

4. Getting to Know Your Library Stock

What stock is in your library?

When you organise your library, it is important to get to know the type of stock you have and to divide your stock into three basic sections – reference, information, and fiction.

Reference material

This includes encyclopaedias, dictionaries, and atlases. Reference books are used to find quick answers, check facts, answer readers' questions, and discover new information. Because reference books are often large, expensive, and in constant demand, most libraries do not lend them. Instead, librarians put them on clearly labelled reference bookshelves next to the information books.

Information material

This is sometimes known as non-fiction and is stock about people, places, and things; it includes textbooks. To help library users find the book they want, it is recommended that the librarian organise all the information stock into different subject areas. For example, put all the books on trees and forests on bookshelves close to each other. You will read more about how to do this in chapter 7.

Fiction

These books are also known as story books or novels. Some fiction books are used by English teachers in secondary schools all around the world; *Animal Farm* by George Orwell and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe are two examples.

Fiction books are not just for studying; they can also be read for fun: *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling is a good example of a novel that youth will enjoy.

Once you have divided the stock into reference, information, and fiction sections, it will be clear to you that the stock comes in many different shapes and forms – including books, pamphlets, booklets, magazines,

newspapers, flip charts, posters, photo albums of the school, maps, videos, audio cassettes, etc. The most important type of stock, however, will be the books.

Sometimes a single book can change a life

Rethabile, a 16-year-old student, was terribly depressed. Her teacher, Mapele Thabang Daemane of Lesotho, tried to draw her out, but she seemed unreachable. Then he found a library book, *The Mystery of Love*, and he read aloud some passages to Rethabile. As she listened to the moving prose and the concerned teacher's voice, something broke loose in the troubled girl's heart. She began to cry and share her story with the kind teacher.

Rethabile's father had died. The young girl was caregiver for her mother and was the family's sole provider. Hungry and no longer able to pay her school fees, she feared she must drop out of school. Then she was raped. 'I must admit,' the young girl said to her teacher as she clutched *The Mystery of Love*, 'I was about to do something horrible today.' She reached into her bag and handed him the poison pellet that would have ended her life later that day.

Mapele later invited a group of troubled students to meet after school. The students shared their stories with each other: parents and siblings lost to AIDS, their own HIV-positive status, and tales of hunger, rape, and hardship. As the stories flowed, the walls of isolation crumbled, and powerful bonds of friendship began to grow.

More about books

Books are made of paper and so they can be easily damaged. It is just as important to show readers how to treat books well as it is to encourage them to make more use of the books in the library. One way to do both is to make sure that readers and library monitors know all about what a book is and are able to name the different parts of a book.

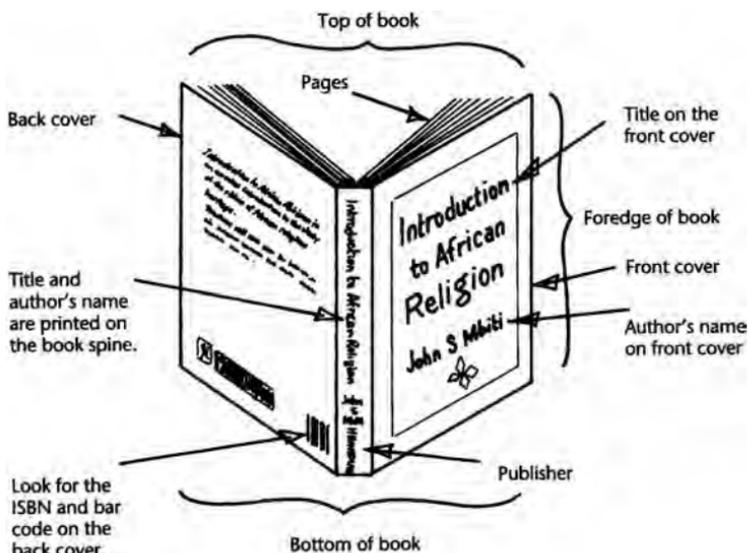


Figure 4.1. Learning about the parts of a book.

How to help readers learn about the parts of a book

In a school library, the best method to help readers learn about the parts of a book is to give a lesson. Give each student a book. Then point out the different parts of a book and explain their purpose. Ask students to find the same parts on their own book. Remember to explain the uses of the contents and index pages, as these are helpful resources. Use figures 4.1 and 4.2 and the information below. For more ideas about library lessons, see chapters 13 and 14. In a community library, you might want to put up a poster showing the parts of a book.

