

Title of meeting: Culture, Leisure and Sport Decision Meeting

Subject: Portsmouth Libraries Stock Practices and Principles

Date of meeting: 12 December 2014

Report by: Head of City Development and Cultural Services

Wards affected: All

1. **Requested by:** Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport
2. **Purpose**
 - 2.1 This report seeks to inform the Cabinet Member on Portsmouth Library Service's stock practice: the understanding and requirements behind the provision of stock in Portsmouth Libraries. Portsmouth Libraries follows a number of principles to inform stock selection, management and processes which are explained in sections 4-10.
3. **Information requested:**
 - 3.1 Stock covers all the materials purchased for use by library members both in physical and digital formats. The publishing world and reading habits are rapidly changing and the stock practice will be updated on a regular basis to reflect this.
 - 3.2 The purchase of items for Portsmouth History Centre will be the subject of another report. The stock disposal policy was the subject of a previous report <http://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=131&MID=2267#AI853>
4. **Public feedback:**
 - 4.1 **Statistics:** The biggest quantitative feedback comes from the issue figures (see Appendix A), which show exactly what the public are borrowing. The Information and Stock Team use these figures to closely monitor what type of stock is popular and to motivate libraries to increase their issues by sending out the statistics on a monthly basis.
 - 4.2 **Surveys:** The library held a stock survey during the summer of 2013 which generated a variety of public suggestions. This feedback was used to adjust our stock purchasing profiles.

- 4.3 **Suggestions:** On an everyday basis, the library aims to respond quickly to all suggestions, ranging from a suggestion for a particular book, to more general observations, such as a certain branch needing more books on psychology. Frontline staff play a key role in feeding back suggestions to the Information and Stock Librarian.
- 4.4 **Reservations and requests:** Borrowers can request books which are not in stock, and many requested books are purchased for the library service. This service is very useful in helping us monitor what is in demand. The library receives about 1,800 requests a year for items that are not held in stock. Many of these requests are for books which are out of print, or too specialist for a public library, in which case we apply for an interlibrary loan from other library authorities, or the British Library Document Supply Centre. However, about a third of requests are for books which are in print and suitable for stock, in which case the Information and Stock Librarian will purchase copies. Inevitably supplier selection will miss the occasional title that is then reviewed, or becomes popular, particularly from books by debut authors. In other cases, the library may have held copies once which have since been withdrawn and not replaced. All these requests are an important form of reader feedback, and alert the library to fill stock gaps. Each week the stock librarian receives an automatic list of reservations on items in stock. Titles with more reservations than copies are easily identifiable, and we can then top up popular books with extra copies.
5. **Legislation and policies**
- 5.1 **Law:** Portsmouth Library Service will provide books and other materials within the current legislation pertaining to libraries and publications:
- Copyright Design and Patents Act 1992
 - Local Government Act 1992
 - Obscene Publications Act 1959 (amended 1964)
 - Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964
 - Video Recording Act 1984
- 5.2 **PCC policies:** Current PCC policies influence stock purchasing. For example Shaping Portsmouth has led to us purchasing more books which support small and medium businesses to develop.
- 5.3 **National agendas:** Stock purchasing can be influenced by national agendas. The Reading Agency is particularly influential in directing important agendas for libraries nationally. For instance there has been a campaign around 'Mood boosting books' which led to the purchase of fiction and non-fiction aimed to help boost low mood.

5.4 CILIP policies

- 5.4.1 We will adhere to the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professional's statement on censorship. In the past librarians and information staff have resisted pressure from many shades of opinion to censor material and have defended the principle of the free dissemination of information. They are expected as part of CILIP's Ethical Principles to show "commitment to the defence, and the advancement, of access to information, ideas and works of the imagination".
- 5.4.2 The responsibilities of librarians and information staff should include full discretion over collection development and management and access policy within a broad general policy set by the parent institution. The provision of access to materials by a library or information service does not imply endorsement especially where the material may be thought to encourage discrimination.
- 5.4.3 The principles of access are the same in the emerging networked society where the opportunities provided by information and communications technologies have revolutionised the way information is made available.
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6. Value for money: Using economical processes in the selection, purchasing and management of stock in order to provide best value:

