

Rethinking Dewey In the School Library

Open Window School, Bellevue WA



OUR TEAM



TIA HEYWOOD

Primary focus:
Signage and book kits



SHIRA GOTTFRIED

Primary focus: Taxonomy
and knowledge
organization



Sponsor



LAUREN RICHEY

Library Learning Commons Director,
Open Window School





OUR PROJECT

We examined the use of the Dewey Decimal System in a K-8 library, with the goal of increasing circulation of nonfiction materials.

We provided our sponsor with an organizational framework she will use to reorganize the nonfiction section, as well as illustrated section signage and themed book kits. Our project proved that rethinking Dewey is a worthwhile endeavor, and encouraged Open Window School students to be part of the process of reimagining their library space.

Problem/Opportunity

The idea for this project arose out of Lauren's observations that the nonfiction titles in her collection were not circulating as much as the fiction collection. After genrefying the fiction collection Lauren recognized an uptick in students' engagement with it. We aimed to rethink Dewey Decimal Classification, and increase nonfiction circulation, by reorganizing nonfiction in a way that makes it more browseable for students. Dewey Decimal Classification was developed in the 1800s, and is a product of its times.

Open Window School is currently raising money to build a new Library Learning Commons, and Lauren plans to implement the nonfiction reorganization once the new space has been built.



OBJECTIVES

Examine the use of the Dewey Decimal System in school libraries

Create subject headings for nonfiction materials that provide more accurate descriptions and aid in collocation

Reimagine the spatial arrangement of the library's nonfiction section

Highlight changes made to the section through visual signage

Create themed book kits that pair books with hands-on activities

Increase circulation of nonfiction materials amongst K-8 students

THE PROCESS

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

SECTION REORGANIZATION

SIGNAGE

BOOK KITS

FEEDBACK

Gathered blog posts and articles about nonfiction reorganization projects

Designed a new nonfiction organization process

Reorganized a trial section of the library based on our new framework

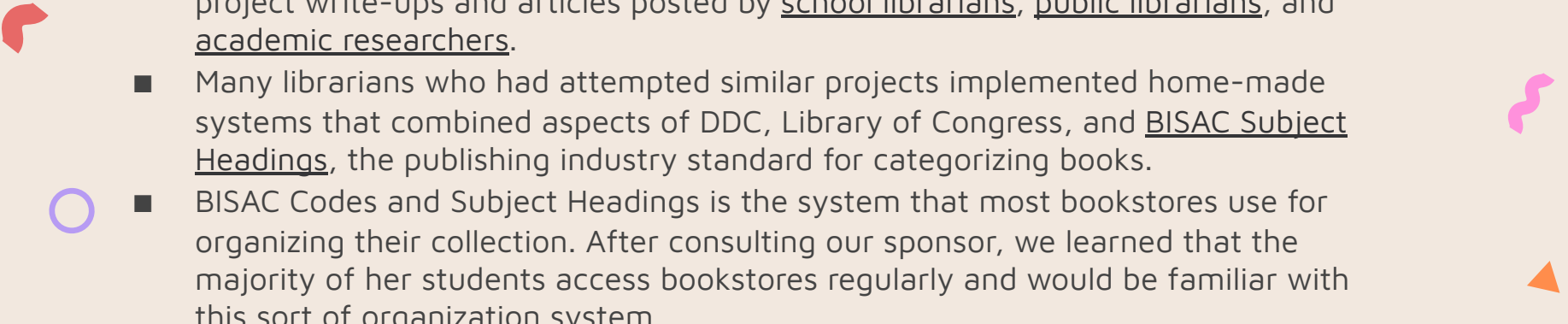
Created digital art to visually represent each category


Picked themes, gathered books, & developed activities

Received sponsor and student feedback

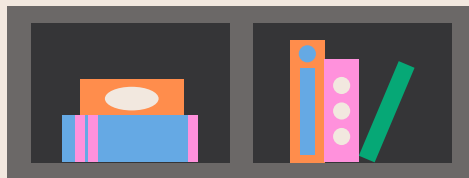
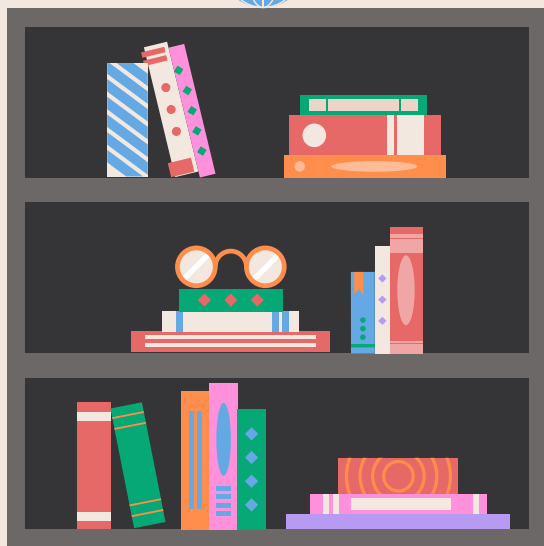


