

PUBLIC LIBRARY STOCK MANAGEMENT

GUIDELINES FOR STOCK MAINTENANCE POLICY FORMULATION

INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of these Guidelines, stock is defined as:

All materials provided by public library services, including hardback or paperback formats of adult lending books, children's books, local studies materials, grey literature, journals, reference publications, music scores and drama scripts, newspapers and official reports and council minutes.

The preparation and implementation of stock maintenance policies (within the context of DCMS Annual Library Plans and written Stock Selection and Management Policy Statements) is recommended in the CILIP and National Acquisitions Group Guidelines 1998 and implied by the Audit Commission's report 'Due for Renewal' 1997. They have become the accepted frameworks for provision and protection policies. Such policy statements, known as collection policies are recognised as good practice nationally and are in accordance with the requirements of the law and council procedures to secure best value. Best value implies that local authorities have a duty to deliver services to clear standards by the most economic, efficient and effective means available.

The approach to formulation of stock maintenance programmes will reflect the past, present and future selection and procurement of stock. Sufficient resources should be made available to successfully fulfil such programmes. To secure best value, consideration should be given to an overall or consortia contract for library stock maintenance. Market testing of Library Bookbinders will secure the most advantageous terms.

ADVANTAGES DERIVED FROM STOCK MAINTENANCE

Reasons for binding or rebinding might include any or all of the following benefits:

- To maintain the attractiveness of useful stock
- To preserve access to valuable information
- To increase the breadth of stock available to the public
- Cost-effective and provides an economic, value for money method of managing collections
- To retain access to out-of-print material
- Offsets impact of increasing price of new stock and diminishing resources
- Extends the useful life of past relatively large initial investments
- Contributes to efficient stock circulation, revision and editing
- Increases the feel-good impression of library customers regarding the "newness" of any area of stock
- Overcomes increasing problems caused by ever-shorter print runs
- Allows greater freedom to select otherwise unsuitable softcover publications that can be reinforced or pre-bound for extensive library use e.g. spiral bound, burst bound or loose leaf publications

IMPLICATIONS

Implementation of stock maintenance programmes, as a policy will have impacts on the services that need to be identified:

- **Staff training and induction**

The majority of new entrants and those members of staff joining over the last ten years, will have received no educational introduction to the subjects of: modern book production and weaknesses; opportunities afforded by specialist library rebinding, repair or conservation; improvements in library binders' adhesives and materials used; or knowledge and experience of criteria on which to base retention, rebinding or disposal decisions. Limited or no training time is allocated to these areas at library schools, colleges or within the NVQ courses. Library binding companies are best placed to be utilised to help input to the training of new and existing staff.
- **Budgetary and financial control**

Where budgets are devolved partially, or completely, to individual cost centres or subsumed into an overall 'Resources' fund, there tends to be a breakdown (either deliberate or accidental) in terms of overall implementation of stock maintenance programmes, with each individual cost centre being free to decide how much or if they rebind or bind at all. Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure a proportion of the 'Resources' are allocated and ring-fenced to enable the policy to function. This figure will need to be agreed in advance according to the general condition of stock, number of new additions added and range of stock but a benchmark nationally across all authorities averages 4.5%-6.5% of bookfunds. The binding allocation of resources should not be reallocated or used to make mid-term savings and should keep pace with inflation.
- **Suitability for rebinding or reinforcing – staff intensive decision processes**

Not all books can be or should be rebound once they become physically worn. Equally, not all books need to be pre-bound or reinforced to achieve their intended life on the shelves. Selection is important so as not to waste scarce resources but is time and staff intensive and will inevitably impact on professional duties and involvement. The retention or disposal decision can be considered as important (and almost as costly) as the initial selection and procurement decision.

