

The 'art' of ... STOCKTAKING



a branch usually cancels out a missing item at the main institution.

A library should still be closed when reports are made available so that missing items can be checked for while the materials are still in place.

The big advantage of stocktaking is of course that one has an up to date record of what is available and you do not spend hours looking for books which are missing.

Scanning procedures are discussed in the section below.

ILZE SWART

Bellville Public Library

The word 'stocktaking' arouses many responses from library staff, few of them favourable. It is seen as a tedious, mechanical task, to be completed as soon as possible. We have always regarded it as an opportunity to do things one could not do during open hours.

Date of stocktaking

Avoid dates which fall in exam time or when learners and students are most likely to want to make use of the library. Bellville is in the fortunate position of having a separate reference library on another floor, which is always kept open while the lending section is closed for the duration of the stocktaking, but with two people on duty to handle queries which would normally be done by the lending departments.

Notices of closure

A notice should be drawn up a month well in advance of the stocktaking - to inform borrowers in the library, for publication in the local press and circulating to neighbouring libraries. Needless to say, borrowers should be told that fines would not be levied for the week of closure. Borrowers are reminded that they can use their cards at neighbouring libraries, but that they should return their books before the stocktaking to clear their cards.

Weeding

Weeding is undertaken before stocktaking so that all redundant and broken material is removed from the stock. Make sure all weeded/withdrawn material has been Changed Current Location (CCL'd) back to CPL prior to the stocktaking. (This should not be done prior to stocktaking in non-PALS libraries.)

Housekeeping

The closed days are a perfect time to do some good housekeeping which cannot be done during open hours without disturbing borrowers, for example, window and carpet cleaning, steam cleaning of upholstered furniture, polishing of shelves. Posters and art prints can be replaced to give the library a fresh look. Dog-eared signs and notices should be refreshed.

Shelf reading is normally done before the commencement of the stocktake so one's stock should be in ship shape.

Staff

Stocktaking is a wonderful opportunity for teambuilding as all staff are participating, and they share tea and lunch times. At Bellville Library we have always tried to include a social event, such as a braai or a special lunch during this period. Staff refresher training can be done and teams can undertake to spruce up specific areas.

Information / reception point

Staff man a desk in the foyer for the duration of the stocktake. Library material is taken in (though not scanned) as this relieves pressure when the library reopens.

Renewals are done and new members enrolled, change is given for the copiers in Reference, and of course, the telephone answered. This is a good public relations exercise. Some libraries do not answer their phone during stocktaking!

Scanning

Teams of two people per category work well. Separation by category also separates scanners physically, as the peep-peeping of scanners in close proximity can be confusing. A checklist of locations for books in a category is ticked off as scanning is completed.

An institution and its branches should do their stocktaking consecutively and within weeks of each other, as a problem report at