

THE IMPORTANCE OF WEEDING LIBRARY STOCK

A school library should look inviting, fresh and up-to-date. Some libraries look jam-packed full of books, but on closer inspection many of those books are at best tired and out-dated and at worst inaccurate and reinforcing harmful stereotypes. Here are some tips to help you make good book stock decisions:

Quality over quantity

Maximise the use of limited resources by ensuring each and every book justifies its place in the library, and that each title is used to its full potential

Resist the temptation to hold onto old books, even if budgets are tight – generously spaced shelves enable users to browse and see new titles

Poor performing books should be removed to allow other books to shine

Consider a policy on the maximum age of books (eg max 5-8 years for fiction, 5 for non-fiction) and remove those that are older

Older stock is unlikely to be representative or diverse

Non-fiction can be inaccurate and unlikely to reflect the curriculum

Children are choosy and unlikely to pick up a dog-eared book no matter how good the story inside! As Cressida Cowell says “I make the cover shiny and jewel-like so that, in the mind of the child, books are sweets, not brussels sprouts.”

You might only have one chance to appeal to a reluctant reader – if they find the books unappealing, they may write-off the library for life!

Getting rid of books can be difficult and divisive, but if they are not good enough for your pupils, they probably shouldn't be given to the local charity shop...

BOOK DISPOSAL


Consider book recycling services such as:

-  We Buy Books
-  Ziffit
-  The Book Rescuers
-  Better World Books
(collection in Scotland and London only)

Some household recycling centres have book recycling bins. Alternatively use them for arts and crafts, there are lots of ideas on Pinterest.

A SELECTION CRITERIA

Having a selection criteria can be a useful tool to help you say no to well-meaning but unwanted donations. Public libraries have strict criteria, and so should school libraries too. Suggestions include:

- Accept only new or nearly new books published in the last five years by mainstream publishers
- All library stock must be considered on its relevance and appeal to students
- Stock should reflect the nine protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010 
- Books must reflect the current curriculum
- Consider a statement on non-censorship of books and an acknowledgement that materials may contain challenging content but will not be excluded
- Popular books that are 'of their time' can be used to promote discussion

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