- 6.1 **CBC:** The majority of the stock is obtained from suppliers chosen after a consortium procurement procedure currently through the Central Buying Consortium (CBC). The contracts, usually awarded for two years with the option to extend cover separate lots for adult non-fiction, adult fiction, children's book, reference books, DVDs and music CDs. The suppliers chosen offer a considerable discount on the published price, service material to our requirements and also link orders and invoices with the library management system. The CBC has considered looking at a procurement process for large print and spoken word material but has concluded that library authorities would not obtain any additional advantage by such a process. There has also been consideration of a process for obtaining e-books but CBC has concluded that the library market is not currently ready for this.
- 6.2 **Supplier selection for adult and children's stock:** Selecting mainstream popular titles is not a cost effective use of the stock team's time. The team therefore have drawn up specifications for suppliers to select the stock for us for a fee. These specifications give guidance on which popular authors we'd like to stock, which subject areas and a budget allocation for each branch. These specifications are reviewed on a yearly basis and the selection is monitored on a monthly basis by the stock team and the Learning and Engagement Manager. The stock arrives ready serviced and shelf ready, thus saving valuable time.
- 6.3 **Standing orders:** Standing orders are an effective way of providing certain categories of stock on a yearly basis, examples would be large print and spoken word stock or a yearly directory that we know is to be bought every year.

- 6.4 **Price:** The library service works to obtain material at the most advantageous price. Every year the stock team meet to allocate the stock budget, between different formats and between the city's nine branches. The division is based on:
- 6.5 **Popularity of areas of stock:** The library uses issue figures to see how many items were borrowed at each branch. The issue figures are our best indication of the popularity of each area of stock, and the library uses them as the basis for the allocation of each year's stock budget.
- 6.6 **Cost:** We also take into account the average cost of material for each category to determine budget allocation. In general, children's books are cheaper than adult fiction, which in turn is cheaper than adult non-fiction. The more specialist textbooks in particular can be expensive. Spoken word on CD is the most expensive of all, with some audiobooks costing up to £90. The stock budget is divided accordingly, with more allocated to spoken word, for instance, than the issues would justify to cover the high unit costs.

7. **Book prices**

7.1 Average book prices for the year 2013-14 were as follows:

	Adult Fiction	Adult Non-Fiction	Children's Fiction	Children's Non-fiction
Hardback	9.97	10.58	4.94	7.40
Paperback	4.64	6.78	3.72	4.42
Large Print	23.50		13.00	
Spoken word	72.50		31.00	

7.2 **DVD prices**

Average DVD prices for the year 2013-14 were:

Adult: £18.50
Children: £13.00

8. **Reader development and access**

- 8.1 The Library Service aims to provide a wide range of quality stock that encourages reading as both a basic life skill and as an enjoyable and fulfilling leisure activity, catering to a wide range of reading tastes and levels. Ensuring that the stock is provided in a range of formats that reflects the needs of all potential users, including speakers of other languages, people with visual impairment and people with learning difficulties is integral to stock buying policy. We will also provide digital access to books, information, magazines and music to extend the availability of library material outside of library opening hours:
 - 8.1.1 **Adult Fiction:** There is still huge public demand for fiction in libraries, especially for newly published titles by popular authors. It is also important that the Library Service maintains a breadth of choice for readers and offers something more than

the supermarkets which only sell top selling titles. We promote the work of local authors, international and debut novelists. An important part of the Library Service's offer is maintaining a store of backlists of authors' works and which also provides access to out of print material.

- 8.1.2 **Children's stock:** We will provide quality collections of children's books at all service points to meet the needs of all ages and abilities of children and to encourage reading for pleasure and enjoyment: All children's material should reflect a diverse society and provide positive images of children and young people regarding gender, ethnicity and disability. Additionally, it should: contribute towards children's intellectual, emotional, psychological and social development; helping them understand their own and other people's situations. It should inspire children and young people, in terms of formal and informal learning, to use their imaginations and extend their use and understanding of language and vocabulary development. It supports the Foundation Stage and National Curriculum at Key Stages 1-4 and for all levels of ability. It should provide a breadth of recreational reading that will develop children and young people as readers, encouraging them to be lifelong learners and users of libraries. Virtually all children's material is selected by our supplier, based on our specifications.
- 8.1.3 **Stock for teenagers:** These categories refer to stock aimed at younger teenagers and older teenagers respectively. Broadly speaking, they are suitable for Year 7 and up - secondary school age - and the categories are set by our supplier. We can change these if it is viewed that material might be too challenging for the younger teen category. Whilst some titles for older teenagers can be fairly challenging in terms of their content, we do not practice censorship.
- 8.1.4 **Adult non-fiction:** Non-fiction issues have steadily declined over the years because of the access to information on the Internet. However there is still a strong demand for popular non-fiction - cookery, travel and particularly biographies- in all libraries. Central Library sees good issue figures for non-fiction and issues 40% of the city's non-fiction books. There is more demand for more specialised non-fiction in this branch because it is used by students. It must also be remembered that non-fiction can be expensive to buy so customers will often seek out these books in libraries to borrow rather than purchase. As with fiction we take requests for non-fiction to make sure we are responding to local demand.
- 8.1.5 **Reference books:** Because of the growth of the internet and online information services the provision of printed information books for reference purposes in libraries will now be restricted to a few key titles such as Who's Who, Whitaker's Almanac, church directories and some sporting almanacs where we retain a permanent file for future use.

