

**Merchandising the Collection: Trading Spaces Demonstration Project
Mount Laurel Library Staff Evaluation Walk-Through Notes May 2004**

Twenty-two staff/volunteers participated in evaluation walk-throughs. Each person was given questions about evaluating the Merchandising project in advance of the session. After an introduction to the evaluation process, they were asked to go into the library for 20 minutes with a copy of the questions, a pad and pen, asked to jot down their thoughts and then reassemble for de-briefing.

All comments were written on flip charts and are summarized below.

5/11: AM Kathy K., Kate, Bill, Runi, Barsa, Ann S, Yolanda

5/11: PM Janet, Darlene, Myrna, Bob, Paul, Marilyn, Marguerite, Adelaide

5/13: PM Ann Hill, Patrick, David Calvanico

5/20: AM Eileen, Johnny, Margaret, Natalie

Four staff also sent written comments (David Calvanico and Dave Sanchez, plus 2 anonymous)

Here are their answers: (Indicates number of groups that discussed same item)

What are the most significant changes you've seen as a result of the Merchandising Project?

- Visible role of the librarian
- Change of attitude among staff (more positive, greater sense of service to customer, greater sense of collaboration, working together, staff have a say in what is done, sense of empowerment and inclusion, everyone has an equal say (FT & PT))
- Living Room (3) (magazines, quiet reading, windows, people like that kids have their own space)
- Family Room (3) (easy to find books, inviting, people like openness)
- DVD collection (very popular, expand it)
- Separating the YA area from Children's
- Books properly shelved (in Marketplace, not in Teen Zone)
- Marketplace (a hit! People like to browse)
- Internet Café
- Greeter role (going to where the customer is)
- I see more people sitting and reading in the library
- More people borrow books because they see them (Easier to see books)
- People have more choice of formats (2) (CDs, DVDs, Music CDs in front as people walk in)
- Library is more attractive
- Redistribution of the collection
- Change of attitude among patrons (positive response to staff when asked if they need help)
- An attitude of "Why don't we try it?"
- Number of books being checked out
- Getting new books out in the open (interesting to see)
- Increase in collection (DVDs, number of new copies of new books)
- From staff email/surveys:
 - ✓ Redistribution of the collection - "new" books on gondolas in the merchandizing area; videos/multimedia (CDs) in the stacks with books; addition of DVDs; addition of new spaces, i.e. "living room," "family room," internet café...
 - ✓ "Greeting" the customers on the floor: this is much more satisfying and beneficial for patron and librarian alike.
 - ✓ A new attitude—positive—among most of the staff at how they are involved with the changes and the evolving changes in our roles...
 - ✓ On the whole, I think the changes made so far are positive. Clearly, the patrons like it. I have adjusted to new arrangement, as far as where materials are located. The circ, self-check out unit works well and is a nice addition.
 - ✓ I've seen people come in to the library due to the DVD selection more, although I think we should put a limit on how many DVDs one can take out
 - ✓ The Library is more user-friendly to the patrons. They are able to browse through new materials and peruse the displays

What are you having difficulty making work?

- DVDs (2) (area a mess, keep falling over, maybe use dividers to keep DVDs upright)
- Shelving for items on hold (need more space, better dividers)
- More light at the check-in area
- Greeter (4) (feel like I'm wasting my time, don't know what to do, just standing around, knowing when to hand off a question to Reference, Circ having a working relationship with greeter-- As greeter, asked to do things others have started - patron looking for book...circ passed it to greeter -checked iPAC—all copies checked out)
- In Front Room, moms don't want to leave their kids to ask a question (need a Kids greeter in Family Room and/or an iPAC there)
- Schedule for public services (day is too chopped up into hour long segments, it would be better to have longer blocks of time for on-desk, off desk tasks)
- Audio Books (new aren't identified as new, interfiled with everything else)
- Remembering where to look (4) (remembering and all possible areas, "we're supposed to be the people who know where things are, "I feel like my tail is between my legs", Finding missing books (lots of places to look), especially on displays, I tell customers it could be here, there, or ask at Reference)
- Bottom shelves (hard to see, shelve, get books)
- Big books don't stay well on gondolas
- Self checkout (needs better signage, where's the right barcode on books, adjust voice message re: DVD/CD cases)
- College collection is too far
- New books need their own collection code in catalog
- Too many loans periods (how long does something get checked out for?)
- Teen Zone (way shelves are laid out, walking back and forth, more awkward)
- Lines of vision (hard to see what's in the rest of the library)
- Finding a specific issue of a magazine in the catalog
- It is sometimes difficult locating materials in a timely way because there are various locations to be found (the stacks, the "market place"...). Teaching the patrons/customers will take time.
- Searching for a YA book is more awkward because the "stacks" are not in 3-foot sections; they are in varying lengths...
- Locating specific issues of magazines in the catalog that are in circulation for a patron.
- You cannot see from the adult reference desk to the children's section because of gondolas. The "Main Street" concept should be utilized, meaning a clear vision of each desk.