Conducting the Literature Review

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- Before we began constructing our own framework for reorganization, we conducted a review of the existing literature on the subject matter. We consulted project write-ups and articles posted by school librarians, public librarians, and academic researchers.
 - Many librarians who had attempted similar projects implemented home-made systems that combined aspects of DDC, Library of Congress, and BISAC Subject Headings, the publishing industry standard for categorizing books.
 - BISAC Codes and Subject Headings is the system that most bookstores use for organizing their collection. After consulting our sponsor, we learned that the majority of her students access bookstores regularly and would be familiar with this sort of organization system.
 - We decided to create our own knowledge organization system based on our literature review, DDC, and BISAC.



“What’s the Dewey Decimal System?”



—Open Window School
Student (6th grade)



DDC



00s General Knowledge

100s Philosophy/Psychology



200s Religion

300s Social Sciences

400s Languages

500s Science

600s Technology

700s Arts and Recreation

800s Literature

900s History and Geography





Creating the Conceptual Framework

- We decided to stick with a ten category system that roughly resembled the DDC categories, with a few key changes:
 - We turned the 100s (Philosophy/Psychology) into an Identity, Community, & Wellbeing category that would be more useful for both the school's diverse student body and collection of library materials.
 - We broadened the 200s (Religion) into Belief and Traditions, which created more room for books about non-Western systems of belief.
 - We separated the 900s (History and Geography) into two categories, due to our sponsor's large selection of Geography books used for one of the school's grade-wide projects.
 - We combined the 500s (Science) and 600s (Technology) into a single Science & Math category.
 - Since our sponsor had already removed and genrefied the 800s (Literature), we created a category for the books that remained in that section: Poetry.
 - Finally, we created a Crafts & Hobbies category to collate some of the most popular non-fiction topics: crafts, sports, games, joke books, science experiments, and cookbooks.



Conceptual Framework


General Reference

Almanacs, Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, Thesauri, Study Aids



Identity, Community & Wellbeing

Identities (African-American, Arab-American, Asian-American, Indigenous, Latinx, Multiracial, Disabilities, LGBTQ+, Neurodiversity), Community (Careers, Education, Environment, Family, Volunteering), Well-being (Health Guides, Personal Growth)



Beliefs & Traditions

Non-Religious Holidays (Birthdays, Juneteenth, Labor Day, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day), Religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Eastern Religions, Hinduism, Indigenous Religions, Islam, Judaism), Mythology & Folklore, The Unexplained (Paranormal & Supernatural, Curiosities & Wonders, Dreams)

Social Sciences

Business & Economics, Politics & Government (U.S., World), Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology

History

Prehistoric, U.S. (Colonization, Revolutionary War, Civil War, 19th Century, 20th Century, 21st Century), World (North America, Central/South America, Europe, Middle East, Asia, Africa, Australia & Oceania), Military History (WWI, WWII), Pirates & Adventurers

Geography

Atlases, U.S., World (North America, Central/South America, Europe, Middle East, Asia, Africa, Australia & Oceania)

Science & Math

Animals (Land Mammals, Aquatic Animals, Insects/Invertebrates, Reptiles & Amphibians, Birds), Prehistoric Life, Biology, Environmental Science (Disasters, Ecosystems, Plants), Earth Sciences (Crystals, Fossils, Gemstones, Rocks), Space, Technology, Physics (Simple Machines, Power), Chemistry, Math, Engineering, Transportation

Crafts & Hobbies

Science Experiments, Cooking & Food, Antiques & Collectibles (Coins, Cars), Creativity (Knitting, Sewing, Fashion Design, Origami), Games & Activities (Chess, Magic, Activity Books, Video Games), Sports (Baseball, Basketball, Football, Soccer, Golf, Water Sports), House & Home (Gardening, Interior Design), Humor, Pop Culture

Arts & Humanities

Drama, Music, Visual Arts, Photography, Architecture, Language, Literature, Philosophy

Poetry



Section Reorganization

- To test the efficacy of our framework, we chose one section of the nonfiction collection to reorganize. We combined and reorganized the materials within the DDC's 500s (Science) and 600s (Technology) into the Science & Math section we described in our conceptual framework.
- While we conducted the organization, we made adjustments to the framework, based on feedback from our sponsor and students as well as the actual materials in the library.
- We encountered some difficulties, including trying to balance making an intuitive browseable system for the students and a system that would be easy to navigate for the parent volunteers who reshelve books.
- On most occasions, we aimed for increased collocation, even when it may decrease ease of shelving. We decided that, ultimately, we wanted to create a system for the students more than anyone else.





