VISUAL MERCHANDISING

FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR APPLYING BOOKSTORE INSIGHTS TO LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

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WHY MERCHANDISE?

Library service has changed; convenience is paramount. [1]

Customers' perceptions of the shopping experience, and therefore their expectations, have changed. [2][3]

These two things combined have changed how customers interact with their libraries.

It works. [4]

WHERE TO START?

1 Examine how things are right now.

2 Study how your customers are currently interacting with your space.

3 Create a plan.

1 Examine how things are right now.

What do you already have in terms of:
- Furniture
- Space
- Accessories (book easels, sign holders, etc.)

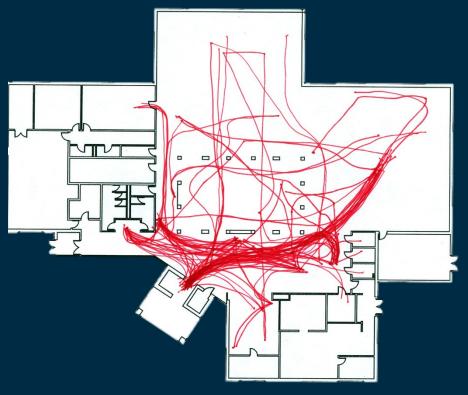**What type of shelving do you have?**

How is your entrance arranged?

What collections are struggling and why might that be?
- Is it lack of interest or lack of knowledge that they exist?
- Are there adjacencies in place that are naturally helping certain collections circulate? (Think adult fiction and teen fiction.)

2

Study how your customers are currently interacting with your space.

Pick an hour each day for a week and sketch a heat map of people entering/exiting your library.

3 Create a plan.

What collections can be moved around to help promote their circulation?
- Map this out for clarity. More than one person will likely be helping.

Similarly, what collections are easily accessed or prominently featured that don't need to be?

Plan to shift and possibly weed.
- You may not need as much space as you think you do for certain collections. If you can condense to free up ranges for display, you should consider it.

What furniture is currently being used or could be repurposed to display books? (No folding tables!)

3

Create a plan.

Do you have fixtures or small shelving units that can be moved to a different area of the library?
- It's easier than you may think. Defining an entryway that promotes your products and leads people through your building will help to encourage them to explore for longer periods of time and in deeper areas of the space.

Consider developing and committing to a brand identity.
- This should be all-encompassing, from the font used on signs and promotional materials to the colors associated with your library.
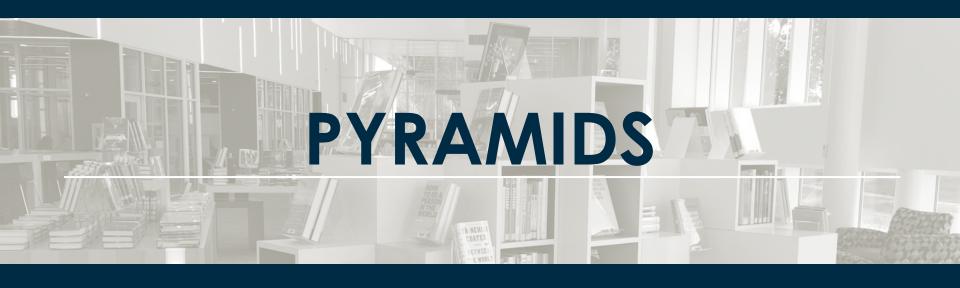
THE RULES

But first,
a note…

This is not
my personal
opinion.

It's
science.[5]

Pyramids
Face Out/Front Up
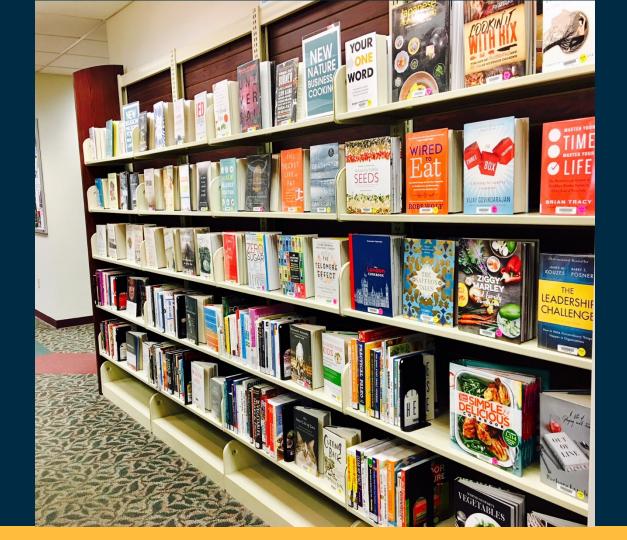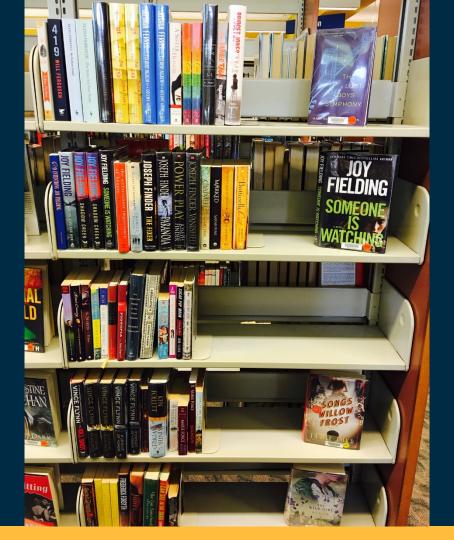# Straight Lines
Balance and Symmetry
NO PROPS.

