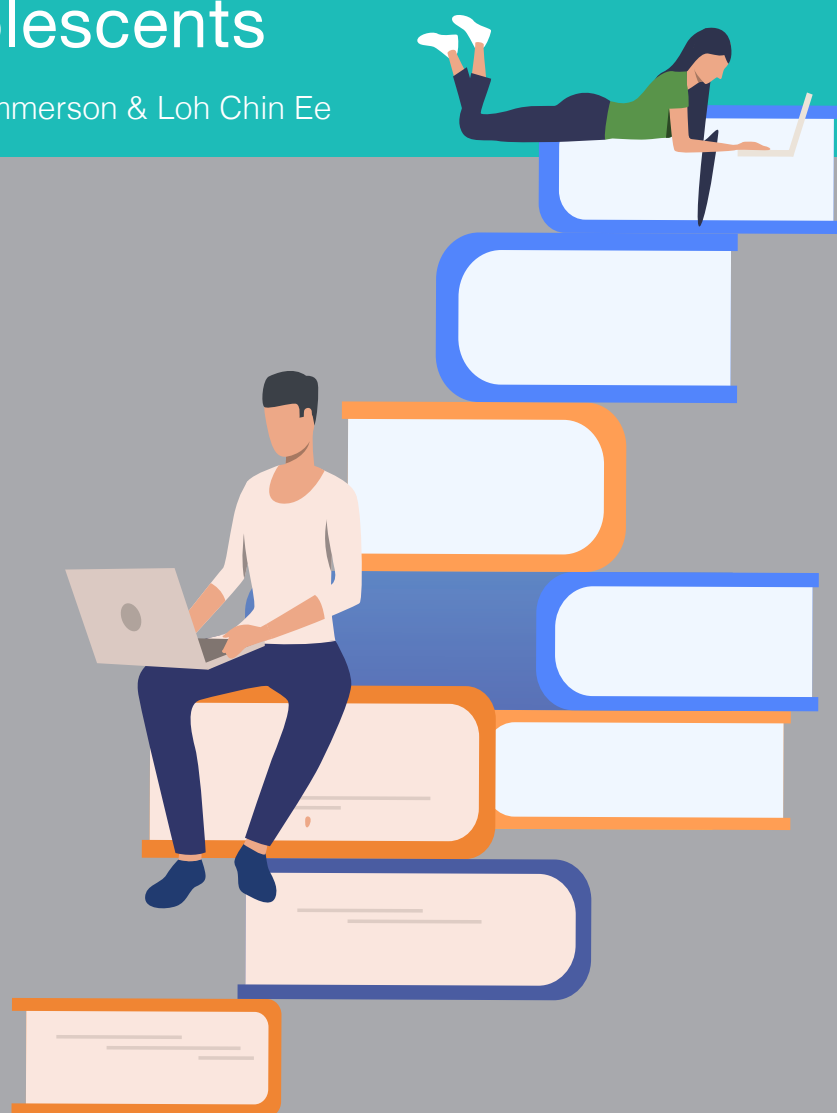
KNOWLEDGE BITES

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Developing the School Library Collection For Adolescents

by Christabel Sim, Jane Hayes, Jenna Emmerson & Loh Chin Ee

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OER Knowledge Bites

Launched in May 2016 by the Office of Education Research at the National Institute of Education, Singapore, **OER Knowledge Bites** aims to share education research discussions and issues as seen in the Singapore context. It also serves as a platform for researchers to share thoughts and concepts of education research with policymakers, educators and the public.

For enquiries pertaining to this publication, e-mail Nur Haryanti Sazali: haryanti.sazali@nie.edu.sg

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Selecting Young Adult Fiction in Public Libraries

By **Christabel Sim**

Christabel Sim is

Ms Christabel Sim gave the audience a glimpse into the life of a book selector in the National Library. While one of the perks of the job was spending a lot of time reading, the main tasks of a book selector were to ascertain which books would likely appeal to library users and then promoting them to increase the chances of the books being picked up and read.

When choosing a book for purchase, the book selector has various “tools” at his disposal. These include historical data (such as loan rates), book review websites and social media (which could also indicate whether a book or series was trending), book catalogues, book collection guidelines, library users’ recommendations as well as the book selector’s own knowledge.

Christabel discussed several limitations with the kind of information provided in book catalogues. Typically, catalogues do not mention a book cover’s colour, its height, thickness and size, nor font and font size. Library users have been found to “judge a book by its cover” and such physical attributes could be helpful to the book selector in positioning books to promote them once they are ready to be placed on the library shelf. She cautioned that purchasing books in a series, unless a very popular series, might be more “risky” than standalone volumes as there is no guarantee that readers would find the quality of the story or writing to be equally engaging in each instalment.

To ensure consistency in choosing books, written guidelines for a library’s collection



should be as detailed as possible, from book size to defining what is considered to be age/culturally appropriate to exclusion criteria. She explained that creating guidelines for fiction books was more challenging than for non-fiction. Unlike the latter, there are no agreed ways of classifying fiction, which is typically done using only the name of the book and/or author. The Infocomm Media Development Authority’s print guidelines could be a useful reference for developing a library’s collection guidelines. Beyond written guidelines, Christabel suggested reviewing relevant past decisions to guide new decision-making, eg. why certain books were not picked previously.