After completing reorganization, we created clear shelf labels, as lack of signage was one of the most prominent difficulties we found during our literature review.

Section Display

We placed this descriptive comic in our newly organized 'Science & Math' section to explain our project to students in an entertaining way as well as encourage them to provide feedback.





“This makes a lot of sense.”

—Open Window School Student (2nd grade)





Section Signage

This graphic was placed in our 'Science & Math' section. It was created digitally using Procreate. The idea of each graphic is to visually represent many of the components of its category. The background colors were chosen to follow the order of colors in a rainbow, with neutral/non-rainbow colors used for the sections after purple. The idea of this is that students (and shelvees) will gain an intuitive sense of the collection layout.

Signage Examples

Poetry

This graphic includes a silly poem to make kids laugh (or perhaps elicit groans):

I am a poet
And I
Didn't Even
Know it





Crafts & Hobbies

This graphic includes many of the categories of the 'Crafts and Hobbies' section, including origami, science experiments, baking, gardening, joke books, sewing, knitting, and sports.

Arts & Humanities

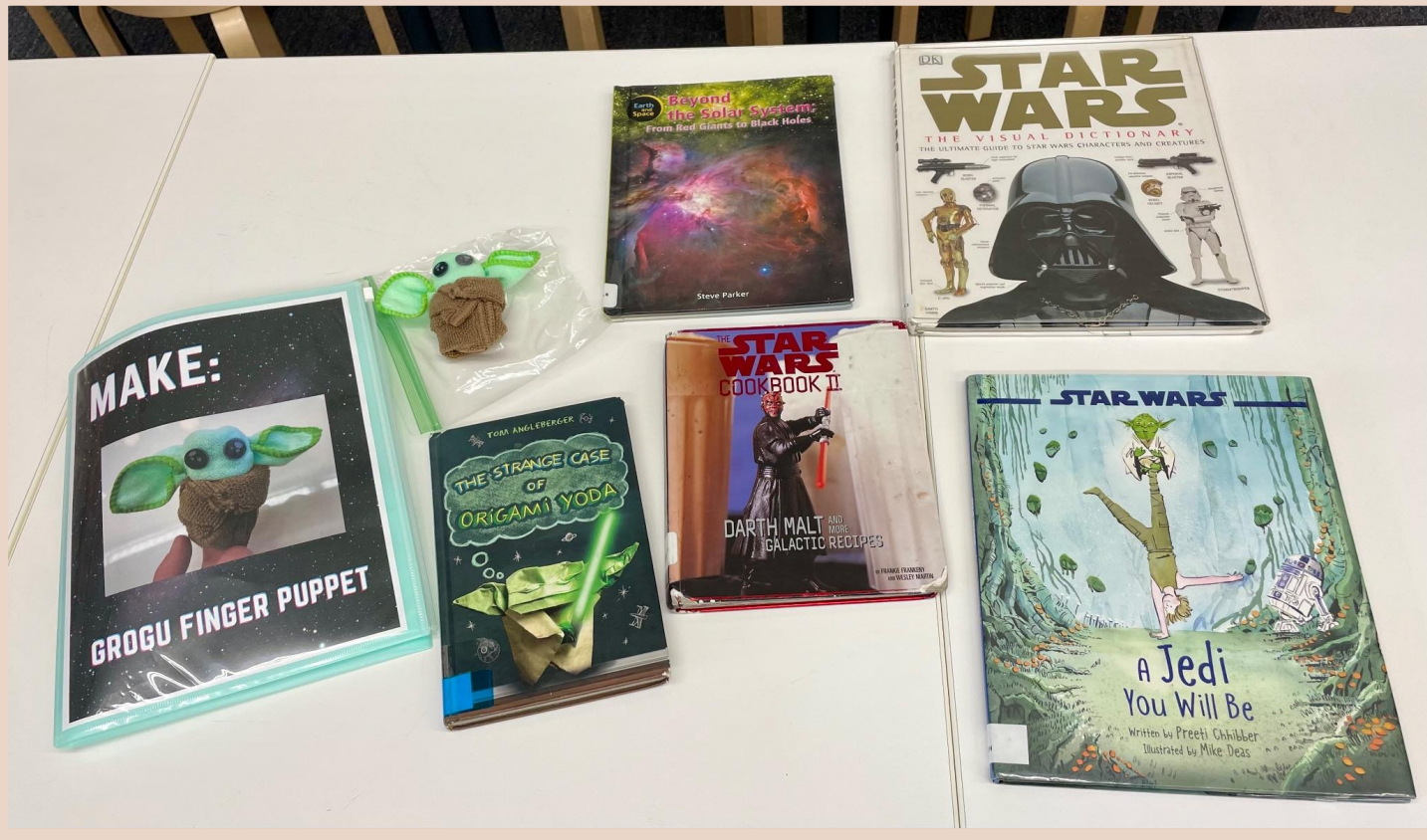
This graphic is meant to represent the many subsections of the Arts & Humanities section, including music, philosophy, theater, art, literature, photography, architecture, and languages.



