THE SCHOOL LIBRARY GUIDE
TO DYNAMIC SHELVING

Dynamic Shelving is an innovative approach that transforms the way libraries organize and present their collections. This system of organization refers to a flexible and adaptive system where books and resources are organized based on their usage patterns, relevance, and user preferences rather than a fixed alphabetical or Dewey Decimal order. This dynamic approach recognizes the evolving nature of information needs and the various learning styles of library patrons. The benefits of Dynamic Shelving are vast, ranging from enhanced discoverability of resources to increased patron engagement and a more responsive library environment. This guide takes a look at the principles and strategies of Dynamic Shelving and also provides practical tips that will empower you to create a vibrant and user-centric library space.

PRINCIPLES OF DYNAMIC SHELVING

User-Centric Organization:
Dynamic shelving prioritizes the needs and preferences of library patrons. Resources are arranged based on user behavior, interests, and the way they interact with the collection.

Usage Patterns:
Resources are organized dynamically according to their usage patterns. Frequently borrowed or highly popular materials are prominently featured, making them easily accessible to users.

Relevance and Timeliness:
Dynamic shelving considers the relevance and timeliness of resources. New and topical materials are given prominence, reflecting the ever-changing nature of information needs.

Flexibility and Adaptability:

Unlike traditional static shelving systems, dynamic shelving is adaptable. It allows for easy rearrangement and adjustment based on evolving trends, curriculum changes, or specific events.

Technology Integration:

Dynamic shelving often leverages technology to enhance user experience. Digital catalogs and interactive displays may be incorporated to provide users with real-time information about resource availability and location.

Feedback and Assessment:

Regular assessment and feedback from library patrons contribute to the continuous improvement of dynamic shelving. Librarians can gather insights into user preferences and adjust the organization accordingly.

Collaboration and Community Involvement:

Dynamic shelving encourages collaboration with teachers, students, and other stakeholders. Input from the community helps in tailoring the collection to meet the specific needs and interests of the users.

Multimodal Presentation:

Recognizing varied learning styles, dynamic shelving incorporates a multimodal approach. Resources may be presented not only in traditional book format but also through audiovisual materials, digital resources, and interactive displays.

Promotion of Serendipitous Discovery:

Dynamic shelving aims to foster serendipitous discovery by placing related materials in proximity to each other, encouraging users to explore beyond their initial search and discover new and interesting resources.

Sustainability:

The principles of dynamic shelving align with sustainability goals by promoting efficient use of space, reducing unnecessary duplication, and ensuring that library resources remain relevant and in circulation.

STRATEGIES FOR CREATING A DYNAMIC SHELVING SYSTEM

Data-Driven Decision Making:

Utilize data analytics and circulation statistics to understand user behavior and preferences. Analyze which materials are most frequently borrowed or requested, and use this data to inform the placement and prominence of resources.

Zoning and Themes:

Create distinct zones or thematic areas within the library. Arrange materials based on subjects, genres, or themes, making it easier for users to locate resources aligned with their interests.

Rotating Collections:

Introduce the concept of rotating collections to keep the library dynamic. Periodically update and refresh displays with new, seasonal, or thematic materials to maintain interest and encourage exploration.

User Feedback Mechanisms:

Establish mechanisms for collecting feedback from library patrons. Surveys, suggestion boxes, or online forms can provide valuable insights into user preferences and help in fine-tuning the dynamic shelving organization.

Collaborative Curation:

Collaborate with teachers, students, and others in the school community to curate collections. Involving the community ensures that the library reflects the varied needs and interests of its users.

Visual Merchandising:

Apply visual merchandising techniques to make the library visually appealing. Use attractive displays, signage, and well-designed shelving to draw attention to specific materials and create an inviting browsing experience.

Technology Integration:

Embrace technology to enhance the dynamic shelving experience. Implement digital catalog systems and/or interactive displays that provide real-time information on resource availability and guide users to their desired materials.

Flexible Shelving Systems:

Invest in modular and flexible shelving systems that can be easily reconfigured. This allows for quick adjustments based on changing needs, seasonal themes, or special events.

Cross-Promotion of Formats:

Highlight related materials across different formats (e.g., books, e-books, audiobooks) in close proximity. This encourages users to explore resources in various formats and accommodates different learning preferences.

Inclusive Accessibility:

Ensure that dynamic shelving accommodates users of all abilities. Consider the placement of materials at various heights, provide clear signage, and offer seating options that cater to various needs.

Educational Initiatives:

Integrate educational initiatives into dynamic shelving. Create displays that support curriculum topics, highlight recommended reads, or showcase resources relevant to ongoing school projects.

Regular Audits and Adjustments:

Conduct regular audits of the collection and shelving layout. Adjust the organization based on changing curriculum requirements, user feedback, or shifts in educational priorities.

PRACTICAL TIPS & TECHNIQUES FOR DYNAMIC SHELVING

For photo examples of these Dynamic Shelving techniques, check out this presentation.

Front-Facing Technique

- Front-facing books involves positioning books on shelves with their covers facing outward, rather than placing them in the traditional manner with spines facing out.
  - Increases and enhances the visibility of resources, which creates an inviting atmosphere that attracts attention and encourages exploration.
  - Serves as an effective marketing strategy by leveraging passive promotion techniques.
  - Helps with quick decision making, allowing students to judge a book by its cover and make selections based on visual appeal.
  - Use boxes, bookends, easels, and display holders to face your books forward.