The parts of a book

Cover

This can be hard (hardback) or soft (paperback). The cover helps protect the book. Some librarians like to put an extra cover, which they buy from library suppliers or make from strong paper or sticky-back plastic, on popular books.

Front cover

This may have a picture on it and usually has the title of the book and the author's name; it may also have the publisher's name.

Back cover

This often has a summary of what the book is about, or it may have some people's comments about how much they enjoyed the book – these are called reviews. Most back covers list the book's own internationally recognised 10 or 13-digit ISBN, usually nowadays in the form of a computer-readable bar code. An ISBN is a computer number used by publishers and booksellers to identify a title. In some large bookshops, you will be able to order the books you want if you give the bookseller just this number. However, it is not essential information for libraries without computers.

Spine

This is the backbone of a book. If it breaks, or is damaged, there is a risk that the book's pages will fall out. On the spine, most books usually have the title of the book and the author, as well as a symbol (picture or letters) that identifies the publisher.

Spine label

All the books in your library should have a spine label, glued or stuck to the bottom of the spine. Readers will use the spine label to locate books they want and to find out if the book is information or fiction; it will also give a visual reminder of what the book is about. If, for example, a reader is looking for a biology book, he or she would look for green spine labels or the classification code number 500 (see chapter 7 for more information about classification systems).

Title page

This is usually a right-hand page near the front of the book. On it will be the book's title, author, and publisher.

Title verso page

This is traditionally the left-hand page immediately after the title page. On it will be more information about the publisher (e.g. the publisher's address) and about the book (e.g. what year it was published, if it has been reprinted, and who printed it). The title verso page will also have details of the book's copyright.

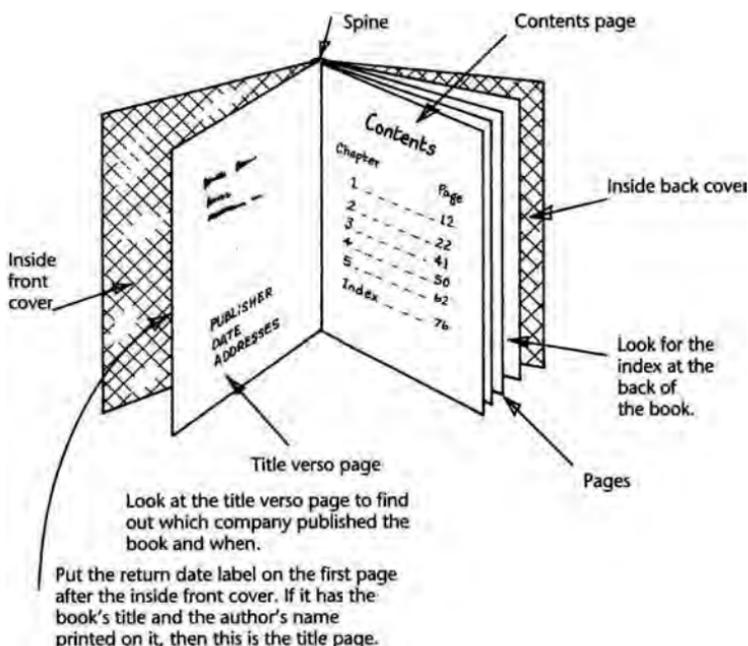


Figure 4.2. Learning about the inside of a book.

School or library nameplate and return date label

It is recommended that you glue your nameplate and a return date label on to the first right-hand page as you open the book (see figure 4.3). Explain to readers that this shows who owns the book and that it is also the place to find out what day they should return the book if they have borrowed it from the library.