• Book Kits

◆ We created four kits that paired nonfiction books with fiction selections and themed activities, with the goal of increasing nonfiction circulation. To pick books, we intentionally pulled from varied sections of the nonfiction collection to highlight different parts of the collection.



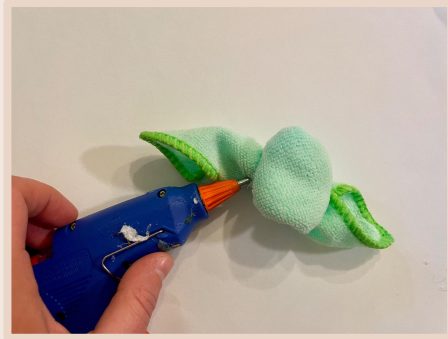


Star Wars Kit w/ Grogu Finger Puppet



Grogu Finger Puppet

This kit paired fiction Star Wars books with a cookbook, a visual dictionary of the Star Wars universe, and a nonfiction book about outer space. In the activity, microfiber cloths and hot glue gun are used to create a Grogu (Baby Yoda) finger puppet. We created visual step-by-step instructions that we adapted from a video made by Fort St. John Public Library in British Columbia.

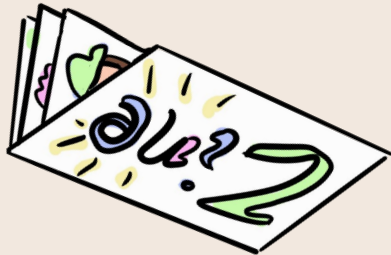




Biography Kit w/ Herstory Zine Project

Herstory Zine

This kit paired picture book biographies of women in history with a zine activity. For this activity, students were encouraged to interview a woman in their life about a proud accomplishment of hers. The zine example tells a simple story of how Tia formed a monthly tea club, to show that the focus of the zine doesn't have to be a big moment in history.



INTERVIEW A WOMAN IN YOUR LIFE ABOUT A PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HERS

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK:

WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU'VE DONE THAT YOU'RE PROUD OF?

WHEN DID YOU DO THIS?

WHAT WERE SOME OBSTACLES IN YOUR WAY?

WHAT DID OTHER PEOPLE THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU DID?

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE PROCESS?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

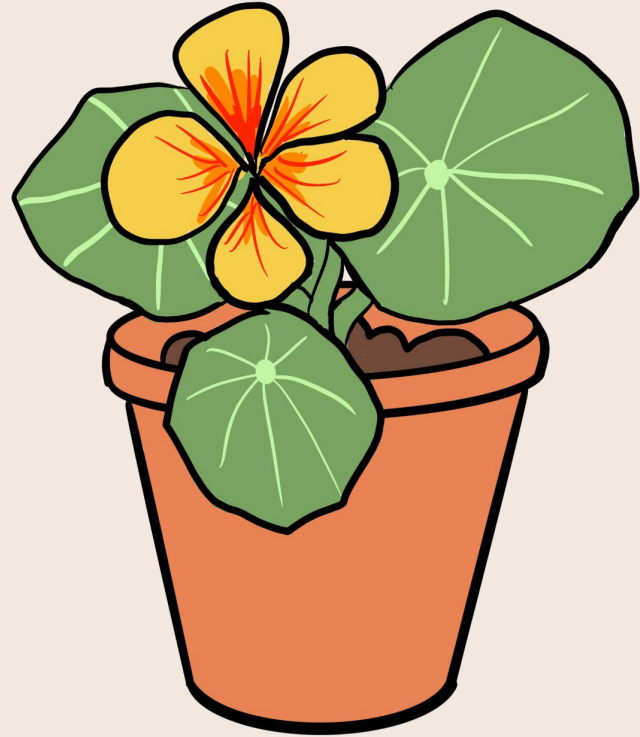




Gardening Kit w/ Nasturtium Activity

Nasturtium Activity

The gardening kit included books about plants, flowers, paper flower crafts, and a fiction picture book about the generational impacts of planting a seed. The activity was to plant a nasturtium seed. Within 32-40 days students have their very own (edible) nasturtium plant!