What areas do we still need to work on?

- Teen Zone (books a mess)
- More signage (4) (vending, Internet Café, Wireless internet, signs for restrooms in lobby, on top of gondolas like in Barnes and Noble, identifying public catalog computers)
- Defining how we merchandise (end caps—what's on these, need monthly themes, now a hodge-podge, use signs with themes listed, should relate to the end of that shelf, communicate these better to part-time staff)
- Shelf reading is neglected (concentrate on this)
- Use the smaller "To be reshelved" carts (add signage here, floater can use these to catch stray books)
- Family Room (colorful border next to the ceiling, bin for stuffed animals?, hard to find board books in baskets—esp. when claims returned, books stacked on wall several deep, no rhyme or reason, feel like we're hiding books))
- Lobby (2) (make it more welcoming, put up pictures, plants/silk flower arrangements, lighting, brighter color)
- Redefine services (it feels like services haven't changed all that much ... we're calling it different, but it's still doing things the same)
- Limit the number of DVDs/CDs per customer
- Improve self check out (people don't always know what to do)
- Lighting in adult stacks
- Phone system
- Redesign check-in (light, build wall up from counter to make a more private area, less public interaction there will make for fewer interruptions/mistakes, assign shelving carts to particular areas with signs, put books on carts in order so they're ready to shelve))
- Internet Café (doesn't look like a café, remove easy chairs and replace with café tables/chairs, can't see vending machines)
- Large Print gondola in front looks out of place, blocks view)
- Marketplace looks like a merry-go-round of gondolas
- Customers don't know where to reshelve books when in Marketplace
- Calls for circulation coming into Reference Desk
- The maze of gondolas is hard to vacuum, open space up a little more
- Audio books (doesn't look inviting, not attractive, items look worn, old)
- Internet access (put on more computers in the library, hard to enforce time limit)
- Greeter (where it stops, if it's not busy...what do you do? what always needs to be done)
- IPAC can slow/stop (what to do, how to use Dynix catalog, return PAC for windows to staff computers)
- would be helpful to have access to both catalogs at the reference desk. There are times when iPAC gets very slow or stops altogether making it necessary to go to the public catalog to use the "old" catalog to locate materials for a patron.
- Maintain a printed list of DVDs for patron browsing. (Like the Books on Tape notebook)
- Signs atop the gondolas—like B&N—would help direct patrons to what they are looking for.
- Making it possible to keep an eye on the computer lab from ... [the desk? Or...?].
- Maintaining statistics that are meaningful and useful...
- An information desk will provide assistance to patron's basic questions without the long walk to reference.
- I am concerned about the lack of presence in the children's area.
- Also, I'm worried that the moving of YA has isolated it and it will languish.
- I do wish there was a way to improve the sightlines to the circulation desk though from Reference.
- Geography - clear path between adult and children's section
- Cataloging "new" books
- I think we should have more vending machines

What lessons have you learned from this experience (both positive and negative)?

About change itself ...

- Change is good (hard to convince patron's it's good)
- Change is work
- Change is painful, even when it's good
- It's good to lighten up (provide vending machines, lend magazines)
- There's always room for improvement, that is, discovering new ways to offer services and materials for our patrons. Change [in this case] has been good!

About Merchandising

- Marketing new stuff will increase circulation
- Merchandising does work in libraries
- Merchandising does work
- You can apply the Barnes and Noble model in libraries
- Patrons do adapt to changes.