MATERIALS, STYLES & FORMATS FOR CONSIDERATION

Individual consideration should be given to policy formulation for different categories of stock:

- Adult Lending Materials– Hardbacks and Paperbacks
- Children's Books – Hardbacks and Paperbacks
- Music & Drama Collections
- Reference Materials – Books, Journals, Manuals, Newspapers, Pamphlets
- Local Studies Materials – Hardbacks and Paperbacks, Pamphlets, Prints, Maps, Documents, Newspapers
Newsletters, Minutes and Records, Journals, Individual Antiquarian Books

Levels of priority and quantities in need of binding or rebinding or repair/refurbishment should be assessed and appropriate funds allocated. Consideration should be given to types of binding to be specified for each category e.g. Re-Sleeved Dust Jacket Style, Laminated Dust Jacket Style, Cloth Binding Style, Paperback Reinforced Styles, Paperback Protection Styles (Wallets, 'ECO', 'Kapco', 'Easy Cover' etc.), Sewing Retained, Resewn or Unsewn Formats, Music Style. Relative importance and anticipated levels of demand, use and life need to be taken into account for the different categories of stock.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF BINDING

For each category of stock a number of simple questions need to be addressed with making decisions. These may include all or some of the following:

- Does the item merit binding or rebinding?
- Is this area of stock popular, in demand and short of titles?
- How many other copies of the same title and edition are in the system?
- Is the book still in print, available and at what replacement cost?
- Is the book out-of-print or the last copy in the system?
- Can the book be simply repaired by the library or by the binding company or recovered/re-sleeved to extend useful life and brighten image?
- Is the book still in-date and not superseded by improved, better designed and illustrated, more attractively designed dust jacket, newer or up-to-date edition?
- Is the book still popular?
- Is the book mis-shaped and physically worn?
- Is the dust jacket or cover too damaged and creased to look good after binding?
- Is the joint broken or the endpaper coming away from the title page?
- Are the pages loose or falling out?
- Are the edges of the pages grubby and dog-eared?
- Is the paper torn and dirty?
- Is their sufficient margin surrounding the text – say minimum of 2 CMS – to allow for trimming?
- Would you want to receive the book in its current condition if being circulated?
- Would new paperbacks or nearly new books last better if reinforced or pre-bound before going into circulation?

Remember rebinding lending material can extend stock's life by between 30-80 issues or 2-5 years. This may more than double the shelf life. Rebinding will always restore the new looking shape to the book, clean the edges of the pages and improve the appearance of the dust jacket as well as securing the spine attachment of pages. The rebinding process will mean that titles are off the shelves and temporarily out of circulation for a minimum of 4 weeks. The best time to send books for rebinding is when the first signs of deterioration or breakdown are noticed. This can be assessed relatively easily as books are passed over the library counters (ensuring that live stock is being identified), during shelf tidies or re-shelving or whilst carrying out periodic stock editing but will probably also require additional professional/central co-ordination/supervisory input from staff.

SELECTION OF BINDERS

The following elements should be weighted with relevant importance when choosing binders:

- Quality of products
- Prices
- Speed of turnaround
- Reputation of company
- Level of customer support
- Management information provision
- Degree of Staff Training support
- Administration of accounts
- Ability to follow instructions and meet specifications
- Suitability of distribution arrangements
- Flexibility in company attitude and procedures
- Quality control
- Price control

CONCLUSIONS

Research has clearly identified that Library Binding is both a key element in Stock Management and, ironically, a much under-valued and under-appreciated tool. Too few library staff may be aware of its beneficial and economic impact on valuable, important and well-used stock. All items forwarded for rebinding could be shown statistically as withdrawn from stock and thence shown as new stock when returned to library shelves. At this point, the stock, whether circulated or not, should be promoted as new additions in order for it to be seen to be working hardest for the library service.

To maintain the attractiveness of useful stock requires planned and costed refurbishment – refurbishment of stock by cleaning or replacing covers, jackets or wallets or in-house or out-sourced repair and rebinding, ensures its continued attractiveness and use.

Arrangements for ensuring the conservation and preservation of books and other materials, that form the library's heritage collections, should be included in the stock management policies.

CILIP/NAG Guidelines on Public Library Stock Management para. 4.23, 1998

FURTHER READING

Public Library Stock Management, BNBRF Report 90 1998

Due for Renewal, Audit Commission Report 1997

The Role of Rebinding in Modern Stock Management, Clwyd Libraries 1992

Paperbacks in Public Libraries, LISU Occasional Paper no. 22 1999