

Shadowing a CM Professional

By Miko Sanico and Faith Yokoyama
LIS 615 – Spring 2005

Miko Sanico and Faith Yokoyama met with Mrs. Maile Davis, Children's Librarian Section Head / Oahu Children's Services Coordinator of the Hawaii State Library. We talked with Mrs. Davis in the Edna Allyn Room for Children on Tuesday, March 22, 2005 for several hours.

Mrs. Davis is a 1987 graduate of University of Hawaii Library and Information Science Program. She has thirteen years experience working as a children's librarian with the Hawaii State Public Libraries System (HSPLS). She spent three years at Hawaii Kai, seven years at Kaimuki Public Library, and she has been at the Hawaii State Library's Edna Allyn Room for Children (EARC) for the last three years. She was promoted to her current position as Children's Librarian Section Head/Oahu Children's Services Coordinator of the Hawaii State Library in July 2004.

Upon arriving, we found Mrs. Davis reading to a group of children. We were able to explore and soak up the ambience of the children's room while she finished her story. The EARC is indeed "for children." Brightly decorated, the room invites children to enter. We especially love the reference / help desk area with arches resembling a castle. Scattered throughout the shelves are large stuffed creatures from the very books children love to read! Artwork from past craft times and displays bring stories to life. The large carpeted reading area allows enough comfortable seating space for at least 60 children. There are two computer stations, right next to the help desk, with educational games for the children as well as internet access.

According to Van Orden, signs should be clear and accurate (25). The EARC meets this expectation. The stuffed animals on the shelves correlate with the nonfiction book topics below. The call numbers are prominently displayed with their matching topics. There is a display board

with all the call numbers and the most popular topics children might be interested in such as airplanes, dinosaurs, and food.

When Mrs. Davis finished reading and attended to her patrons, we met at a round table to begin our discussion. Once we shared our focus about collection development, she invited us to join her in the private librarians' workroom downstairs. Here, we were introduced to the "behind-the-scenes" procedures of the State Library's Children's and Young Adults' collection development. We were able to browse through their automated shelves housing the closed stacks for children's books. These stacks include holiday books (which are brought up to the first floor during the appropriate holidays), favorite pop-up books used by the librarians for story telling, extra copies of books, and oversized books. During our visit, we discovered that Collection Development is a major portion of Mrs. Davis's job and we spent the remainder of the morning discussing this in detail.

Reviewing and Selecting Material

Mrs. Davis spends a great deal of time reviewing and selecting material prior to placing titles on her order lists. We were not surprised, but very pleased with this discovery. We were aware of the school librarian's duty to use reviews to justify alignment with curriculum and appropriateness of content, but we assumed the public librarians were not **required** to use reviews.

When asked how much time she spent on reading the reviews and making wish lists, Davis laughed and said, "Daily, throughout the month." She admits to being swamped by tons of catalogs and having almost no time to look through them. She says, "When you do [look through them], you will want everything."

For the most part, Mrs. Davis prefers to use online sources because she is able to save items in a virtual shopping cart for later use. The online sources also provide accurate information to be

copied and pasted into the spreadsheet for her order lists. This copy and paste feature prevents typographical errors (especially important for ISBNs). Online sources often provide multiple full text reviews and full text descriptions of the books. She uses reviews to help her make selection decision.

Her favorite online review source is www.bwi.com (Book Wholesale Incorporated) because it provides multiple reviews and has no advertisements. HSPLS subscribes to this service which is accessible by password. She also likes *School Library Journal* (SLJ) and Amazon. She appreciates that SLJ is aimed at children and includes *how* the book can be used. It provides craft ideas or extensions activities for library programs. She cautioned us about Amazon, though, “You end up wanting to buy other things instead of books.” She mentioned other review sources such as *Booklist*, *Horn Book* and *Kirkus*. She finds the *Kirkus* reviews a bit stuffy and grouchy/overly critical. Horn Book relates to Children’s books and Booklist comes from the American Library Association (ALA). She likes *Publishers Weekly’s* prepublication section, for example “Hints of Spring” which is printed in the Fall issue. Other pre-publication notices are found Little, Brown & Company and Simon & Schuster catalogs.

