



GENREFYING A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY WITH EASE

Building an elementary school library from the ground up is no easy task. Rachel Weatherford, the first-ever library media specialist at Faldyn Elementary School in Katy, Texas, knows this firsthand. Not only are you curating and shelving thousands of books, you also need to make sure your collection is well organized and appeals to students wherever they are on their reading journeys.

Weatherford made the decision for her library to be organized into genres for both fiction and nonfiction titles, confident that genrefication was the best choice for her new library. “To me, genrefication is essential,” Weatherford said. “Students do not look for books by the author and often have a hard time finding books they’re interested in. When books are grouped by genre, however, the students immediately know where to look for their favorite titles and how to find new ones. As adults, we have genres that are our favorites, so why wouldn’t we create an elementary school library that supports the same practice?”



RACHEL WEATHERFORD

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Are you ready to bring genres to your library?
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To pull this off, she didn't just need a vendor she could trust, she needed an experienced partner she could rely on. Weatherford didn't have to ponder the choice long. She was sold early on Follett Content, confident that their team shared her vision for her library and could process and deliver the thousands of books she needed on a tight deadline.

Weatherford and Follett Content worked together to create genre categories for the school's more than 14,000 books. Since the campus is bilingual, it was imperative that each category had a Spanish equivalent. "It was important that English and Spanish titles were integrated together alphabetically," she said. "For example, I wanted all nonfiction books about a certain topic, regardless of language, to be shelved together. Follett was able to take the two different language sections for each category and pack them in boxes exactly how I wanted."

To ensure Faldyn Elementary's opening-day collection met Weatherford's expectations and the needs of the school community, Follett Content sent her multiple sample books to verify that the labeling was exactly to her specifications. Once book processing details were finalized, they focused on genre labels.

Experience has taught Weatherford that elementary school students can be wary of the Dewey Decimal System, regardless of the number of lessons they may have received about using it. She noticed that nonfiction tended to be one of the lowest circulated sections in libraries where she had worked. "Upon moving away from Dewey, I created categories that worked for my students based on the topics they were seeking," she said.

Those topics became the categories that Weatherford supplied to Follett Content for the genrefication of the collection. Weatherford said getting the books genrefied was surprisingly simple, with most of the books she selected already being assigned to one of her categories. For books that didn't immediately pull up a category, she was easily able to select from a dropdown menu that recommended the best fit.

Follett Content packed and delivered the books in expert fashion, which made shelving them before opening day a breeze. With the biggest part of the project in her rearview mirror, Weatherford is now able to enjoy watching students and teachers all use the library, easily and happily browsing for books. "As they are walking around, I hear students shouting out to their friends to come and see this or that section," she said. "They love it!" It seems clear that the students are enjoying the fruits of her labor. "After genrefying our nonfiction section, the circulation statistics went up 45 percent. Now nonfiction circulation is almost tied with our graphic novels," she proudly reported.



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