

How different libraries handle their children's collections

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Reports

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Abstract

A Report about the classification of children's libraries in 3 countries: Lebanon, the USA, and Canada. It states the customized classification themes in 5 children's libraries: the Lebanese American University Library, Perrot Memorial Library, Westminster Public Library, Berkeley County Library System, and West Vancouver Memorial Library.

Keywords

Children's libraries, classification, Lebanon, USA, Canada

The Children's Library at the Lebanese American University is an exemplary library, established to serve the Nursery School located on campus. Its material is used and analyzed by LAU students attending the courses Creative Dramatics and Children's Literature.

The Library moved from the ground floor to the third floor. This move to a smaller area necessitated a decrease in the categories of classification which are distributed as follows:

- J/E (Easy) above Cutter author number: for simple informative books with lots of pictures.
- J/F (Fiction) above Cutter author number: for short stories, fiction and science fiction books.
- J/B (Biography) above Cutter author number: for the history of the life of individuals. Collected biographies are classed with the Reference Section.
- J/R (Reference) above Dewey and Cutter author number: for general or specialized reference books written for young adults.
- J (Juvenile) above Dewey and Cutter author number: for non-fiction books treating all types of topics directed towards young adults.

The Example of the Perrot Memorial Library

The local system of classification herein used is much more detailed. Some of the decisions for categorization are left in the hands of the children themselves. These decisions are reviewed by the staff to ensure consistency. The 'system' is distributed as follows:

- E : Children's picture books
- J : Juvenile fiction
- J/B : Juvenile biographies
- J+Dewey920: Used across the board for all collected biographies
- J/SF : Juvenile science fiction
- J/M : Juvenile mysteries

- J/1,2,3 : Three levels for easy readers as decided by the children themselves.
- J + Dewey no. : All non-fiction books. If the children decide that this non-fiction is Easy, an E between parenthesis is added to the call number and all types are intersheveled.

This compilation is the result of my correspondence with the Autocatt listserv.

Other Symbols Used in the Same Library

- J/BOT : Books on tapes
- J/CASS : Juvenile music cassettes
- J/CDBook : Books on CD-ROM
- J/CD : Juvenile music CDs

The Example of the Westminster Public Library

This Library drew its guidelines from the input of the Youth Services Staff. They are straightforward and easy to follow because they also take into consideration the annotations provided on the books themselves.

Away from the previous practices E symbol designates fiction books and covers two categories

- Books with a lot of pictures appropriate for reading aloud for young children.
- "Easy reader" designed for children who are just starting to read. They constitute part of series such as "Beginning to read", "First steps to reading", etc. often followed by "Step 1", "Step 2", etc. Besides E an additional sticker is applied to this level.
- J or YA (young adults) are assigned for both fiction and non-fiction:
- J : for grades 3-5 or 6
- YA : for grades 5-9

The responsibility of these assignments lays in the hands of the selector not the Technical Services.

The Example of Berkeley County Library System

The 'system' in this library is more basic. Decisions are the mutual responsibility of the cataloguers and the Youth Services Librarian.

Symbols are assigned as follows to four categories only:

- E : non-fiction picture books
- J : books with a significant amount of text and children's materials that aren't books.
- J Easy Reader : for beginner readers ("A beginning to read book", etc.)
- YA : for Grades 6-12.

The Example of West Vancouver Memorial Library

Again in this example there is no definite rule but general guidelines agreed upon between cataloguers and Youth Services Staff. These guidelines can be described as simple, practical and comprehensive.

The symbols are:

- E (picture books)
- ER (easy reader)
- J (Juvenile)
- Teen

The guidelines are:

E (picture books)

- larger size book often 27-30 cm
- mostly pictures, usually fully colored
- intended to be read to a child.

ER (easy reader)

- smaller size suitable for a child's hand (24 cm)
- lots of pictures and simple text on same page (E separate pages)

- Have some sort of statement about the reading level (“step into reading”, “Cat in the hat beginner library” ,etc.)
- Intended for a child to read alone.

J (Juvenile)

- usually a smaller size book (24 cm or less)
- has an age statement on the cover (for ages 8-11,for grades 3, 5); the intended audience is older than toddlers but not yet teenagers.
- intended for a child to read alone.

TEEN

- usually a smaller size book (24 cm or less) but often more pages than a J book
- cover illustrations show older kids (physically developed, make-up, driving a car, etc.)
- has an age statement on the cover (for ages 13 -15, for grades 9 -11); intended for teens or high schoolers.
- subjects discussed are, namely, boys-girls relationships, puberty, high school issues.

The above listed guidelines, combined together, can constitute a good and comprehensive policy for the classification of a children's collection. Of course it can be modified and augmented if other children's librarians in Lebanon can provide their input as well as their comments