Other sources for reviewing books are provided to her through donated books from Scholastic. She showed us a cart full of new books sent to the Library. She previews these new books and may add some of the titles to the Order List. Mrs. Davis said that she does a lot of ordering from Scholastic because of this extra ‘hands-on’ service that they provide. Having the actual book to preview is very helpful. Another source for selections came from the users themselves. She has a patron suggestion form for readers who would like a book but cannot find it on her shelves.

All branch librarians may order on their own or give input for the statewide selection and ordering lists. Because of all these multiple inputs from various people, Van Orden’s preference for

involving others in the [collection] decision making is clearly evident in the state's selection process (23). Since these selection lists come out monthly or every other month, Van Orden's advice of the "best way to gain cooperation is to sincerely seek others' opinions, act on them and inform these people of the results" is clearly acted upon by Mrs. Davis on a regular basis (126).

Selection Policy

Mrs. Davis follows the criteria as set forth in the Hawaii State Library's Collection Policy criteria when selecting new material. Criteria include:

- Readability
- Accuracy
- Clarity
- Information value
- Current usefulness
- Cost
- Durability
- Popular titles
- Literary and artistic excellence
- Historical / cultural / ethnic interest
- Appropriateness of format and binding
- Appeal and suitability for children.

We compared Van Orden's Criteria, with the State's Collection Policy criteria (101,102).

We found many similarities:

- relevance to today's world
- artistic, historic and literary qualities
- reflect the problems, aspirations, attitudes and ideals of society
- appropriate for the age, ability level, and social and emotional development of the intended user
- validity, currency, and appropriateness of the content
- high degree of potential user appeal
- reflect value commensurate with cost and/or need.

Order List

Mrs. Davis shared with us that a huge task for her as Section Head is creating and compiling a monthly “Order List” for Children’s books. (Note: Depending on funding, this list may be developed every other month). Mrs. Davis said that she does not order books according to a set ‘user’ population. Instead, this Order List compiles all the books that the Children’s State Librarian and each branch librarian may want to order for the month. It also includes items that Mrs. Davis “thinks the other librarians would want for their libraries.” This month’s list was approximated twenty pages long with over one hundred titles.

Once input is received by from all branches by the specified deadline, Mrs. Davis follows a tight schedule:

1. Compiling the list to include title, author, ISBN, publisher, cost, edition, annotations noting reviews and sources of the reviews, short summary, binding type, intended age, and number of copies requested.
2. E-mailing the list to the children’s librarians at each branch.
3. Librarians make their selections from this list and send their requests back to Mrs. Davis.
4. Mrs. Davis will send this compiled ‘order’ list from all the branches to Technical Support Services, who in turn, places the order.
5. Items are sent directly to each branch.
6. Mrs. Davis begins to create a new Order List for the next cycle.

Because of high volume orders, Technical Services is able to secure wholesale and bulk pricing, thus negotiating the best prices. They have found Ingram to be an excellent source. By centralizing the ordering process for the entire state, ‘speed, accuracy, and thrift’ are accomplished by this acquisition process. There is little to no ‘duplication of effort’ (Van Orden, 225).

High Demand Order List

Mrs. Davis also compiles a separate “High Demand Order List” on an as-needed basis or from requests submitted from branches. She prepares selections for the 51 branches and 1 bookmobile. These are items she says, “I think everyone should want.” She includes the Award

Winners (Caldecott, Nene), recommended titles, Hawaiian material, favorite children's authors (e.g., Tomie dePaola, Rosemary Wells), favorite series (e.g., Berenstain Bears, Henry and Mudge), and holiday books. When authors are scheduled to come to town, Mrs. Davis will place their books on the High Demand Order List. For example, the "Read to Me" Conference in June 2005 includes author Tomie De Paola. He will also be in her library on June 28th showcasing his newest book – *Stagestruck*. So, Mrs. Davis has added this title to the High Demand Order List.

A few of the publishers on the High Demand Order List are Henry Holt, Little Brown, Candlewick, HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster, Oh!a Productions, and BeachHouse Publishing.

The items on this list are not screened by branch librarians as in item #3 from the above Order List process. They are ordered by Technical Services and paid for by Central Funds (not branch funds), thus making these books basically like "gifts" to the libraries.

Additional Ordering Sources

In addition to the Ordering Lists, Mrs. Davis makes lists and purchases for the EARC from several other sources. She has some freedom to browse at bookstores and to pick up items locally using purchase orders. This year, out of the \$25,000 budget for the EARC, approximately \$3,000 can be spent locally. Her favorite bookstore is Barnes and Nobles because of their excellent service.

