I Made the Change!

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Do we really need to use the Dewey Decimal System? The first time I heard that questions I was at a retirement party for a fellow media specialist. Needless to say, I was flabbergasted. How could a media specialist question the use of the Dewey Decimal System? This paper will present my transition from a non-believer of changing the media center from the Dewey Decimal System to organizing by genres and the steps involved in making that change in the fiction section in my library. The school librarian at Mountain Home High School, D. Pendergrass, expresses my feelings exactly in the following quote, "I have panic attacks just thinking about doing away with the Dewey Decimal Classification system. Why would we want to completely change a system that has worked without fail or problems?" (Pendergrass, 2013)

I felt the same way D. Pendergrass does in reference to teaching the Dewey Decimal System, which I have taught for years to my second through fourth graders. Why change a system that has worked since the 1800s? If students found the Dewey Decimal System boring, then perhaps the methods the media specialists were using didn't include enough enthusiasm.

> So if Dewey is not working for other libraries it might not be the system but the teaching of the system that needs to be revamped. I know as school librarians we are in a world of constant change and progression, but not everything has to change. Consistency is the key-we don't have to jump on every newer, cooler, or hipper way of doing things. (Pendergrass, 2013)

> The primary benefit of the Dewey Decimal System is that it catalogs books so that they can be easily located. Rather than having to randomly sort through stacks of books, or rely upon a system of alphabetization, students and researchers can find a book on a particular subject in a card catalog (paper or digital), then locate it on the bookshelf. (Adamich, 2014)

How was I to know that my entire way of thinking was about to come into question during my attendance at a local literature conference in March 2014? During the conference, I attended a session on how to genre-fy your collection. The presenter could barely share her presentation before the audience turned on her. They questioned everything she said and what she did by arranging her media center by genre. Needless to say, I left the session feeling sorry for the presenter and taking a hard look at my own thoughts on the topic.

> We are in the midst of a huge Dewey debacle in school library media centers! More and more, School library media specialists are considering the benefits and the damages associated with Ditching Dewey and moving to a genre-based organization of their collections. (Snipes, 2014)

> Many school librarians are questioning the method of arranging their library collections. The move away from Dewey classification to genres has resulted in confusion, unanswered questions and a variety of attempt. (Acedo, 2013)

I began to review articles and blogs as well as discussing the topic of genre-fying the library media center with other media specialists. Once I decided to make the change, I started discussing the change with my paraprofessional. She and I brainstormed what sections to include and how to go about the process. We talked about color dots, which several bloggers said they used, but we decided to use graphic labels because we use colored dots to level our Accelerated Reader books, and we did not want students to become confused. We spent hours looking at labels on Demco. Who knew there were so many choices for fantasy, historical, mystery, etc.? We made our choice, ordered the labels and label protectors, and waited.

In the spring of 2015, I decided to make some changes in the media center. After purchasing a number of graphic novels, I shelved them together for easy access. The biography section was located at the end of the non-fiction section. While sorting through the non-fiction section, I pulled out a new series, Who am I? and shelved them together. This is a series that students were always asking for. We already have an easy reader section, but I decided to pull out some easy chapter books to make a more extensive section for first and second graders who are ready for more of a challenge but not necessarily the more advanced subject matter found in the regular fiction section. I spoke with the second grade teachers, and they were on board with the creation of a section of starter chapter books. Because our school is highly vested in the Renaissance program, Accelerated Reader, I moved the chapter books that were level 2.0-3.0. I decided to leave the higher levels threes in the regular fiction section for some of the students in advanced grades but reading on a lower level. My goal was, and still is, the same as any librarian, as K. Parrott points out in her article, "Throwing Dewey Overboard". She states, "Ultimately, the librarians wanted to provide the community with a collection that was highly browse able, intuitive to navigate, and grouped into subject areas that directly addressed the browsing and searching patterns of children. We want our users to be able to locate material for their reading pleasure." (Parrott, 2013) By making these changes, my hope is that the students and teachers will find the new organizational structure to be easier to search, browse, and select books available in our own media center.

After running a Circulation Report of the fiction section on Destiny, I found many books were outdated and/or not being checked out and decided to pull them from inventory. It was very hard for me to discard books that were still in good shape and what I considered good literature while keeping books like the Diary of a Wimpy Kid . A good friend and recently retired media specialist stepped in to help me. It seemed like we got rid of half of the fiction collection. The removed books were gathered and made available to teachers to add to their existing classroom libraries. Some of the teachers were not happy and wanted to know why I was getting rid of so many 'good' books. Any books left after several days were removed. I wanted to do this quickly before I changed my mind.

The next step was pulling the rest of the books off of the shelf and placing them in groups by genre. I was able to see quickly which sections were lacking as well as seeing some holes in our existing series. I knew I could complete these series when my budget was released. I stopped to reflect on how one's library collection reflects the media specialist. I have been at my school for sixteen years, so our collection was heavy in mystery and historical fiction which happens to be my favorite genres.

Once our labels arrived and our books were sorted, it was time to look at the books that did not have a clear genre. This took a lot of time because each book had to be individually handled and reviewed. I used Scholastic Book Wizard and Follett's Titlewave. These programs sometimes listed more than one choice, so I had to think about our students and place the book where I thought our students would look for the title.

