
PUBLIC LIBRARIAN'S GUIDE TO DESIGNING DISPLAYS THAT GET NOTICED

A display is a chance to highlight books, spark curiosity, and invite people to explore. With a little planning and creativity, your displays can become some of the most engaging spots in the library.

The Basics of a Strong Display

Purpose

- What do you want this display to do: promote a program, celebrate a theme, highlight a genre?
- Who are you creating it for?

Theme

- A clear idea makes the display more memorable.
- Try “Books That Make You Laugh,” “Tiny but Mighty,” or “Local Voices.”

Design

- Choose 1-2 fonts and 2-3 complementary colors.
- Balance the layout and leave some open space.
- Props or small decorations can add personality.

Call to Action

- Give people a next step: “*Take One Home Today*” or “*Ask Us for More.*”

Practical Tips

- **Keep It Simple:**
Pick a handful of titles instead of filling the whole shelf. Use blank space so the display doesn't feel crowded. Add one surprise element such as a prop, sign, or interactive piece.
- **Make It Timely:**
Connect displays to community events, seasons, or pop culture. Relevance grabs attention.

- **Strong Signs:**
Big, bold, and easy to read. Use a catchy headline or a question to draw people in. Add a QR code to link to more resources if helpful.
- **Invite Interaction:**
Give visitors a way to participate. Try voting jars, sticky notes, a “Patron Picks” section, or a small take-and-make kit.
- **Use Visual Hierarchy:**
Place the most important item at eye level. Vary the height of books with risers or stands. Group in threes or fives. Add layers for depth.

Working Smarter

- **Reuse and Rotate:**
Save props and signs to use again. Re-theme old elements to fit new ideas. Take photos of displays you like and keep an idea bank.
- **Collaborate:**
Invite staff, patrons, or community groups to help curate a display. Share patron reviews, art, or poems alongside books.
- **Build Around Favorites:**
Use popular genres, trending media, or recommendations from patrons. A “You Asked, We Delivered” display works well.
- **Plan Ahead:**
Rotate displays on a schedule, monthly, seasonal, or quarterly. Create sign templates in Canva or Google Slides. Keep a yearlong calendar or spreadsheet of ideas.

A Simple Formula

- **Theme/Message:** Clear title
- **Anchor Item:** One focal book or object at eye level
- **Support Materials:** 4-6 curated items
- **Signage:** Catchy headline + short call to action
- **Visual Touch:** Prop, lighting, or color accent
- **Optional Add-On:** Interactive element