

Florida Library Literacy Tip Sheet

State Library and Archives of Florida

Marketing the Adult Literacy Collection

Introduction

The traditional library uses the principles of cataloging and the Dewey Decimal System to organize its collection. When the goal is to make an Adult Literacy/English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) collection accessible to patrons and staff, the promotion and display of the collection play important roles. To ensure continued and sufficient funding of the collection, it is necessary to remember to sell the idea to the library's administrators as well. Libraries may have a collection with consumable titles along with those listed in the automated catalog. Library literacy programs need both formats. Titles listed in a library's catalog can be easily found across a library system.

In this Issue

This Tip Sheet discusses promotion and display strategies for various users of the adult literacy collection, ways to make the collection known and accessible to staff members, and ideas about how to best inform library administrators of your efforts.

Patrons

Those interested in the collection could include students of English as a second language, new readers, tutors, Adult Basic Education teachers, and literacy providers. The following are tips on how to meet the needs and attract the interest of these patrons:

- Group adult literacy materials together in a prominent place in the stacks. Consider creating rotating displays by topic, such as "Tutor Tips and Fresh Ideas," "Books on Tape for New Readers," "Get Ready for the GED," "Management Tips for Literacy Councils," or "Life Skills English."
- Place English literacy materials near the entrance so users new to the library do not hesitate to visit and browse. Consider a quiet, yet easily accessible corner for new readers so they can browse the collection unobserved by circulation desk patrons.
- Conduct tours of the collection for groups of literacy tutors.
- Package materials as a set with correlated teachers' manuals, student workbooks, skill books, cassettes, and videos. The patron will be spared the hunt for the separate titles.
- Schedule regular open houses for literacy program learners and Adult Basic Education classes. Offer card sign-ups and tours. Promote other library programs as well as the adult literacy collection.
- Get invited to tutor training workshops and promote the collection with sample titles and bibliographies. Encourage the tutors to bring their students to the library to sign up for cards.

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- Develop skill level-appropriate marketing materials, e.g., lists of titles, bookmarks, and fliers to promote the collection.
- Facilitate book discussions for new readers and advanced ESOL learners.
- Become a member of local literacy coalitions and encourage suggestions on appropriate materials for the collection.

Library Staff

- Consider creating a separate material code for the collection to ease location of specific titles in the catalog.
- Create a bibliography of adult literacy and ESOL titles for use by reference staff. They are often the patron's first contact.
- Adjust check out periods for materials meant for tutor use. Tutors who commit to working one-on-one with a learner typically require the materials for longer than the customary check out periods. Staff will appreciate the automation of this task.
- Ask for Literacy Liaison staff and/or volunteers at every location. Help them become familiar with the collection and community literacy providers.
- Ask for periodic invitations to staff meetings and branch manager meetings to promote the collection and invite suggestions.
- Package multimedia sets and teachers' manuals/workbooks together so staff does not have to hunt for separate titles.

Administrators

- Collect circulation statistics and provide a regular report. Provide a context for the numbers. Literacy materials may not circulate at the same rate as the overall collection. A comparison from year to year is a better indication of progress.
- Keep track of statistics on outreach projects, e.g., number of participants, number of new cards, frequency of use by participants, and frequency of open houses and presentations.
- Encourage literacy council board members, tutors, ABE teachers, and learners to document their satisfaction with the collection.
- Enlist the assistance of the library advisory board or a Friends of the Library board member as an advocate for your program and collection.

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The following groups will support your efforts. Your program should become a member of ProLiteracy America (www.proliteracy.org), Literacy Florida! (www.literacyflorida.org), and Florida Literacy Coalition (www.floridaliteracy.org). The State of Florida also provides training, technical assistance, and grants for library sponsored programs.

For more information about library literacy services and programs in Florida, contact Sandra Newell at: **State Library and Archives of Florida**

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You may also visit http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/bld/Literacy/BLD_literacy_index.html.

Resources

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) has an information sheet available titled "Important Resources on Literacy for Libraries."