

Book Displays Increase Fiction Circulation over 90%, Non-Fiction Circulation 25%

Michele Seipp, Sandra Lindberg & Keith Curry Lance

One of the most visible differences between bookstores and libraries is the manner in which books are presented to the public. At bookstores, it is more common to find books displayed, cover facing out, while in libraries, books are usually shelved so that only the spine is readily visible. More and more public libraries, however, are adopting the practice of displaying books as bookstores do. What difference does this make to a library's circulation statistics?

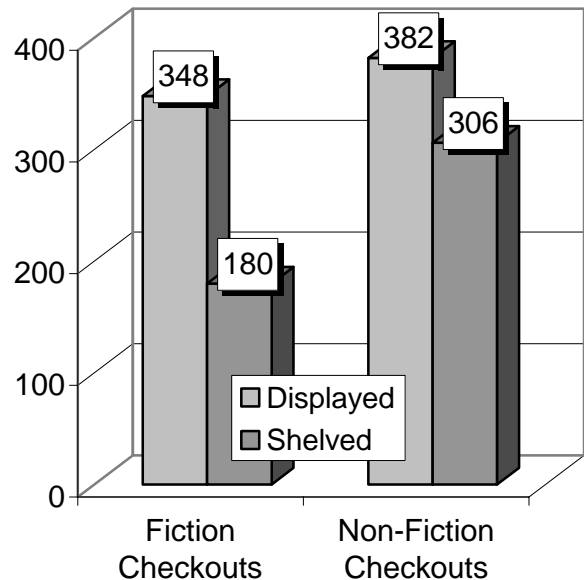
At Lafayette Public Library, Michele Seipp, Director, and Sandra Lindberg, Coordinator of Information Services, asked this question. Library managers assumed that patrons like to browse and will examine books on display, but they had no hard evidence of that. Likewise, they did not know if it mattered what type of books were on display (i.e., fiction, non-fiction). Because of the inconvenience involved in having displayed books out of place, library managers wanted to know whether the assumed increased usage was worth the need to hunt for books that aren't "on the shelf" where they are "supposed to be." Accordingly, during the first three months of 2002, Lindberg managed a research project to investigate these issues.

The study involved 182 adult fiction titles and 398 non-fiction titles of which the library owned two copies. All books involved in the study were at least one year old. For each title, one copy was displayed, while the other remained in the stacks. The library's standard checkout period is three weeks with a single renewal of an additional three weeks.



Mural on the Baseline Road façade of Lafayette Public Library

Fiction & Non-Fiction Circulation Transactions for Displayed Vs. Shelved Books: Lafayette Public Library, January-March 2002



Results:

- Of the 182 fiction titles, display copies were checked out 348 times, compared to 180 times for shelf copies. That is an increase of 93 percent for display copies.
- Of the 398 non-fiction titles, 382 display copies were checked out, compared to 306 shelf copies. That is an increase of 25 percent for display copies.

"Some impressive numbers," reported Seipp. "I'd vote for the increase in circulation over the inconvenience of having to track down books that might be in a display rather than in their spot on the shelf."

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