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### Shadowing a Proven Professional

I interviewed Ginger Ikeda, school librarian for Keaau Middle School in Keaau, Hawaii. She gave me with me twice in March 2005, for about one hour and forty-five minutes in total, in order to illuminate for me her selection and deselection processes. As a school librarian sharing space with two public librarians, Ms. Ikeda had to consider several librarians' points-of-view, and strict criteria, especially in the deselection process.

Ms. Ikeda has a nominal budget of \$1000.00. This leaves little left, after replacements of lost or damaged books. An order for a set of encyclopedias can easily wipe out this budget. Ms. Ikeda considers the curriculum at KMS (Keaau Middle School) when she does her ordering. She finds her public library counterparts also consider the needs of the school as they administer their budget. This library media specialist consults fliers and catalogs she receives from reputable publishers in order to purchase materials with the limited funds she controls. If there is a need, Mrs. Ikeda has discovered the administrator at the school to be responsive in 'finding' money for necessary materials.

This situation is similar in some ways to my previous situation as acting librarian at Waiakea Intermediate School. I had a budget of \$5000.00 for the needs of the nine-hundred-some students and sixty-odd faculty and staff that accessed the library. I found that to be sufficient for subscriptions, supplies and repairs, but not sufficient for new book orders over \$500.00. The first year I worked at this library, I ordered minimally. The following year I lobbied the parent association for funds for a new set of

encyclopedias, and I got some money from departments for orders that benefited the curriculum. The third year, I presented my 'dream plan' to the advisory board (we had come into Title One funds for the first time), and was able to purchase \$12,000.00 worth of new poetry, fiction, mythology and science books. My previous years of observation of and participation in the curriculum allowed me to garner support from the faculty for these expenditures. Administering these funds was a learning experience. At the close of that year, I successfully lobbied to have the library base funds increased to \$7000.00 (using budgetary records from years previous), and secured funds for the biography section, and for specific sections of the science section. In this CMP project, I am practicing on a small scale what I would have done in reality, had I remained in place as librarian at WIS.

My forays into selection during year three of my library employment were mostly online. I used Follett to a great extent, because it was easy to use, and had full text reviews available. I did not order materials unless I could assess them with the full text reviews, unless the author was a known winner in my library, verifiable through circulation records. This author test was used mostly for the fiction orders. During the period between semesters, when teachers were reinforcing routines, and we had a lull in library usage, I consulted the full text reviews and made selections based on quality, requests of students and teachers, and curriculum. I asked for three reviews, and would not order materials that did not have at least two favorable reviews, except in the case of mythology, which was an area that seemed to have little available, and yet this area is a major component of the grade seven curriculum. I consulted several sources but found myself, regrettably, taking what I could get. Fortunately, the mythology portion of the

funding plan was small. I consulted the book vendor Baker and Taylor, but found it less user friendly. The other vendor I consulted was Gumdrop Books, because the vendor always came personally to see me, and showed me actual books. I valued this personal service, and made a point of ordering books from this vendor yearly. The materials were of good quality, and useful to the school curriculum. In retrospect, I wish I had done more footwork in seeking materials particular to Hawaii. I was aware of the small presses due to information given by School Library Services, but I was overwhelmed by the scope of ordering to be done in a short period of time.

Returning to Keaau Middle School, deselection of materials at this institution is a scientific process. Library media specialist Ikeda approaches this task in a systematic fashion, with tools in hand and budgetary restrictions in mind, to aid in the process. Ms. Ikeda consults “Weeding the School Library Media Collection: A Systematic Approach to Strengthening the Library Media Collection,” *Materials Selection Policy for School Library Instructional Technology Centers*, *Children’s Services Materials Selection Policy*, “Some Special Considerations...By Dewey Sections,” and *Draft Guidelines for collection Weeding for Children’s Materials*. These sets of guidelines give recommendations for publication year and quality of materials, and underscore the unique considerations for materials in various sections of the library. Using these formulae take the emotion and guesswork out of initial deselection. Reality, such as budget, primary source considerations, and usage, may cause the librarian to place initial deselections back on the shelf, but for the first sweep, these rules are invaluable.