Before determining whether to choose or reject a book, she encouraged book selectors to read the entire book, where possible. A selector would be in a better position to appreciate a book’s entire message after reading it, especially when initial impressions are negative, eg. a controversial character. She also suggested that book selectors build their awareness of books of similar genres or themes so they can make more meaningful comparisons with a book they are considering. However, Christabel urged book selectors to maintain some amount of open-mindedness too.

Otherwise, the book selector may end up imposing his/her tastes on library users and this may prove counter-productive.

Even after acquiring a book, a book selector decides if and how to promote it to catch the eyes of library users. A good book may be left on the shelf purely due to lack of advertisement. Lastly, Christabel recommended carrying out regular reviews of the library’s collection as the entire collection may need to be refreshed.

Ultimately, what is key to a successful library collection is knowing the library users’ tastes and preferences. School libraries cater to a narrower age group of school-goers. While there may be some overlap between school and public library collections, public libraries attempt to serve a wider audience, not just in terms of age but of varying interests and types of readers as well. Thus, public libraries could fill in gaps and complement school libraries.

How to Cite

Sim, C. (2019). Selecting young adult fiction in public libraries. *OER Knowledge Bites Volume 11* (p. 4). Singapore: National Institute of Education.

Developing the Non-Fiction Collection in School Libraries



By *Jane Hayes*

Jane Hayes is

Ms Jayne Hayes highlighted that non-fiction reading ability was an important indicator of students' college-readiness. Unfortunately, there was also evidence that students tended to read less in secondary school than they did in primary school. Hence, it is crucial for a secondary school library to develop and maintain a relevant non-fiction collection and engage students.

She shared the ways which Dulwich College (Singapore)'s school library had sought to achieve this:

1. The school library is part of the International School Libraries Network (ISLN) in Singapore. Every year, a committee of teacher-librarians shortlists children's literature published in English within the past four years and host the Red Dot student's choice book awards. The school libraries stock copies of the shortlisted books and invite students to vote for their favourite books in four different categories.
2. The school librarians jointly select good quality books for the Dulwich College International Information Book Award and promote them for one month.
3. Reference to "The Nonfiction Family Tree", a way of categorising both commercial and literary non-fiction books into five different types, namely "browsable", "active", "traditional", "expository literature" and "narrative". (originally from Melissa Stewart's 2018 article in the School Library Journal at <https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=understanding-teaching-five-kinds-nonfiction>).
4. Tap on the school's library collection development policy which refers to curriculum requirements, the use of technology and certain diversity principles.
5. Work with the school's department heads to ensure that books acquired for the collection are relevant to the pedagogical requirements of various subjects.
6. Tap on book suggestions from students collected via an app and the library's front desk.
7. Look at review magazines such as The School Librarian;
8. Consult non-fiction online book lists which have been compiled by school library journals (SLJ), reading foundations and public libraries from various countries (e.g., the SLJ Book Lists and the Young Adult Library Services Association Award for Excellence in Non-fiction).
9. Pay particular attention to graphic non-fiction book titles which are growing in popularity, especially with boys. These also teach visual literacy and sequencing skills
10. Use online databases such as Library – EBSCO host and Library – Jstor Research;
11. Improve the effectiveness of library signage and increase the number of front-facing shelves in the library.
12. Ensure that the library collection is reviewed and refreshed from time to time, keeping in mind the Continuous Review Evaluation Weeding acronym or "CREW". "Weeding" refers to the removal of books which are "misleading, ugly, superseded, irrelevant or are available elsewhere". These are ongoing processes which help to interpret and continually reshape the library's collection so it always remains relevant to users' needs.

How to Cite

Hayes, J. (2019). Developing the non-fiction collection in school libraries. *OER Knowledge Bites Volume 11* (p. 5). Singapore: National Institute of Education.

Trends in Print and E-Book Publishing and Collection Development



By **Jenna Emmerson**

Jenna Emmerson is

Ms Jenna Emerson from Follett, which provides educational technology and services, began by assuring the audience that in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK), print books continued to remain more popular than electronic versions. This was probably due to relatively more immediate access to physical books, lack of device availability and the complexities involved in navigating different types of electronic platforms.

Publishers have been experimenting with interactive elements in their materials (e.g., combinations of print and e-books as well as audio and video). They have also collected data such as the amount of time users spend on an e-book page to analyse if and how users engaged with the content. Armed with such information, publishers forge ahead to adapt their

content and presentation to promote student-centred learning. Nevertheless, the question of whether the print or e-version is better should be subservient to the need to have students reading.

With regards to library collections, Follett has seen more requests for print over digital materials and digital non-fiction (including curricular) over fiction (e.g., digital textbooks). They saw a decline for print references which was likely a consequence of increased reliance on databases. However, demand for dictionaries and thesauruses was not affected. There was also a noticeable trend towards collection genrefication, involving both fiction and non-fiction and even picture books. Genrefication for non-fiction titles involves moving away from the standard Dewey classification. Some current “hot” topics for library collections include STEM, engineering, makerspaces, coding, activism, young adult reader versions of adult books, mindfulness, gaming, critical thinking and graphic novels.