About public reaction/impact

- People love movies
- People like the way the library is NOW
- More people are coming to the library and checking out books
- Marketplace shelves work well for people in wheelchairs (items at their level)
- Give popular materials to the public and they will come (we see an increase in the gate count)
- In Family Room, mothers have become more self sufficient and more involved with their children
- Patrons feel more comfortable approaching staff
- People love the sheltered feeling in the Living Room
- Internet Café -people get coffee and sit at counter ... same as Living Room
- Teens are more comfortable in their own space, and mothers of young kids love having them out of the children's area. However, some adults get upset with teen in new area.
- The Merchandising Project has increased circulation and brought positive publicity and feedback from the community.

About staff reaction

- Give it time (It takes time to get comfortable, to adjust to all the new furniture)
- Hard to tell people you can't find things
- We need to take time to slow down, reflect, fix things
- Working the plans—the strategic and the marketing plans—have made the library a more positive and “fun” experience for patrons and employees alike. (Even with the frustrating moments of going through learning curves, getting used to new procedures and material displays.)
- Less focus to the family concept

About the Greeter

- Training is essential (greeter)
- Greeter role is positive (Patrons can talk to us, we're free to learn more about the library)
- As a greeter, now I have a new appreciation of what the Circ staff deals with and how good a job they do
- As greeters, we can get the circ phones and help them out

What do you think our next steps should be?

- Work on the lobby
- Lots and lots and lots of training
- Do a tour/walk through for staff showing the new locations of everything!
- Shelf reading (gondolas)
- More signage
- Effective interim signage (while we're tweaking)
- In computer Lab, replace broken chairs
- More furniture (in Teen Zone...seems too "in the center", get audio equipment/head phones, seems too empty, needs a computer, no work area, needs "something")
- Put a study carrel/table by the Juvenile fiction area
- Reconfigure the Circulation Desk
- Should patrons be checking items in instead of checking them out?
- Keep doing what you're doing (keep staff informed, training, opportunities for input, refresher training)
- What other areas of the collection can we make more accessible for the public (for example, do we need to keep Valueline behind Reference Desk?)?
- Provide opportunities for the public to give verbal feedback (Walk-throughs for the public)
- From staff email:
 - Move the reference desk(s) so that we can serve both youth and adult areas more effectively.
 - Re-emphasize shelf reading
 - Continue to get public feedback on what they like [and don't like].
 - The children's section should have a librarian present at the desk at high volume times, Also, summer programs should be formulated. Finally, there should be a reevaluation of the effectiveness of self-checkout

Extra credit!

The library has gone through a tremendous amount of change in the last year and more changes will continue to be made. How can the Library improve the *process* of change to make it easier for staff?

- For volunteers, it was hard to keep up with all the changes. We never knew from one week to the next what had changed.
- Put up a central bulletin board with all changes posted.
- Put changes in writing and put in staff/volunteer mailboxes
- Continuing communication by numerous methods
- Staff has to do its part too, by looking at written materials, notices of changes, etc.
- Training (I feel like I'm out there on a boat with no oars)
- Everyone does everything, but no one is responsible for anything
- Learn how to hand off reference questions
- Communication in beginning was good, so it exaggerated the gaps in communication later in the project
- Have a central information point where all changes are noted
- Keep staff informed
- Enjoyed the workshops (team building, staff day)
- Rotate staff involved in decision making (creates more ownership, sense of involvement)
- Being involved makes it easier to accept change (share meeting minutes with staff)
- Have an Open House Day for the community
- Take staff on a tour (where things are)
- Take your time
- Have information sheets for all staff
- Morning briefings address the same staff ... maybe do at different times?
- Continue collaborations between circulation, part-time, full-time and all departments
- Keep email alerts coming
- Keep giving refreshers/reminders: This is why we did this. These are the changes that are happening
- Walk through incorporating feedback
- Develop talking points to "sell" reluctant customers
- "Ask Me" badges are good, encourage casualness and a sense of fun
- Promote the positive impact of change (share circulation and gate count statistics with all)
- From staff email/surveys:
 - Continue to do what you have been doing thus far: Involve the staff with exploring options and implementing of plans. This helps us understand the new arrangements and procedures and then put them into practice.