The bulk of the budget allocated to reference material has been diverted to the budget for online resources. We provide subscriptions to a range of popular online reference resources ranging from encyclopaedias to family history.

- 8.1.6 **Historical collections:** Portsmouth History Centre seeks to continue to build a comprehensive, permanent collection of books, pamphlet, maps etc. about the Portsmouth area and by local authors. To this end we will aim to add at least one copy of new local books to the reference collections in the History Centre. Additional copies may be purchased for the loan collections. We will add items to stock even though they may not always meet the usual criteria of standard of production both in the physical format and the content. Significant works on the Royal Navy that add to the information we can provide to researchers will be purchased for reference for the Naval Collection. Important works on the life and works of Charles Dickens will be added to the Dickens Collection. We will not attempt to represent new editions of the novels either in English or in other languages. These will be purchased for loan when appropriate. Similarly we will add to the Conan Doyle Collection, new biographies and significant other works. Within the library service material budget we cannot hope to represent the range and depth of the material acquired by Richard Lancelyn Green.
- 8.1.7 **Books in other languages:** The library service aims to provide a range of books for both adults and children in the most widely read languages spoken in Portsmouth. These will be monitored over time and material in different languages provided or withdrawn as demand changes. According to the 2011 census 92.9% of the Portsmouth population speak English as a first language. At present the most widely-read languages are Chinese, Polish and Russian. The majority of books in other languages are held at Central Library.
- 8.1.8 **Skills for Life:** The Library Service is committed to providing Skills for Life collections in all of our libraries to help those who may be developing their reading skills. We will buy stock at all levels starting with books with a few words on each page working up to books with over a thousand words. The collection also consists of numeracy books which contain activity sheets for tutors to copy.
- 8.1.9 **Large print:** Large print books are provided for those library members who find reading standard print difficult. The range of material in this format is limited but we will select from that available through the major publishers of this format. This area will be closely monitored as the growth of e-books that give the user the option to change font size may well see this market diminish. The majority of the stock is purchased on a standing order basis from the major suppliers as these cover a range of fiction and non-fiction.
- 8.1.10 **Spoken word:** Spoken word material on CD is used by library members with little or no sight. They are also useful for people who find holding a book a struggle and those with some literacy issues. Spoken word is supplied by standing orders in a very similar way to large print. At present, the library only purchases spoken word in CD format. Although still popular with some older borrowers, overall there is little demand for cassette packs.
- 8.1.11 **e-audio:** We offer free audio book downloads to library members via the One Click Digital platform. This resource has proved a valuable addition to our cassette and cd spoken word offer as it enables users to access the books from home 24/7.

Increasingly more of our users are purchasing MP3 music devices and tablets so this offer is a welcome addition to them.

8.1.12 **DVD:** Five branches hold DVDs in stock (Central, Beddow, Cosham, North End and Southsea), although borrowers at other branches can reserve individual DVDs. The library mainly purchases rental DVDs which are licensed for libraries to rent to the public. Due to the rental licence, these DVDs are more expensive than standard retail DVDs, and are only available from the supplier for a limited time. Unlike the books, each DVD is selected by the library stock team, as the fee for supplier selection would have taken a large proportion of the budget.

Although the popular films issue the most, and therefore generate the most income, we expect each DVD to pay for itself over its lifetime, which would usually be several years. The library service will monitor the use of DVDs as the growth of downloading and streaming may well diminish the market for the physical format.