In terms of space utilisation, libraries have seen a need to create more makerspaces, especially to assist in STEM/STEAM learning. More library spaces have also

been adapted as learning commons (or environments for collaborative learning).

Jenna concluded her presentation by introducing the Follett “Future Ready Librarians” Framework designed to support schools by providing suggestions to support student-centred future learning.

How to Cite

Emmerson, J. (2019). Trends in print and e-book publishing and collection development. *OER Knowledge Bites Volume 11* (p. 6). Singapore: National Institute of Education.

Developing a Future-Ready School Library Collection for Adolescents

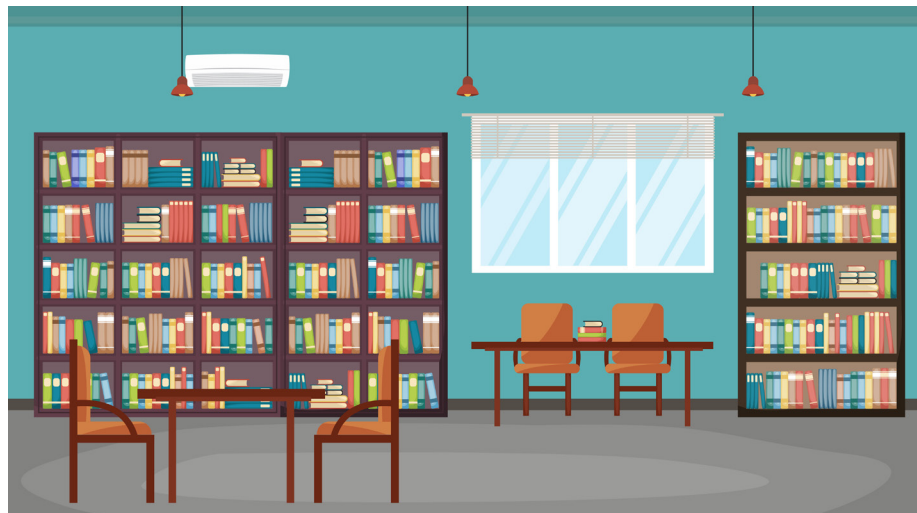
By **Dr Loh Chin Ee**

Loh Chin Ee is Assistant Professor at the English Language and Literature Academic Group at the National Institute of Education. Her research focuses on literacy and literature education at the intersection of social class and globalisation.

Following the earlier two roundtable discussions on designing library spaces and reading, Dr Loh's presentation focused on the unique role of secondary school libraries and the challenges faced by library staff and teachers in developing book and materials collections for the future.

From her research findings, it was evident that students, regardless of socio-economic status, language proficiency level and gender, were more likely to visit their school library than a public library due to proximity. Lower proficiency students were also less intimidated by the school library given the smaller size of its collection. This was also the case for reading in mother tongues (Chinese and Malay). In fact, some students never go to the public libraries and are reliant on the school library. The results of an earlier survey carried out by Dr Loh showed that students wanted to see more books in their school libraries as well as improved accessibility to books they wanted to read.

School libraries also need to support the school's pedagogical requirements and cater to the specific learning needs of various communities and profiles of its users (e.g., some schools may want to promote STEM and robotics). The *School Library Guidelines* of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions ("IFLA") recommends that school library collections should "complement and enrich textbooks, teaching materials, and methodologies". The school library can also aid in the



teaching of information literacy and research skills to students.

Citing the *IFLA Guidelines for Collection Policy*, Dr Loh highlighted that with developments in technology, libraries have seen the need to move away from merely archiving information which its users may want ('just in case') to ensuring that its users always have access to information they need ('just in time').

Dr Loh suggested that there was a unique role for school libraries and put forward three challenges when thinking about collection policies:

1. how to encourage **engaged** (i.e., independent and self-motivated) **reading** through the collection. This could be achieved by concentrating on the quality, quantity, variety and appropriate advertising of the materials in the collection;
2. how to provide **pedagogical support** to teachers and students. The school library could, after consultation with teachers, expand teachers' resources and support niche learning by creating specialised collections; and
3. how to inspire **independent learning**. The school library could provide more physical (eg. space) and technological (eg. specialised computers) resources as well as beef up research capacity through non-fiction and e-resources.

The roundtable participants raised several related issues. These were on how to ascertain students' needs and wants for the library collection, clearer guidelines on sensitive topics and age-appropriate material, how often to review and refresh the library collection and the allocation of funds.

Dr Loh also queried about the types of collections (e.g., audio, online, magazines) the school library should have, the roles of physical books versus e-books, the space and furniture needed to move books, and the kinds of technology and partnerships needed to support library collection policies.

She encouraged the participants to continue to reflect and discuss the issues put forward in order to develop future-ready school libraries.

How to Cite

Loh, C. E. (2019). Developing a future-ready school library collection for adolescents. *OER Knowledge Bites Volume 11* (p. 7). Singapore: National Institute of Education.

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