Book Stacking Technique

- Stacking books is a technique that involves arranging books in a vertical or inclined manner, typically with their covers facing outwards.
  - Allows for better visibility of book covers, making it easier for users to quickly identify and select titles.
  - Adds an aesthetic dimension to shelving, creating a visually appealing and dynamic display.
  - Particularly effective in highlighting new arrivals, recommended read, thematic collections, and books in a series.
  - Allows for a more efficient use of shelf space, as books can be arranged at different angles without leaving unused gaps.

Bin Technique

- Using bins as a Dynamic Shelving technique involves employing containers to organize and display library materials, offering a versatile and flexible approach to book presentation.
  - Provides a practical solution for categorizing and organizing materials based on themes, genres, or other specific criteria and allows for a more intuitive browsing experience as students can easily locate resources within designated bins.
  - Great for series and paperbacks (think Manga!) and also great for deep shelves and awkward spaces.
  - Adds a dynamic element to the library, as librarians can easily update bins to feature different thematic collections.
  - Contributes to an easy and user-friendly experience when bins are positioned at accessible heights.
  - Can be used for interactive displays that encourage students to engage with their contents (hands-on activities, library of things, related multimedia resources, etc.).
  - Encourages serendipitous discovery when materials are placed in bins in an unexpected or thematic manner and students come across resources they may not have initially considered.
  - Contributes to a neat and orderly display, reducing the visual clutter that can sometimes arise on traditional shelves.
  - Allows for customization based on the needs and preferences of different age groups or reading levels.

Eye-Catcher Technique

- The Dynamic Shelving technique of using eye-catchers involves strategically placing attention-grabbing elements or features within the library space to draw patrons' attention to specific books, displays, or thematic collections.
    - Eye-catchers are things like props, toys, stuffed animals, seasonal decorations, etc. that are meant to have a strong visual appeal, utilizing vibrant colors, unique shapes, or creative designs.
    - Showcases featured collections, new arrivals, or thematic displays by serving as indicators that guide patrons to specific sections of the library.
    - May include interactive elements that engage patrons in a more hands-on experience.
    - Often used in conjunction with rotating displays and the promotion of special events and themes in the library.
    - Can include signage (large and small) and shelf-talkers.
    - Encourages collaboration as librarians can work with other teachers or community members to create eye-catching displays or installations in the library.

Chunking and Display Technique

- Chunking and displaying resources involves organizing library materials into visually distinct and themed groups and presenting them in eye-catching displays.
    - Mini collections combine picture books, chapter books, graphic novels, and nonfiction books on popular topics into mini-collections. For example, you might house all of your library's books about basketball together, regardless of the genre or format.
    - Pullout collections are smaller-scale chunking on display; things like series, early readers, board books, bios/memoirs, graphic novels, comics, manga, poetry, classics, mythology, NF sports, authors, etc. They are books that are pulled out of their "correct" categories & grouped together to better meet the needs of your readers for easier browsing, less anxiety, and improved access.
    - Displays can be permanent, semi-permanent, or rotating. Let community interest drive your decisions. Use what you have: carts, folding tables, window sills, end caps, center of study tables, circulation desk, etc.
    - Virtual displays can also be created for your library website and catalog.
    - Encourages exploration, enhances the discoverability of resources, and creates an engaging and dynamic library environment.

Signage and Directionals

- No matter how you choose to organize your library, remember that great signage makes your library more accessible to your users. And bad or no signage will make a well-organized library inaccessible.
- Different types of signage and directionals include: area/directional signs, bookcase and end cap signs, shelf talkers, series labels, and spine labels.
- When creating signage, remember to consider font, imagery, color, and language to account for accessibility.
- Signage and directionals are integral components of the school library environment, playing a pivotal role in facilitating navigation, promoting resources, fostering engagement, and contributing to an overall positive user experience. Thoughtful design and strategic placement of signage enhance the functionality and ambiance of the library, making it a more inviting and effective space for both educational and recreational purposes.

HOW TO GET STARTED

To start organizing your library using dynamic shelving techniques, librarians should begin by conducting a thorough assessment of the current collection, analyzing circulation data, and seeking feedback from students and teachers. Identify popular genres, frequently borrowed materials, and emerging curriculum trends. Armed with this knowledge, develop a plan for thematic chunking and dynamic displays that align with the identified patterns and preferences. If possible, invest in flexible shelving systems that allow for easy rearrangement and experimentation (or use what you have!). Utilize eye-catching signage to guide patrons through the new organization, making the library's layout intuitive and inviting. Collaborate with teachers to align dynamic shelving with curriculum needs, and consider incorporating interactive elements to further engage users. Regularly evaluate and adjust the approach based on ongoing feedback and evolving educational priorities. In short:

- Understand your patrons.
- Focus on what you CAN do.
- Use what you have.
- Start small.
- Try a variety of different things.
- Get inspiration from stores (& readers)!

For photo examples of these Dynamic Shelving techniques, check out this presentation.