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Beam Me Up Some Sci-Fi: Building and Promoting Popular Science & Climate Fiction Book Collections in Academic Libraries

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Beam Me Up Some Sci-Fi

Building and Promoting Popular
Science & Climate Fiction Book
Collections in Academic Libraries

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Overview



— 01 —

Popular Reading in Academia

What are popular reading collections and their history in academic libraries

— 02 —

A Collection @ Binghamton

Establishing the popular reading collection at Binghamton University

— 03 —

Promoting Science in Popular Reading

Creating and promoting popular science, sci-fi, cli-fi, and fantasy book collections

— 04 —

Challenges, Successes, and the Future

Biggest challenges and successes, and plans for the future



-01-

*Popular Reading
in Academia*

What is a Popular Reading Collection?

Popular reading collections, often also referred to as leisure, recreational, or pleasure reading, or browsing collections have two main characteristics in academic settings:

- “Fulfill the role of reading for entertainment, not related to curriculum”
- “Are selected by the library (i.e. not a ‘take one, leave one’ situation where the library has no control over what is in the collection)”

Brookbank, Davis, & Harlan (2018)

A Brief History

- **Early 20th Century:** Popular reading collections were popular, with browsing rooms, book lists, activities, and displays common in academic settings.
- **1950s-1960s:** Attitudes towards popular reading collections began to shift & literature on them began to fall*
 - Changes in building architecture
 - Declines in student interest in reading for pleasure
 - Counter-culture and challenge of authority
 - A move towards a exuding a more “serious”, research-oriented vibe
 - Increasing demand on time and resources
- **1990s-present:** literature calling attention to the importance of popular reading collections in academic libraries begins to pick back up, with strong advocacy for newer materials/topic coverage, such as graphic novels, social justice content, etc., becoming more prevalent.

The Myth?

- **Brookbank, Davis & Harlan (2018)** decided to test the seemingly common belief that popular reading collections are not common in academic libraries and/or they are not wanted, nor supported, in these environments. They ran a survey in the Orbis Cascade Alliance (large consortium of academic libraries in Pacific Northwest) and found that 68% of libraries had a pleasure reading collection.
 - Marks (1976) surveyed 30 of the largest university libraries in the US and found that 50% of them had recreational reading collections.
 - Wiener (1982) surveyed 110 libraries, found that 61% had such collections.
 - Morrisett (1994) conducted a survey of 120 academic libraries in twelve Southeastern states and found that 45% had recreational reading collections.
 - Kerns & O'Brien (2002) surveyed academic libraries in Tennessee and found that 70% had recreational reading collections.
 - Elliott (2007) in a national survey found that 71% had a “browsing area” in their library.

Benefits

- Studies have shown that there are strong correlations between reading for pleasure and academic achievement.
 - Through better reading comprehension and ability to understand and synthesize information from academic texts (Galik 1999)
 - Producing higher quality academic writing across disciplines (Krashen 2001)
- Support for popular reading collections is often very strong when campus communities are surveyed (Rathe & Blankenship 2006, Diers & Simpson 2012).
- Circulation Statistics of such collections in academic settings demonstrate high usage (Hackman, Corlett-Rivera, & Larson, 2014).

A decorative illustration on a dark green background. On the left, there is a stack of three books. The top book has a dark cover and is tied with a light-colored string. Below it is a book with a reddish cover, and at the bottom is a book with a patterned cover. In front of the books is a dark green cup with a light-colored band, filled with a dark liquid. To the right of the books are several small hearts in light blue, light orange, and dark red. In the top right corner, there are brown leaves on a branch. The text '-02-' is centered in the upper right, and the title 'Popular Reading @ Binghamton' is in a cursive font below it.

-02-

*Popular Reading @
Binghamton*



The Why



Accessibility

Browsable, accessible
(via check out times),
eye-catching

Diversity

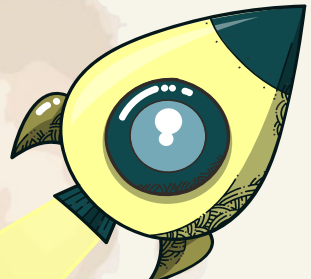
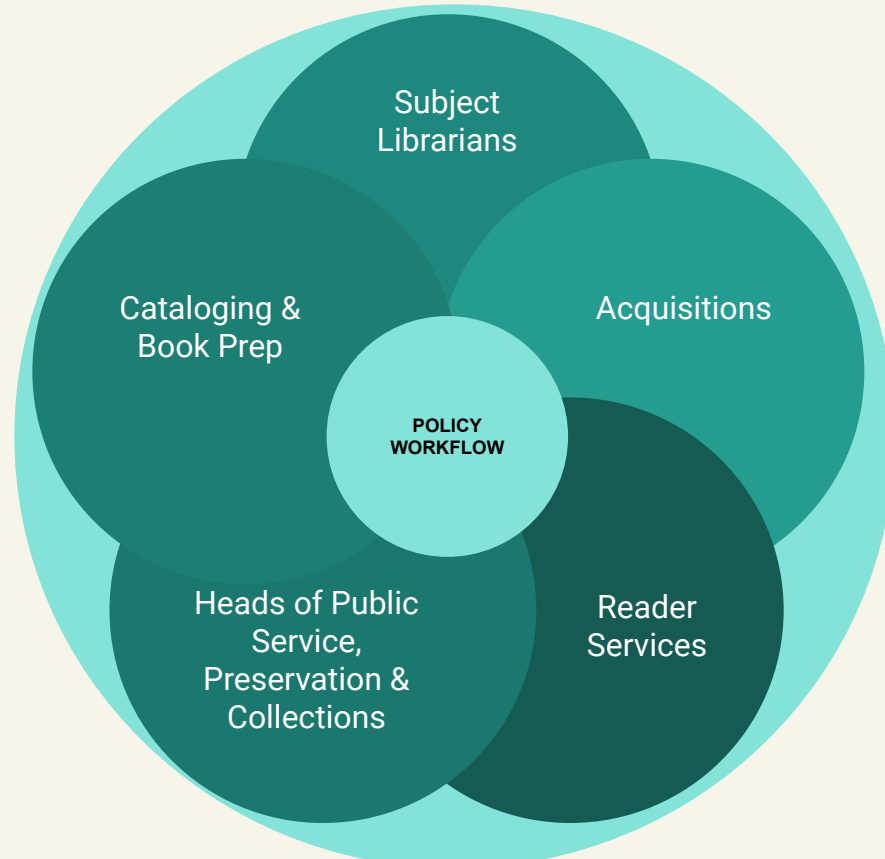
Could provide access to
books were
under-represented in our
collections

