

Library Shops – Top Tips

1. Shop it!

We have found that bringing all for-sale goods into a focal point of the library helps customers and boosts sales. Putting merchandise in locked glass cabinets or on racks behind the counter can put less confident customers off from even enquiring, let alone purchasing. Mixing for-sale goods among shelving does not always produce the impulse buying we hope for, as customers are not into 'buying' mode as they would when in a shop.

2. Use your space

Like in many library authorities, our space is often at a premium. Luckily, shops fit well with our drive to improve the way we use that space, removing large counters in favour of self-service and small, movable staff pods. Shops can be 'movable' too – so it's 'shop by day' and event space in the evening. We do this by using purpose built, mini merchandising units, mobile options and easy to move hooks, shelves and spinners. Consider sight lines, storage options, signposting, shelf style, mobility, security, branding and flexibility.

3. Keep it fresh

We have learned that libraries are driven by 'repeat business' – our customers keep coming back! And they are drawn to new stuff – this works for our shops just as well as it does for our 'quick picks' and 'recommended reads'. In both cases we showcase new and topical stuff that really catches our customers' eye, aiming to Strike a balance between busy shelves and

ones that look sparse. We group merchandise together in themes and avoid displaying every product in the same way. Use acrylics to promote new lines or special offers and above all make sure everything stays clean and tidy. Keep it simple and pay attention to detail.

4. Staff make it work

Shops, like libraries, do not run themselves. Self-service may be the main way to manage circulation nowadays, but our staff are busy serving customers and our shops are part of this service. Staff manage their shop and own its success.

5. Know your customers

Another way in which running shops resembles running libraries: you need to know your customers, what they need, the events shaping their lives and their communities. It can be all about the Olympics one month, and helping children with school homework the next. Then Christmas comes along before you know it – shops that plan stock with an eye on these events tend to do well. Naturally, library customers come in all shapes and sizes, and our stock reflects this.

6. Find your *Unique Selling Point (USP)*!

We learnt early on that simply copying the competition doesn't get you anywhere. In every location, there may be lines of goods that are well catered for elsewhere. Our shops thrive where we offer something unique or different – and at the right price.

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