



CREATING A DIVERSE AND EFFICIENT LIBRARY

As Library Program Coordinator for a large Texas K-12 school district, Sofia Darcy has a big job. But she also brings two decades worth of experience to her role, first at Houston ISD and now at Katy ISD, which has nearly 75 schools with an enrollment that exceeds 85,000 students.

She lives and breathes the mission of the Katy ISD library media centers, which is to “build a culture of literacy, inquiry, and creativity while empowering all patrons to become lifelong learners and discriminating users of information.”

But as anyone in her seat knows, school libraries are only as beneficial as their collections. And with 1.4 million books being checked out annually, Katy ISD’s collections must be current, offer diversity, and serve all students efficiently and effectively.



SOFIA DARCY

*Former Library Program Coordinator
Texas K-12 school district
Katy, Texas*

SIMPLIFYING LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

While Darcy has experienced many opening-day deadlines in her career, it can nonetheless be daunting to ensure lists are built, source tags are set up, campus orders have been vetted and received, and appropriate weeding has taken place. Darcy's secret to success? Follett Content Solutions and Follett Titlewave® – the most powerful online collection development and curriculum support tool for educators.

"My Follett Content representative, Billy Morrow, has been so instrumental in helping me minimize the amount of work it would take to build lists for our opening-day collections," said Darcy, who earned her master's degree in library and information science from University of North Texas in Denton. "Billy made sure I made the most out of the tools available – including whether all books in a particular series had been ordered – through Titlewave to build the best opening day collection possible!"

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Sofia Darcy

"Billy asked several questions such as my preferred ratio of fiction to nonfiction, starting copyright date, preferred formats, and any specific series," Darcy recalled. "We also discussed if there were any orders from other campuses that should be included. This was key for me because I knew a couple of campuses had placed large orders recently. Why reinvent the wheel?"

EMPOWERING LIBRARY COLLECTIONS WITH TITLEWISE

To evaluate each school library's strengths and weaknesses, Darcy turns to TitleWise®, the online collection analysis tool available through Titlewave.

"TitleWise is by far one of my favorite tools to use for collection development," she observed. "For me, the strengths and weaknesses of a collection include age, curricular ties, and diversity. After looking to ensure I have updated information, I then check to see if there are any holes in the Dewey sections that support the curriculum. I want to include titles that offer different viewpoints, are multicultural, and reflect the student population."

Darcy shared Katy is an ethnically diverse district featuring a student population with 36% Hispanic/Latino, 30% White, 16% Asian or Asian Pacific Islander, and 13.5% Black or African American, and others.

PROVEN LIBRARY WEEDING STRATEGIES

Equally as important as adding new books, she noted, is an effective weeding plan. She guides campus librarians on what to look at to help them make data-informed decisions.

"I include as much information as I think librarians should consider when preparing to weed," Darcy said. "For example, librarians should always import their MARC records, especially if they've added any copies since the last time a TitleWise analysis was run to ensure they have the most up-to-date information for their collection."

Darcy said librarians should first answer a series of questions before getting started to fully understand their weeding objectives and how best to get answers from TitleWise. Are you looking to...

- ... make room on the shelf?
- ... increase average age?
- ... discard old or worn-out copies?
- ... discard non-circulating copies.

Throughout the planning process, Darcy reminds librarians to use the TitleWise feature showing recommended average ages for Dewey sections.

"It's important to look at the Dewey sections with the oldest average age in TitleWise and ask yourself if they still support the curriculum,"

she said. “If they support the curriculum, you’ll need to purchase new and updated titles, ideally before you weed it.”

Other tips Darcy recommends for nonfiction titles include:

- Look at the Dewey sections with the newest average age in TitleWise. “This is a good time to weed older books in that section to improve it even more,” she said.
- Look at the largest Dewey sections in TitleWise. “Congratulations! You can cull this section by weeding old or outdated titles.”
- Run circulation reports in your Learning Management System and export to Microsoft® Excel®. “If you can’t filter by corresponding Dewey sections when you create the report, then sort and filter by Dewey to see circulation data for any titles that are in the targeted Dewey sections in the TitleWise analysis. Non-circulating titles can be weeded.”
- Include most recent checkout date on the circulation report to help identify books that might have once had good usage but don’t now.

Fiction titles “are a different beast,” Darcy stressed, but still many of the same strategies can be used. She said TitleWise can show the oldest fiction books by looking at the results and sorting it by “Pub. Year – Old to New.” That list can then be downloaded to Excel for easier use.

Darcy emphasizes that just because some older fiction books don’t have new publication dates, it doesn’t necessarily mean students don’t love them! “If they’re circulating well,” she said, “you might need to weed them because they’re worn out, not because they’re old. That also means you’ll need to buy new copies.”

THE “COMPLETE YOUR SERIES” FEATURE

Completing a series quickly and easily is another key feature of Titlewave, an exclusive new service introduced earlier this year that allows educators to receive monthly notification emails about upcoming and top-selling titles. With the new service, librarians can conveniently shop current and previous series titles, plus receive a sneak peek into what’s coming next. Beyond providing librarians an easy way to stay current, the service is crucial to students as studies show those who embrace a book series will yearn to read more about their favorite characters.

“It doesn’t take long to find – and add – any missing ones to your list,” Darcy noted.

A TRUE PARTNER

Above and beyond all the great features of Titlewave, Darcy said the level of customer service she receives is “off the charts” from Follett Content and her representative, Billy Morrow, who has been with the company for more than 20 years.

“There isn’t enough time to fully explain why I give my customer service from Billy and Follett Content five stars out of five!” she said. “The short list would include all the prep work from my rep getting the collection lists started. That’s followed very quickly by the suggestion and set up of source codes. “If you know Follett Content,” Darcy concludes, “you know that all this takes coordination between multiple departments. I probably don’t even know all the departments involved behind the scenes! Titlewave is a lifesaver for me.”