Visual Merchandising Handbook

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Visual Merchandising refers to anything that can be seen by the customer inside our libraries, including displays, decorations, signs, and layout of space. Successful visual merchandising practices help create attractive environments that encourage customer discovery of new titles, authors, and topics. The purpose of this handbook is to outline these techniques and to serve as a mechanism through which to share great merchandising ideas.

The material in this document, coupled with customer feedback and experimentation, are key to create inviting spaces with effective displays that showcase our collections. As always, be creative, collaborate with your team, and have fun!
PRINCIPLES OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING

EYES ON DETAILS

• Condition – use hardcovers in excellent condition; use pristine paperbacks sparingly
• Rule of 3 – odd numbers are best
• Balance – display similar-sized faceouts next to each other to create balance
• Symmetry – ensure the weight of elements on both sides of displays
• Color and scale – group by color or cover art to draw interest.

KEEP IT SIMPLE / LESS IS MORE

• Focus on books, not accessories
• Minimize signage
• Use faceouts in stacks, but keep them neat and at the front edge of the shelves (face front)
• Keep copies handy for refilling, but don’t let the refill titles clutter the display
• Use either all plexi and all wire holders on a display unit, not both

KEEP IT FRESH AND CURRENT

• Refresh or rearrange titles on display every 2-3 days; don’t let them stagnate
• Effective display themes are high interest, sustainable, and easily understood; they should mirror customer’s reading interests and be appealing to the community
• Multiples carry more impact and many customers won’t take that “last” book; find another set when display is down to one copy
• Multiple identical faceouts work best on swoops or displays with a fixed space for books

PUT DISPLAYS WHERE PEOPLE CAN SEE THEM

• Pay attention to branch traffic patterns and put displays in these areas.
• Put faceouts on the 2nd and 3rd shelves in the stacks
• Move high-demand collections to non-prime location; measure effectiveness and relocate if display performance is poor
• Experiment! Customers remember things that surprise them.

EVERYONE OWNS THE EXPERIENCE

• Make displays everyone’s responsibility; all staff should be trained and encouraged to fill and fluff
• Consider scheduling staff to work on VM; assign display ownership to interested staff
• Implement a branch display plan/board to keep staff informed of current displays
• Encourage all staff to submit display ideas
WEDDING CAKE

PRINCIPLES AT WORK
Multiples copies (flush and full effect)
Balance (similar-sized faceouts)
Organized Refill

GOOD FOR
New Books
High Interest Adult
Children’s Fiction Multiples
OVAL

PRINCIPLES AT WORK
Balance (horizontal and vertical)
Multiples
Less is More

GOOD FOR
Quick Picks
Children’s Nonfiction
New Books
Smaller Theme Displays
SWOOP

PRINCIPLES AT WORK
Symmetry
High Traffic Placement
Scale (matching covers)

GOOD FOR
New Teen or Children’s Fiction
Paperback Fiction (in pristine condition)
Smaller Theme Displays
PRINCIPLES AT WORK
Themes
Scale
High traffic placement

GOOD FOR
Golden Books
Friendly Faces
Readers
Children’s Graphic Novels
Board Books
SLAT WALL

PRINCIPLES AT WORK
Balance
Color
Scale
Organized Refill

GOOD FOR
Children’s Fiction
First Chapter
Readers
POWER WALL

PRINCIPLES AT WORK
Balance
Symmetry
Color
Scale
Rule of Three
Multiples
Organized Refill
Faceouts / Face Fronts

GOOD FOR
New Books
High Interest Multiples
Picture Books
PRINCIPLES AT WORK
Balance
Theme
Less is More
Way Finding
Scale (matching faceouts)

GOOD FOR
Fiction
Genres
High Interest Nonfiction
BOOK BINS

PRINCIPLES AT WORK
- Faceouts (no spine up)
- Themes (match books and tags)
- Balance (similar-sized faceouts)
- Organized (bins no more than ½ full)

GOOD FOR
- Picture Books
- Concept Books
- Board Books
- Friendly Faces
- Holiday Picture Books
20/20 CURVED DISPLAY

PRINCIPLES AT WORK
Balance
Color
Simple
Organized Refill

GOOD FOR
Quick Pick Titles
New Adult Fiction and Nonfiction
20/20 WALL DISPLAY

PRINCIPLES AT WORK
- Balance
- Symmetry
- Color
- Simple

GOOD FOR
- New Picture Books
- High Interest Children's NF
- Larger-sized High Interest Adult NF
LOW SHELVING DISPLAY

PRINCIPLES AT WORK
Scale
Rule of Three
Balance
Symmetry

GOOD FOR
Children’s Fiction
Smaller-sized Children’s NF
Audiobooks
Readers
LOW SHELVING DISPLAYS

PRINCIPLES AT WORK
Faceouts and Face fronts
Books at Eye-level
Color
Themes

GOOD FOR
Picture Book Multiples
Book Bundles
STANDARD SHELVING DISPLAYS

PRINCIPLES AT WORK
Faceouts
Books at Eye-level
Color
Themes
Way finding

GOOD FOR
High Interest Nonfiction and Fiction
SHELF APPEARANCE GUIDELINES

GENERAL APPEARANCE
• Shelve materials so shelves are 2/3 to 3/4 full
• Keep an even quantity on each shelf; shift to keep shelves even
• Bring spines to the front edge of the shelf.

LOW SHELVING (3 shelves)
• Less is more: place one plexi unit per three feet to keep a feeling of openness if displaying books on top of shelving unit
• Use matching display holders
• Use first shelf for faceouts, spine outs can go on second and third shelves
• 2020 locations: restrict displays on top of the shelving unit to shelving that is attached to wall in order to keep the space open (clear sightlines) and to draw attention to display units and the children’s area.

STANDARD SHELVING DISPLAYS (4 or more shelves)
• Place books faceouts on the 2nd and 3rd shelves only
• Keep faceout covers parallel to and within 2 inches of the shelf edge front and aligned with faceouts on the shelves above and below
• Use multiples (2-3) for displays; if shelves aren’t tall enough, display one book
• 2020 locations: restrict top of shelf displays to shelving that is attached to wall in order to keep the space open (clear sightlines) and to draw attention to display units