> The biggest challenge is the outlier-that book that doesn't readily belong in any of your distinct categories. At Darien, we ran into this problem numerous times. Of course, there is no right answers-consider doing whatever you think will make more sense to your patrons and contribute to their ease of use. The important thing is to have a plan. (Parrot, 2013)

 At this point, I came across the problem of authors who wrote more than one genre. This also meant thinking about our school population. Another issue was whether to keep books like the 39 Clues series in the mystery section or move them to the series section. After discussing this with my paraprofessional who spends a lot of time assisting students with locating books, I decided to keep the 39 Clues series in the mystery section, but I moved them to the end of the section and kept them all together even though they are written by different authors. I left the Little House in the Prairie series in the historical section because it is not very popular, but I moved the American Girls books to the series section because I have American Girls historical mysteries, classics, and modern day books. I may go back and change some of these decisions after the students start checking out. Once we got all of the books put into sections, it was time to physically apply the genre stickers and label protectors. This took a lot longer than I had anticipated. We also found ourselves moving books based on changes we made while labeling. In addition to labeling the books by genre, I also wanted to label the book series so that they could be kept in order. I had used color dots for Accelerated Reader and graphic labels for genres, so I really wasn't sure how to label the books that were a part of a series without causing confusion. I decided to use numeric numbers from Demco since I did not put series labels on the books. I also created a notebook with a page for each series which I shelved in the fiction section. I plan to put a couple of links on the media web page to sites that lists series in order.

> Patrons should notice your new nonfiction section. It should be intuitive and easy for them to use. Your collection needs identifying characteristics, and you need to know what most of those will be before you start your process. Your new collection will need more than a new arrangement. Your books will require new spine labels, which need to be sourced and purchased, and then applied. As anyone who has done a reorganization of any type before knows, the physical conversion of the books is definitely the most time-consuming. One of the greatest pieces of advice we got before beginning our own reorganization was from our building supervisor Lois Calka, who advised us to handle the books as few times as possible. The more times you physically deal with each book, the longer your reorganization will take. (Parrott, 2013)

I wanted the students to find this new arrangement easy, so I made some additional signs, and I changed the OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog). I started out by searching the internet for signage that I liked. Then, I made color 8x11 prints which I took to Office Max and had them enlarge to poster size.

Finally, I hung these on the wall in the fiction section. Next, I tried a couple of ideas with the genre labels. I enlarged them on the copier, but I didn't like the way they looked in black and white. I tried some different things on the computer and found that I could enlarge the actual label from Demco and print them on the color printer. They were perfect. I took some old magazine boxes, attached the sheets, and made the shelf marker for each section. After reading a lot of blogs that talked about the pros and cons of changing the catalog, I decided to change it. It was very time consuming to open each MARC record and add the genre. I added the new classification word next to the abbreviation for fiction to make searching and creating a list easier in Destiny. After completing these changes, I included this information in a Power Point presentation to share with students and teachers to make everyone aware of how to navigate the new organizational structure.

This was a much bigger project then I could have imagined. Even after reading the blogs of others who have completed these changes before me, I did not realize how long it would take. I am glad that I did this over the summer, although, it will be an ongoing project with the addition of new books throughout the year. If I had the time, I would have redone all the spine labels so that the labels were placed in the same location on each book's spine. I would definitely encourage others to use label protectors as the genre labels come off easily. Running out of labels slowed our progress when we had to stop and acquire additional supplies. Since there were only two people working on this transition, I think we could have finished the project sooner if I had enlisted more help.

Here are the top reasons to ditch Dewey and genre-fy your library:

It's student centered. School librarians spend an enormous amount of time helping students locate the book they want. The easier it is for kids to locate materials, the more content-rich conversations can be happening about the actual books.

It makes browsing easier. Like materials are grouped together. Students and patrons looking for their favorite kinds of books can find them faster and often without having to rely on the catalog.

It can be adapted to meet the changing needs of students. As curriculum changes or trends in student reading habits shift, the collection can evolve and grow with them.

Students discover new authors and read more broadly within their favorite genres. For a child who loved reading J. K. Rowling, she may branch out to enjoy C.L. Lewis, Tolkein by browsing deeply within the genre.

It allows librarians to examine, evaluate, and really get to know the collection. By separating into genre-based sections, librarians can see clearly which areas need weeding and which ones need an influx of new titles. (Parrott, 2013)

By the time this project is done, there will be hundreds of hours logged on our end, but those hundreds of hours will translate into positive user experiences. Positive user experiences translate into repeat customers, and in our business that means lifelong readers and learners, the ultimate goal in what we do. (Miller, 2013)

I believe that making this move will help in the future development of the collection by filling in the gaps that once existed in the fiction section. Making the change from the Dewey Decimal System to organizing by genre will encourage the love of reading by offering students a variety of books that are labeled clearly, shelved in colorful sections, and easily searched.

> Reading is a foundational tool for successful learning in and outside of school at the middle and high school levels. Educators are keenly aware of the consequences to the lifelong learner as they develop their comprehension skills. The condition of College and Career Readiness 2012 reported by ACT found that only 52 percent of high school graduates met the reading benchmark. While this percentage has remained steady from 2010 to 2012 and is down from 53 percent in 2008 and 2009, students, educators, parents, and decision makers should not satisfied with this level of proficiency. Even if students are not pursuing post-secondary education, they must be proficient readers to contribute to the workforce and to civic and political life. (Moreillon, 2013)

I hope that the students feel the same excitement that I felt while working on this reorganization of the media center. Just adding the shelf markers and weeding the older books from the collection have added color to the shelves. I cannot wait to see the surprise and hear the discussion of the students as they explore the different sections that we have created for their pleasure.

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