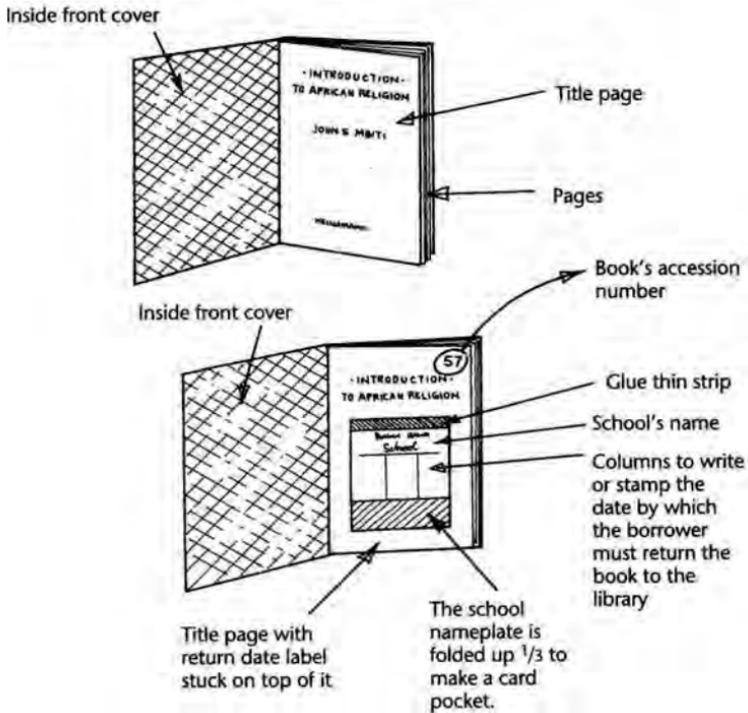


Figure 4.3. Where to place the return date label in a book.

Contents/table of contents page

Most information books have a contents page (table of contents). This gives an outline, or sometimes a brief summary, of what will be in each chapter – and a page number so that you can turn straight to the right chapter. For example, in a book on the lifecycle of a butterfly, you might see from the contents page that chapter 1 is on larvae, chapter 2 is on the chrysalis, chapter 3 is on caterpillars, and chapter 4 is on butterflies. If you want

more detailed information, then you should look at both the contents page and the index.

Index

An information book is more useful if it has an index. This is usually an alphabetical list of subjects, people, and other important items that are written about in the book, each with a page reference. An index is usually at the back of a book. The page references make it easy for the user to find the information they want. For example, use the index in this book to find out where there is more information about different types of stock. After the word 'stock', you will find several numbers. These numbers direct you to the pages in the book that have information about stock printed on them. Make sure your readers do not confuse an index with a glossary (or keywords section), which lists difficult or foreign words and explains what they mean, but does not give page references.

Before people use the library, check that they know what is the front cover, the back cover, and the spine; how to tell the title from the author (this can be quite difficult); who the publisher is; where to find the publication date; and where to find your own library details, like the return date label.

TEACHING TIP

To teach students how to use an index, given them an assignment with one question about how to grow rice, one question on how to make aeroplanes, and one question on Nelson Mandela's work in South Africa.

Explain that if they want quick answers to these questions, they need to find a reference book and use the index. In the index, they should look for the best possible word that describes the subject they want – in this case, the words would be 'rice', 'aeroplanes', and 'Mandela'.

If they want more detailed information, they should go to the appropriate bookshelf in the library, and then check the contents and index pages of relevant books.

How to help readers keep books in good condition

It is unfair to blame people for spoiling books if they have not been taught how to look after them. It can be tempting to tell people not to write inside a book; not to have dirty hands; not to take books out in the rain; not to bend the corners of the page when they forget their bookmarks; not to eat in the library; not to pull the book's spine when they are taking a book off a shelf... but lists of 'Don't do this' and 'Don't do that' can discourage readers from using books. A friendly reminder telling them what to do can be more effective: 'Use a bookmark,' 'Wash hands before touching books'. Give a bookmark as a reward when you notice a reader taking good care of books.

Explain that because books are expensive and can be easily damaged, they must be treated with respect.

Using a library and its books requires skills. Everyone will need patient, repeated explanations and a good example set by the librarian and other staff. Remember also to make the library a friendly place; otherwise, readers will not use it.

More about other types of stock

Some libraries have a variety of stock besides books. This may include magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, and audio-visual stock. The rest of this chapter looks at different types of stock that might be good for your library. These should all be included in your accession register, but you probably will not lend these out. These other types of stock are not essential, and if you do not have them, you do not need to read the remainder of this chapter. Later, if you add other types of stock, you can come back to this.