PYRAMIDS

STAFF PICKS

JANE GREEN — summer secrets

Thank you, Octopus

THE DOG ENCYCLOPEDIA — THE DEFINITIVE VISUAL GUIDE

Marcel the Shell with Shoes On: Things About Me

30 DAYS OF NIGHT

BLACKBERRY — SARAH JIO

natalie BABBITT — TUCK EVERLASTING

STIFF — The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers

Frog Music — Emma Donoghue

LISA GARDNER — FEAR NOTHING

The Walk — RICHARD PAUL

Elizabeth Berg

THROW — THE CURVE

Pretty Once Day — DAVID

FIND MOMO COAST TO COAST

Essential! Survival Guide to School

LISA SCOTTOLINE — DON'T GO

Crenshaw — KATHERINE APPLEGATE

Little Women

SUMMER

PEANUTS!

FACE OUT/FRONT UP

STRAIGHT LINES

BALANCE AND SYMMETRY

NO PROPS.

CHALLENGES

Too many books vs. too few books – single and multiple copies.

The rules are set up to work for both scenarios.

STATION ELEVEN

A NOVEL

EMILY ST. JOHN MANDEL

PRAISE FOR SHOTGUN LOVESONGS

GRAVE MERCY

ROBIN LAFEVERS

NEW & EMERGING GENRES

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

SARAH J. MAAS

THRONE OF GLASS

LEV GROSSMAN

THE MAGICIANS

A NOVEL

MY NAME IS MEMORY

ANN BRASHARES

FIRE IS YOUR WATER

No money? How to work with what you have.

Do you have fixtures that can be repurposed?

End table!

Copier table!

Does your library have slanted shelving?

Are there area bookstores you can reach out to?
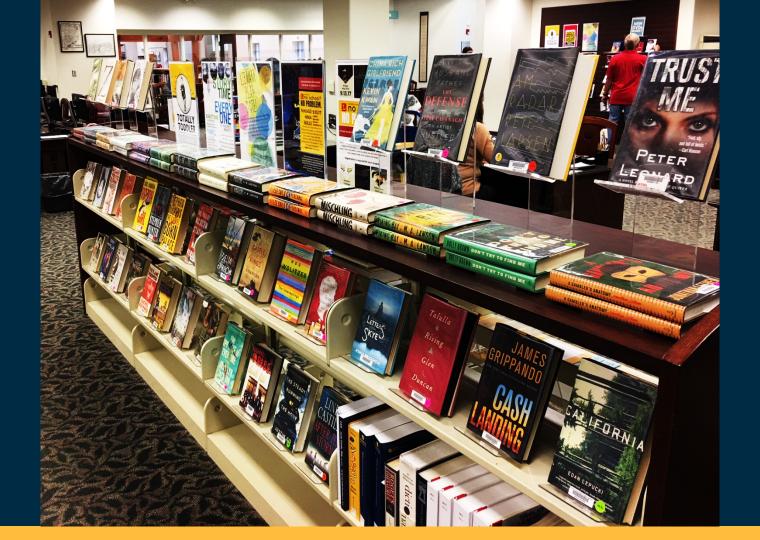(i.e. Barnes and Noble, Books-a-Million)

Do you have book stacks that are out in the open?

Signage and brand identity plays a role.

If you library already has an established "brand" (i.e. logo, colors, font, etc.), lean into it.

- Though it may seem boring to you, it will help customers to know that the merchandising and signage are something the library is taking ownership of. This will help them to associate the "shopping experience" with your library.

Use your brand colors and font for all signs associated with displays. Not only does it appear more professional, but it will aid in the book browsing process.

Create a template that all staff can access and adjust as need presents itself.

- Library displays will often be more spur-of-the-moment than we expect as we respond to the ebb and flow of checkouts. Having the ability to switch it up and keep it branded is important.

Staffing: How to do more without additional people

First, recognize that this is most likely a culture change for your library.
- We are not used to having to push our product. In many libraries it was simply never a priority and so the work that goes into it wasn't a priority either.
- Be open with staff about why this is important and stress that this is *everyone's* responsibility. Repeat this often.

Build the work into your daily schedule.
- Make it a portion of your opening and closing routine to recover the entire library.
- Provide time for it on the schedule if possible.

Hold people accountable.
- If someone isn't following the rules, correct them – preferably in the moment.
- Avoid the temptation to make this just one person's responsibility. It takes a team.

QUESTIONS?

REFERENCES

1. Hoffert, B. (2017). Under the surface. *Library Journal, 142*(3), 30.

2. Cant, M. C., P., and Y. Hefer. "Visual merchandising displays: Wasted effort or strategic move? The dilemma faced by apparel retail stores." *Journal of Applied Business Research* 28.6 (2012): 1489-96. *ProQuest.* Web. 3 June 2017.

3. Bastow-Shoop, H., Zetocha, D. & Passewitz, G. (1991). Visual merchandising: a guide for small retailers. Retrieved 3 June 2017 from http://ncrcrd.msu.edu/uploads/files/NCRCRD-rrd155-print.pdf.

4. Krishnakumar, M. (2014). The role of visual merchandising in apparel purchase decision. *IUP Journal Of Management Research, 13*(1), 37-54.

5. Janiszewski, C. (1998). The influence of display characteristics on visual exploratory search behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research. 25*(3), 290-301. Retrieved 3 June 2017.