8.1.13 **Music:** A decision was made in 2014 to discontinue the CD collections as a result of declining issues. The stock has been removed from branch libraries. The remaining collection at the Central Library is generating a few issues but we are not currently adding to the collection. In 2014 we introduced the Freegal music download and streaming offer. While it is not comprehensive it does offer a music service to those users who have access to PCs, tablets and smartphones. The library service will keep up to date with developments in music services available to libraries to assess the most appropriate and cost effective service for the city.

8.1.14 **Magazines:** The cost of keeping a comprehensive collection of hard copy magazines with the thousands of titles published in the UK would be prohibitive so the service at present only takes those that are relevant to Portsmouth History Centre and are kept on permanent file. In 2012 we introduced an online magazine download service called Zinio, which means we can offer a far greater range of titles, accessible 24/7 and at a lower cost.

8.1.16 **E-books:** We are currently exploring the procurement of an ebook offer.

9. Quality

9.1 The advent of ebooks has seen an explosion in the numbers of self-publishing authors in both ebook and traditional book formats. Whilst this has brought much variety to the book world it also presents challenges for booksellers and librarians.

9.1.1 These challenges are in the quality of production where we often see poorly produced books with unattractive covers and flimsy binding. There are also considerations around the quality of the writing. In libraries we aim to be as inclusive and non-judgemental as possible in presenting a wide and diverse range of books, but we also have a responsibility to our users to make sure what we do present is of a reasonable quality.

If we are donated a copy of a new book by a self-published author, our policy is for the Information and Stock Librarian to consider whether it is suitable for stock. If it is, we might purchase more copies for other branches, but we cannot accept everything and sometimes we will have to decline. The Stock Librarian's decision is final.

9.2 **Criteria:** we apply the following quality criteria when purchasing books:

- **Physical format:** The binding should be robust to ensure the book will not fall apart easily. Some formats, such as spiral binding, are unsuitable for library stock. The overall production quality will also be taken into account.
- **Writing:** We aim to present a wide range of reading to all tastes. We do have an obligation to ensure that the writing and editing is of reasonable quality - this will be a decision that the Stock Team will make at their discretion

9.3 **Donations:**

While we will accept donations, subject to capacity, this is done on the understanding that we are not bound to add them to stock. In deciding whether to add a donated item, the same principles of selection apply as those used when purchasing material. Any donations not added to stock will be subject to the same disposal criteria as our own stock.

10. Measures of success

10.1 **Quantitative measures:** We partly measure the success of our stock policy using quantitative measures.

10.1.1 Basic monthly issue statistics are analysed to see how many items of stock were issued in each branch that month. We compare these to previous months and also the same time period the previous year. We are also able to break down the issues to see how much stock is issuing in each category e.g. adult fiction, children's non-fiction, DVDs. This includes analysing the number of downloads for digital formats.

10.1.2 We are also able to use our Library Management System Spydus to check numbers of reservations on items. This helps us to assess whether we have purchased enough copies of a particular title. We know that if there is a long waiting list of reservations, we may need to purchase more copies.

10.1.3 Every year the Library Service submits quantitative stock information to CIPFA. We are able to see other authorities' responses to compare how we measure.

10.2 **Qualitative measures:** Qualitative measures are also a very important factor in analysing the success of stock purchasing.

10.2.1 Every 3 months the Information and Stock Team work with the Library Managers to carry out stock revision in the libraries.

This involves physically looking at the quality and condition of the stock in the branches - we look for currency, wear and tear and number of issues for that item before deciding whether to keep the item or discard it (see Stock Disposal Policy for more information). Seeing the stock in situ is often the best way for assessing whether there is enough or too much stock in a branch and how much it is being used.

10.2.2 Feedback cards and surveys: All libraries have feedback cards for the public to use to tell us what they think about any aspect of the Library Service, including the stock. This feedback is first seen by the Head of Service and then stock suggestions are given to the Stock Team. The Library Survey also carries out public surveys from time to time. This always includes questions about the stock and can be a valuable method of gathering feedback.

10.2.3 Learning and Engagement team: The team work outside of libraries engaging the local community with library services. Feedback on stock is often gathered this way and can be a valuable method of feedback from non-library users.

10.2.4 The Library Service subscribes to Nielsen book data and book scan. This product enables us to compare our issues with national trends and check which titles are selling and issuing well.

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Signed by:
Stephen Baily
Head of City Development and Cultural Services

Appendices:

Appendix A: Portsmouth Library Service issues 2013-2014

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location