Newspapers

Newspapers are often very popular with readers. However, old newspapers soon turn yellow and attract dirt, insects, and mice. After three months, you should remove newspapers from the library, and then you can cut out the most interesting stories and organise them into general sections in a subject file or project box (see below). In this way you could create subject files on, for example, the recent elections, wildlife conservation, football, etc.



Figure 4.4. A hand-washing station outside the entrance makes it easy for students to wash their hands before entering (Ghana).

Another alternative is to give away unwanted issues of newspapers and magazines. Some readers might appreciate the materials.

Magazines

Magazines are publications produced on a regular basis, such as quarterly, monthly, or weekly. They are often in colour and have news items, feature stories, photos, and advertisements inside. A magazine can be on any subject: world events, sport, fashion, business, etc. Famous world-circulation magazines include *Time* and *Newsweek* (both report international events each week); *National Geographic* (which has excellent photographs of people and the world); *New Scientist* (about science); *The Economist* (a business magazine); and *New Internationalist* (facts about people's lives around the world, particularly in developing countries). The best magazines for secondary schools and community libraries have plenty of pictures that will raise readers' curiosity. A carefully chosen display of magazine pictures and picture captions on the wall can make reluctant readers more enthusiastic about reading short news items.

Both magazines and newspapers can be displayed in browser boxes or on special magazine racks. If you do not have these, you could make tidy piles of magazines so that readers know where to find their favourite newspapers or magazines. Each magazine should have its own pile, with issues placed in date order – the newest on top. Figure 12.5 in chapter 12 shows how to make a strong magazine folder.

Figure 4.5 shows the differences between a book, a pamphlet, and a magazine.

Pamphlets

Pamphlets are small, thin books that contain information about one subject. They are sometimes called booklets.

They look different from other books because they do not have a spine. This means that if you arrange them on the bookshelves, you cannot read the title or the name of the

author. One way to store pamphlets is to put them in a project box. Because pamphlets are cheaper (and quicker) to make than books, they often contain useful, up-to-date information, such as health and nutrition advice or advice about how to run a business.

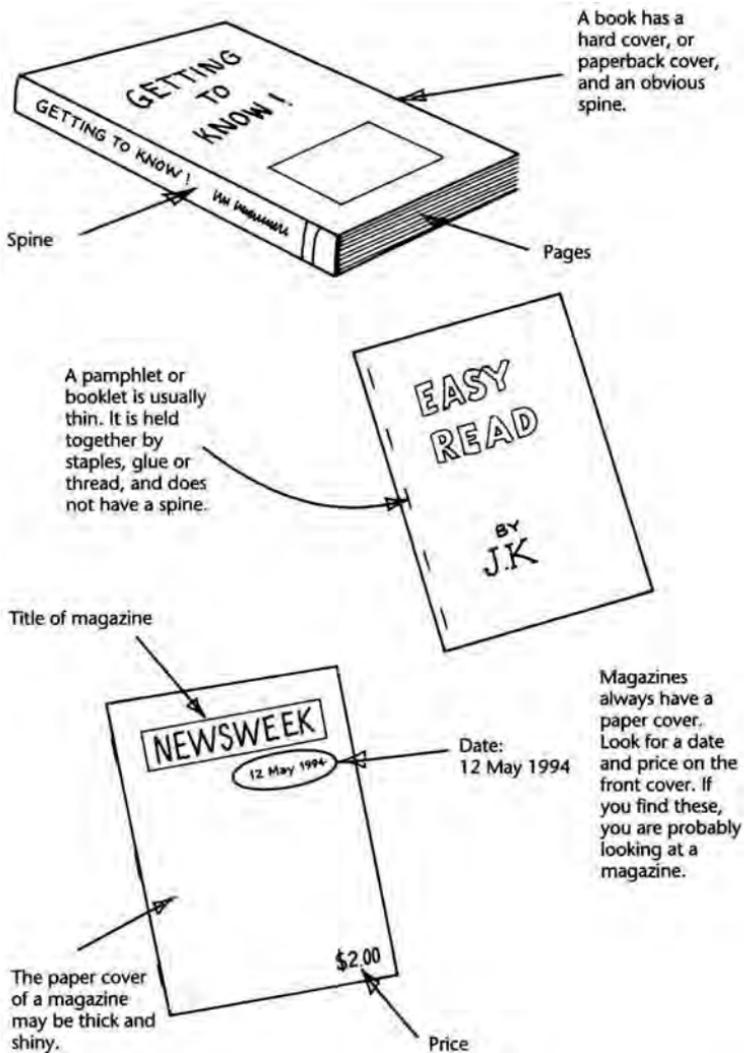


Figure 4.5. Differences between a book, a pamphlet, and a magazine.