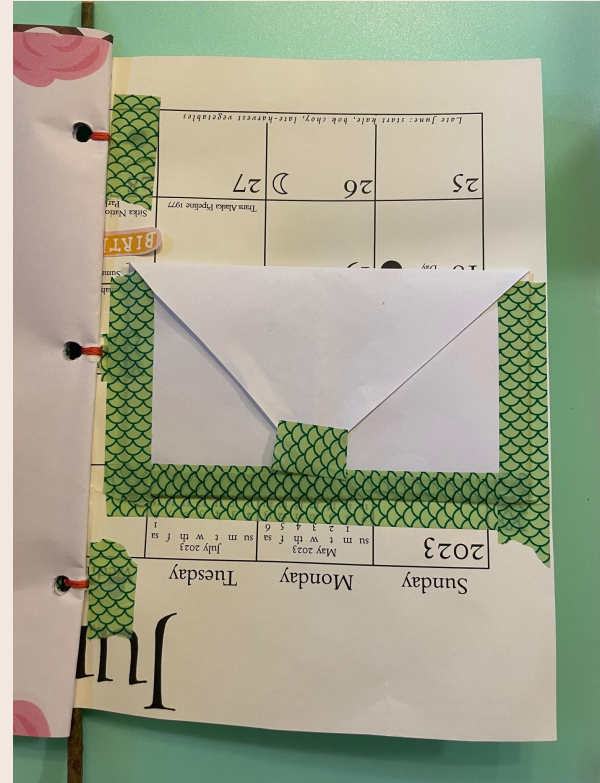




PNW Nature Journal Kit

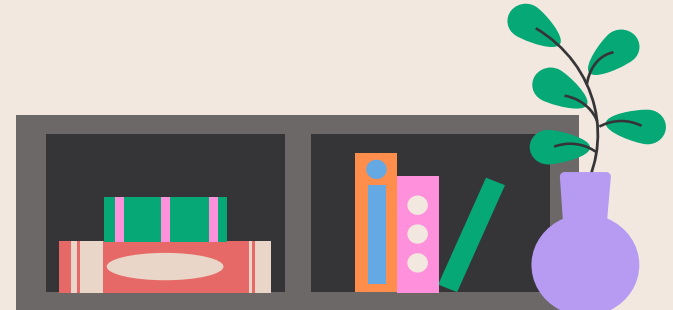
Nature Journals

This kit paired Pacific Northwest field guides with a book of short stories from local authors and a picture book about approaching nature with curiosity. The activity was to make a nature journal, with an encouragement to get outside and observe the natural world.





This sign advertised book kits in the library. Students have a checkout limit of 5 books, and the kits each contain 5 books. Parents are also allowed to check out books, so we pictured parents checking kits out for their whole family. We included a selection of books that we thought could be enjoyed by students of all ages.



Insights



Browseability vs. Findability

Ex. Should primates be shelved together under 'A' for apes, or individually by type ('G' for gorilla, 'C' for chimpanzee, etc.)? We chose to group primates together.



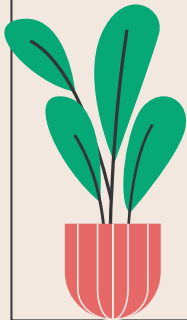
Thoroughness vs. Practicality

Ex. Some of the activities in the book kits require materials that don't mix well with books (hot glue guns, and dirt). We opted to let students find those materials themselves.



Reorganization is worthwhile!

The reorganized 'Science & Math' section helped students find books they hadn't noticed before. One student even thought Lauren had bought new books.



Impacts



Familiarity

Open Window School students have been introduced to the idea of reorganizing the nonfiction section, so they'll be more ready for the full change when it happens



Deliverables

Our sponsor received:

- Conceptual Framework
- Science/Math prototype section
- Surveys to distribute
- Signage
- 4 themed book kits



Ownership

Students provided their feedback and ideas, giving them a sense of ownership over their library space and its reorganization

● Next Steps



Compile student feedback

Throughout the process, students provided feedback in multiple informal ways. When Lauren is ready to continue the reorganization process, she can distribute formal surveys to students and teachers using survey forms we provided her with.



Implementation

Once the new Open Window School Library Learning Commons has been built, Lauren will reorganize the nonfiction section using insights gained from our Capstone project.



Looks like we've reached the end of these slides. Time to go forth and reorganize my bookshelf!