For example, “Draft Guidelines...” urges the librarians to examine the 520 Astronomy section for mention of spacecraft on the moon, Mars, and Venus. Publication

date should not exceed five years, and if the book has not circulated in three years, it should be considered for deselection. The 580 Botany or Plants section should have mention of DNA and cloning. Bioethics should be featured. Publication date should be within 10 years, and circulation apparent within five to eight years (7). Fiction has more rigorous circulation standards, to be considered for cancellation if it has not circulated in one year (12).

“Some Special Considerations...” advises the librarian to “(b)e ruthless in the 510s.” The featured library media specialist got rid of most of the arithmetic books and found that “no one ever noticed (Handy 1).” There is a stern statement from librarian Handy that states: “(w)arning: any book on sexually transmitted diseases that does not mention AIDS is downright dangerous—get rid of it (1)!” I agree with this author’s belief that costume and folklore sections have a longer shelf-life than science and social studies texts may have. The direction to keep primary resources in mind, and on the shelf, when weeding the 900s is useful, and a reminder to check books on Native Americans for offensive stereotypes is timely (2).

*Weeding the School Library Media Collection* contains duplicate date and circulation recommendations for deselection, but also has pertinent reminders to keep the classics, award winners, and core materials, as well as materials of local interest, and unique materials. The *Children’s Services Materials Selection Policy* has general procedures for the Hawaii State Public Library System, which Ms. Ikeda must abide by. It states that three percent of the collection should be weeded a year, and advises the librarian to consider the appropriateness and usefulness of unsolicited gifts before cataloging. The Department of Education’s *Materials Selection Policy*... gives a

theoretical basis for selection and deselection of materials, numerical guidelines similar to those already shared, and a procedure for complaints about retention or removal of materials.

All of these guidelines give a clear picture to a library media specialist as this individual approaches the shelves at deselection time. A timetable for various sections of the library can be useful in actually completing a yearly evaluation of the collection. Ms. Ikeda goes through various sections of the collection as specified by her calendar. In my school library, we found it useful to complete inventory during the summer months. We did a special weeding when we received word of funds for replacements and refurbishment. While Ginger Ikeda works in conjunction with the public librarians, with agreed upon parameters, I worked with my librarian assistant for initial deselection, based on use of the book, publication date, and condition, then looked at all the factors outlined above, as well as viability of replacement. Finally, I asked Ms. Aileen Kaneshiro, retired librarian of WIS, to look at our weedings, and confirm them. She advised us firmly to keep all Hawaiian materials, even if not in active circulation, and to keep special items like 'horsie' fiction books that certain patrons like to check out no matter how old they are. Her energy in the deselection process was invaluable.

Finally, the library media specialist needs to gracefully release the materials from the library media center. It can be a difficulty to 'unload' unwanted materials without incident. The public looks unkindly upon deselections that end up in a dumpster. My mentor, Ms. Kaneshiro, advised me to cancel the books rather than 'discard,' and then offer the books to teachers for their classroom sets. When we took on a weeding of the stackroom in 2001-2002, my then Kupuna advised me of a charter school that was

desperate for materials. They took truckloads from our deselections (that had been approved by the departments, and would make up a couple of dumpsters). Mrs. Ikeda offered the cancelled books to teachers in a school, and within a month, her cart of deselected books was depleted. School Library Services related several horror stories about news media reports of ‘waste’ in schools, when deselections were found, thrown away. This was not an area covered by any of the readings given me by Ms. Ikeda, but unwanted books can stack up alarmingly, as our stack room gave indicated by its disarray.

Selection and deselection of books is the almost spiritual journey a library media specialist takes on a yearly basis. The tools above-mentioned are certainly helpful, but cannot replace the consideration of the careful and caring professional. What to the uninitiated might seem as a boring chore, is to the librarian, the essence of the profession. Building and maintaining the collection is of paramount importance in the professional life and times of the librarian.

### Works Cited

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