Flip charts

Flip charts are like teachers' notes, but they are drawn on several pieces of poster-size paper. Flip charts can save teachers a lot of time, as they are a permanent record of diagrams that take several minutes to draw on the blackboard, only to be wiped out by the next teacher.

Encourage teachers to make flip charts (e.g. of the life cycle of a frog for biology or on how to vote in an election) for the subjects they teach and then store them safely in the library. The best method is to roll the flip charts up, and label them clearly on the outside. Make a cross-reference in the shelf guide and catalogue if you have one. Then store the flip charts in a project box, away from dust.

Maps and posters

The best place for all maps and posters is pinned up on the library walls or on classroom walls. Libraries look more interesting if you display lots of colourful posters. If you are unable to display all your posters, store them in a dust-free area – either folded in project boxes, rolled up in cardboard poster tubes, or in a cupboard.

Video cassettes, film reels, music tapes, CDs, CD-ROMs, and DVDs

These are all audio-visual, audio, or computer equipment. They are usually supplied in their own cases or boxes to protect them from dust. If your library is in a humid climatic zone, see if you can buy silica to protect them. Silica is a desiccant that works like a sponge absorbing the moisture in the air. Some silica is blue but, as it absorbs moisture, it turns pinky purple, and then pink. Another type starts out orange and then turns green or colourless when it is moist.

Once it changes colour, it is a signal that it is no longer absorbing moisture (some silica is always whitish or colourless – this type will not change colour but it still works the same). You do not have to throw out silica when you have used it. Just heat it up (over a low temperature) so that it dries out and turns the original colour again,

ready to be reused. Silica can usually be bought from chemists.

Audio-visual stock will include films and videos (on tape or DVD); audio stock will include cassettes or CDs of music, oral (spoken) history, and stories. CD-ROMs are compact discs that look like music CDs but provide audio-visual content, including games. In some cases, you can preserve the content on CD-ROMs by downloading them onto your computer's hard drive.

These items are useful because they allow people to see things and hear sounds they may find hard to imagine. Used well, they can be excellent teaching tools. The problem is that you will need a special device and electricity (or a generator or batteries) to use them. They must also be stored carefully. If you have not yet used audio-visual material for teaching purposes, and feel nervous about using it, don't worry. Just experiment – the results are usually very good.

It is often possible to borrow films on educational topics. Many libraries like to arrange at least one film or video night every few months, and even if they do not have electricity, they are often able to hire a generator. Social nights like this are often an excellent way to help people learn more about the world.

A number of computers have CD and DVD players included in their hardware. With a speaker connected to your computer, you may be able to play them and have dance parties or movie nights in your library. DVDs that contain movies are created for specific countries using DVD region codes. Usually you can play any DVD on a computer (if it has a DVD player included). However, with a separate DVD player that goes with a television, you will only be able to play the DVD if the region code on the disc matches that of the player.

See chapter 19 for more on using audio-visual and computer resources in the library.

Project boxes and subject files

Project boxes and subject files are two very similar ways of storing stock, such as newspaper articles, magazine cuttings, postcards, or pictures, all dealing with the same interesting subject. They are very useful places for collecting information about your country or local activities, especially if there are not many books on these subjects in your library. Give your project boxes a title so that you can file them in the title catalogue.

A project box is usually made of wood or plastic or strong card (such as a cereal packet). You can store odd-shaped stock such as thin pamphlets, maps, and videotapes in them.

Subject files are sometimes called clip files. To make a subject file, use an A4 ring binder file. Decide what information you plan to collect and write a suitable title on the file's spine (e.g. Malaria, Government Elections, Reggae Music or Cocoa Prices). Then cut out each article carefully and glue it on to a piece of A4 paper, remembering to write the name of the publication where you took it from, and the date, on the paper. A good place for this information is the top right-hand corner of the page. Build up subject files for your library with the help of library club members or library monitors.



Figure 4.6. Students reading attentively in Botswana.