Other sources Mrs. Davis uses are small presses like Mutual Publishing, Bess Press, Native Books Press, and Kamehameha Schools. She also networks with colleagues, in particular, the Young Adult Librarian who works with her. They regularly swap books they think will be more appropriate for the other's age level. Involving others in the selection process is necessary. Van Orden suggests Collection Managers approach others for their "expertise, either as subject specialists or as effective users of materials" (126). Van Orden deems this to be very important.

Mrs. Davis said that she doesn't use standing orders. Instead, she will order "continuations." This means certain volumes will be sent to her each year they are published. These volumes are the Guinness Book of World Records and the Children's World Almanac.

Deselection

Mrs. Davis shared the Hawaii State Library's collection management policy with us. We noted that, unlike the public school libraries who keep material for 10 years or longer, the Children's book at the State Library has a turn around time of 5 years. She will deselect books if they are superseded, contain inaccurate information, are beyond mending, or if duplicate copies are no longer in demand. Mrs. Davis will place some items in the Edna Allyn *Memorial Collection* if they are classics, limited editions, have original illustrations, gifts from private collections, fragile, rare, or irreplaceable. Items in the *Memorial Collection* are for on-site use only. Van Orden would approve of the State of Hawaii's exceptions for deselecting materials such as classics and local and state history (269).

Mrs. Davis noted that since she has taken over responsibility for the Children's section last year, she has not yet had a chance to go through her stacks for a thorough evaluation of items that should be deselected. She did point out, though, that few books are discarded. Withdrawn items, which are still usable and useful, may be offered to other libraries in the system.

Administrative Concerns

An administrator must be a planner, organizer, policy maker, public-relations expert, business person, and evaluator (223). Mrs. Davis has fulfilled many of these duties with the statewide coordination of the selection and ordering process.

Her duties as an administrator also include supervising personnel. Mrs. Davis works with two librarians, one librarian technician, one student helper, and currently one UH LIS intern (Jenn Ogg).

One of Mrs. Davis' public-relations activities is her outreach school visitations. She presents story time and creates craft activities for schools that arrange visits during the week and during the library's regular story time on Saturdays. Children are able to browse through the diverse library collection; something that Van Orden feels is of great importance. It is here that the true value of Mrs. Davis's excellent collection expertise pays off. EARC is regularly frequented by the neighboring schools.

Mrs. Davis plans and organizes the Children's Services Meetings with the other branch librarians to discuss what their libraries are doing, any problems they are having, creative solution ideas, and programming. Currently, the children's librarians are working on the HSPLS Summer Reading Program. She is involved in creating on-going and summer reading lists for Preschool – K, Grades 1 – 3, and Grades 4 – 6 based on a theme. We were amazed at all the duties she performs in her current position.

Learning Experience Reflections

We believe that Mrs. Davis, or any public librarian, can be an excellent resource for collection management, especially with all their knowledge of new material coming out. As new school librarians, we should make it a point to go to our public library on a regular basis to keep abreast of what new material they have on their shelves, thereby, creating our own wish lists. The 'New Book' shelf presents a wonderful opportunity to browse through new material that would fit into our school curriculum rather than ordering them sight-unseen or from a catalog. We now know that *quality* selections were made and we could ask for the reviews they used in their selection of that material.

We also gained insight into what we may keep in our ‘closed shelf’ section to make the best use of the limited shelf space in school. We can arrange our storage space by holidays and start our own ‘big book’ and ‘pop-up book’ selections specifically and solely for the librarian’s story telling use. Not all material in the library needs to be circulated.

The daunting task of selecting the best material for students with limited funds can be shared with colleagues. As school librarians, we should emulate to share our resources via a virtual bulletin board featuring new material that we find along with correlating reviews. A good start for this ‘sharing of ideas’ can begin with our LIS colleagues.

It was an eye opener to realize that, when our school does not have the resources needed, there will always be the public libraries to help supplement our school’s collection. This further drives home the necessity to develop close working ties with our public librarians through the Hawaii Library Association. Too often we limit ourselves and only look to our immediate peers within the school system. Resources are wide and varied, and as school librarians, we should take every advantage to network with librarians throughout the field.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Van Orden, Phyllis J. and Kay Bishop. *The Collection Programs in Schools Concepts, Practices, and Information Sources*. Englewood, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 2001.