

Turbo-Charged Pages

How a Quick-Draw, Smartphone-Toting Rookie
Reversed Sluggish Shelving

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Mid-Columbia Libraries, Kennewick Branch

Mid-Columbia Libraries' Kennewick Branch is approximately 30,000 square feet in size and circulates more than 800,000 items annually. We employ 13 part time pages who are responsible for 100% of the shelving and 99% of the manual check-in (no RFID or automated sorters). The library is open to the public 70 hours per week.

Find the Path

- **Determine reasonable targets for your library.** If you want to determine a shelving speed, find out what the speed is for everyone working in your building. A solid hour of shelving isn't necessary; 30-50 books should provide a reasonably accurate snapshot speed. Pages are expected to shelve no slower than 150 items per hour during the first 6 months in my branch to keep their jobs. As they start their 6th month, I let them know 250 is their new minimum (if they haven't already cleared it). Most of my pages are shelving 250-350 items per hour, with the leaders hovering at 400. The targets being used in my branch are not applicable for a setting that is significantly different. This point is demonstrated in figure 1.

The same 20 adult fiction books were shelved by the same person in 2 different libraries:

- Shelving speed = 240/hour in 30,000 square foot building with more than 1,000 adult fiction shelves
- Shelving speed = 343/hour in 6,000 square foot building with 140 adult fiction shelves

**my recommended target for this 6,000 ft. building would be 225 or 250/hour*

Figure 1

Shelving Assessment Procedure

1. Count books on cart and order for shelving.
2. Photograph cart and email photo to self for printing.
3. Begin phone timer when page arrives at shelf to begin (stop and restart timer for legitimate interruptions).
4. Stop timer when empty cart emerges from shelves.
5. Check 10 books for shelving accuracy using the printed photo of the cart.
6. Photograph shelf with error for later conversation.
7. Calculate speed and accuracy.

Shelving Speed Formula

(Quantity/minutes) 60 minutes in hour = books/hour

Example: 20 books shelved in 3.5 minutes
(20 / 3.5) 60 = 343/hour

When I assess shelving speed, I'm always on the floor so I can be aware of factors that may influence speed. I can't be on the floor without customers asking me for help, so sometimes multi-tasking results in an invalid assessment. Pages may or may not know they're being assessed. . Occasionally an assessment is done by a trusted colleague when I'm not in the building.

figure 2



Photo of cart ready to shelve

figure 3

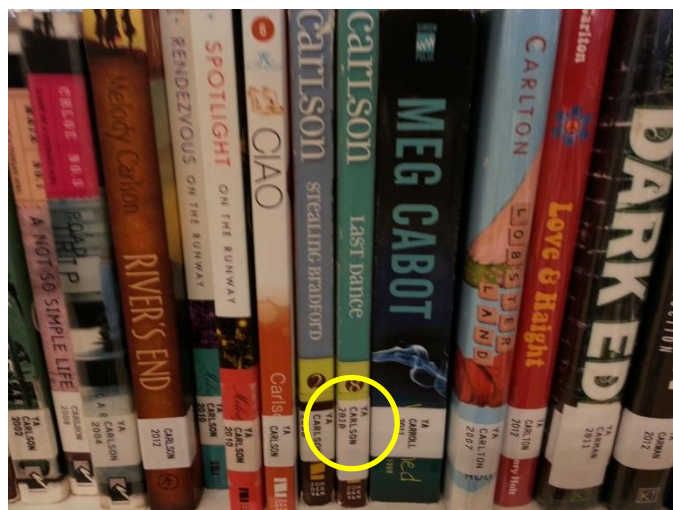


Photo of shelving error for post-assessment coaching

Shape the Path

Fix the environment before you evaluate employee performance

- Remove efficiency obstacles: Study how staff is moving in the space with a keen eye for unnecessary repetition. We found books were often being handled more than 5 times between book drop and shelf.
- Replace equipment that contributes to inefficiencies with equipment that is mobile and ergonomic. It's unreasonable to expect excellent performance from people who are working with inferior equipment.
- Engage in a lot of dialogue as you recreate the workspace. The dialogue will go far in getting participants invested in the changes as they occur. Apathy will begin to give way to excitement and hope.
- *Do something radical to unite the team in conspiracy.* We had all shipment boxes dumped into a big book return tub. We receive shipments from other branches 3 times a day. One of our expandable book return bins will hold about 20 crates full of books if the contents of each are upended and dumped. These crates used to sit around waiting for someone to sort and cart them up for check-in. The first day I said let's just dump all of them in this bin, mouths hung open all around me. It took a week for everyone in-branch to embrace the new way, which was just about the time people from other branches began bashing us for 'book abuse'. Our team was prepared to defend the practice and prove its success. An inquiry led leadership to fully endorse the practice and have it replicated by the very branches that were persecuting us as heathens. This victory gave our team a unifying event that and built resolve and encouraged more creative thinking.

Establish expectations and communicate them clearly

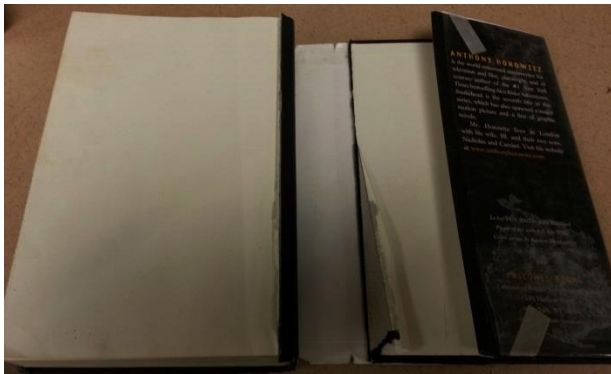
- Check-in is not the time to talk to co-workers. Any conversation conducted while checking in must be task related in order to decrease error rates. We were making about 2 errors per 1,000 items. In some cases items didn't get cleared from customer accounts resulting in reduced credibility with customers.
- Pages are not allowed to carry their cell phones during their shift, and internet access was removed from check-in computers.
- Performance appraisals were developed to regularly provide documented communication regarding current performance and future expectations.

Photos are regularly shared via email to define specific expectations. Some photos are posted in relevant staff work areas as triggers that last beyond the email message.



Great display choice

Poor display choice



On shelf; who was asleep at check-in?



correct

incorrect



This is how we want to keep this



Like this Not like this



Poor shelf balance



after 2 minute repair

Resources

James, Geoffrey. "10 Things Employees Want More Than a Raise." *Inc.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 Oct. 2014. <http://www.inc.com/geoffrey-james/10-things-employees-want-more-than-a-raise.html>

Rzeczynski, Mary. "Improving Your Library's Culture." *Public Libraries* 53.3 (2014): 12-13.