Improving the Shelving of Items at Bryan College: Workflow and Best Practices

Process Maps

Former Shelving Process

Returned books checked in at circulation desk.
↓
Books sorted and placed by circulation desk workers in call number order on cart at circulation desk.
↓
Trained shelver takes cart to second floor for shelving.
↓
Shelver retrieves books from tables and carrels and places them on cart.
↓
Shelver begins shelving books. Patrons place books they have used at the end of the row from which they took the book. Library shelvers watch for such books and reshelve them as they perform their normal shelving duties.

New Shelving Process

Returned books checked in at circulation desk
↓
Books sorted and placed by circulation desk workers in call number order on cart at circulation desk.
↓
Trained shelver takes cart to second floor for shelving.
↓
Shelver retrieves books from tables and carrels and adds them to the cart for reshelving. During the transition to the new process, shelvers still watch for books reshelved by patrons at the ends of the rows.
↓
Shelvers reshelve books found on second floor return carts.

Former Procedure for Training Shelvers

Some student workers were identified to be trained as shelvers.
↓
Verbal, one-on-one explanation given by librarian of Dewey Decimal Classification system and call numbers.
↓

Student shelver asked to rearrange a cart of books in proper call number order.
↓
Cart checked by librarian. Any errors corrected and explained to shelver.
↓
Shelver takes cart of books to shelving area. Books are shelved spine-down by new shelver so that librarian can check for correct order.
↓
If book is incorrectly shelved, librarian makes a note of it and informs the new shelver.
↓
If all books are shelved properly, the student is considered a regular shelver.

New Procedure for Training Shelvers

All circulation desk workers receive shelving training.
↓
Verbal, one-on-one explanation given by librarian of Dewey Decimal Classification system and call numbers.
↓
Shelving trainee completes Dewey Easy computer program.
↓
Student shelver asked to rearrange a cart of books in proper call number order.
↓
Cart checked by librarian. Any errors are corrected and explained to shelver.
↓
Shelver takes cart of books to shelving area. Books are shelved spine-down by new shelver so that librarian can go through and check for correct order.
↓
If book is incorrectly shelved, librarian makes a note of it and informs the new shelver.
↓
If all books are shelved properly, the student is considered a trained shelver.

Reflections: Shelving Best Practice Suggestions

As part of this study, consideration was given to the incorporation of best practices gleaned through a survey of sister ACA libraries and a review of two

benchmark shelving projects at other libraries.* As we planned this project, some of these practices became part of our new approach to shelving. Others are still under consideration.

1. A 24-hour turnaround time for reshelving books is a desirable goal.

2. We now direct patrons to return books they have used while in the library to nearby carts.

3. Staff gather books used in the library from tables and carrels and place on return carts.

4. We have not initiated the step of returning in-library-use books to the circulation desk for scanning to record use. A recommendation is that we initiate this step in order to register use of such items, providing a useful statistic at budget time.

5. We now use the Dewey Easy** program to train shelvers.

6. We frequently shelve books collecting in the carts at the circulation desk rather than waiting for the carts to fill completely. All circulation desk workers were trained to perform shelving, thus eliminating the need to wait for a trained shelver to report for duty.

7. It is difficult for weekend workers to perform shelving duty as it requires that they be absent from the circulation desk. Often, they are the only workers on duty at those times.

8. Further thought should be placed upon requiring regular (i.e., more than once per year) shelf reading of high-use Dewey areas in our library (e.g., the 200s and the 800s).

9. For high-use areas, we may want to consider asking summer regular staff to perform additional shelf reading as needed.

10. Produce an Inventory of Basic Skills to facilitate training of circulation desk workers and shelvers.

11. Consider training and appointing a student worker as a shelving team leader.

12. Consider incentives/motivators for shelving and shelf-reading workers.

*Creelan, Marilee, Rebecca R. Fehrenbach, and Jacqueline A. Rodgers. 1998. A Benchmark for Quality Shelving: Weaving Our Way through the Stacks. Unpublished. Medical College of Georgia: Augusta, Ga. Available at http://www.mcg.edu/Library/MLA/Index.html.

Report on Shelving Process, January-May 1999. University of Virginia Library. Available at http://www.lib.virginia.edu/mis/benchmarking/bench-shortrpt.html.

** The computer training program for shelvers is available as either Dewey Easy or LC Easy. Users may download a trial version. For more information on these products, go to http://librarytools.com/