

Literature Collection Plan--the 800's

I. Description

- A. **Coverage.** The literature collection--the 800's--show the Dewey Decimal Classification at its most eccentric, opting for organization by language, then by type of literature. Thus, the user's simple question, "Where is the poetry section?" requires a long-winded answer, which few users understand. The 800's are a lumpy stew, with some very large sections (authorship, American poetry), some very small (French, German, Italian, Spanish, Latin, and Greek), and a single number (808) that encompasses such disparate topics as authorship, drama and poetry collections, stories, speechmaking and quotations. Literature and fiction overlap to the extent that both include short story collections, with multiple author anthologies generally going to the 800's. Collections of essays may end up here, or in subject collections.
- B. **Collection Purpose.** Different parts of the literature collection have different purposes, among them recreation for poetry, story collections and humor; life-long learning for authorship and speeches; curricular support for literary criticism and many other areas, especially Shakespeare's plays.

II. Collection Scope

Throughout the collection, emphasis is on breadth, with a few exceptions. Humor books have emerged as a popular category. David Sedaris especially requires many copies. Most books on authorship find an audience that sometimes dictates duplication.

Poetry has for years been treated as a special case, due to Iowa City's heritage as a home and training ground of many great poets. More titles are purchased than their circulation would otherwise warrant, and Iowa City authors usually are exempted from item-purge's normal rigor.

For years, selector meeting agendas have listed "retention of items of local significance" as "pending". Our principle of retaining Iowa authors clashes with our principle of keeping a collection with high turnover. In fact, many works by Iowa authors have found new homes in UI Special Collections or the Marriott's Iowa Authors Library within the last few years.

III. Audience

- A. Independent learners. The whole collection lends itself well to independent learning. Books on authorship, poetry, and collections of stories fit this category especially well. We collect anthologies of plays that are used by audiences and participants in local theatrical groups.
- B. Students. It would be naive to deny that students, secondary and above, use this

collection extensively. Poetry, plays and literary criticism are all assigned reading, and multiple copies are usually purchased, of, say, Shakespeare's plays, so that the independent learner can also find material.

- C. Browsers and recreational readers. Popular parts of the collection for these users include poetry, humor, and erotica. The story collections upstairs have been slow to find their audience.

IV. **Size and Duplication**

The collection has shrunk the last decade (5667 items in FY98, to a suspiciously round 5000 in FY06), and circulation has also gone down (13,748 in FY98, 12,306 in FY06) though the turnover rate remains nearly unchanged at 2.3. Still, this is low and will probably remain so.

V. **Selection Plan**

- A. Criteria. We generally avoid strictly academic titles. A few humor books seem to generate most of the circulation, and are purchased in single copies, until their success can be gauged. Much more poetry is reviewed, and well reviewed, than our meager circulation warrants buying. Local or well-known poets make the best bets, and poetry is almost always bought in paperback, if available. They seldom wear out. We receive few suitable gifts. Several standing orders satisfy much of the demand for current anthologies of various kinds, including *Prize Stories (the O. Henry Awards)*, *Best American Short Stories*, and *Lyrical Iowa*.
- B. Selection Tools. The standard tools are very good for many parts of the 800's, with *Booklist* and *Library Journal* having added more extensive poetry reviews recently. *Poetry* and *American Poetry Review* are good for current awareness, as is *Funny Times*. Titles on authorship are most easily located in catalogs, such as *Writers' Digest's*.

VI. **Maintenance**

The collection is weeded twice a year for condition, attempting to provide attractive editions of standard titles. Worn titles are replaced or withdrawn, unless they are of local interest and out of print.

Like many of the higher Dewey numbers, the shelves are somewhat crowded in the 800's. The bottom shelf is used in $\frac{3}{4}$ of the stacks.

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