Meeting Student Needs

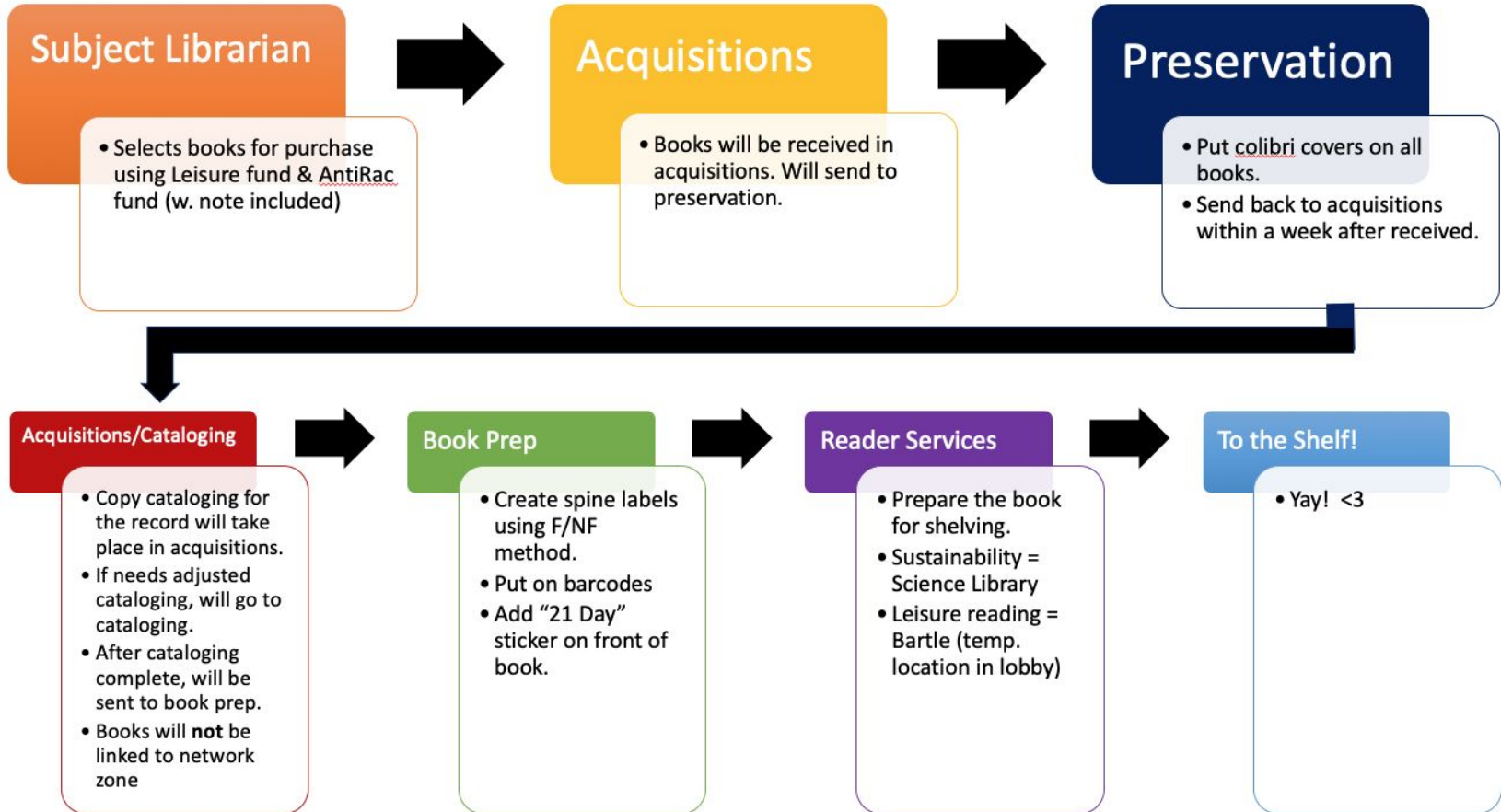
Students were
consistently asking for
such a collection at
service points



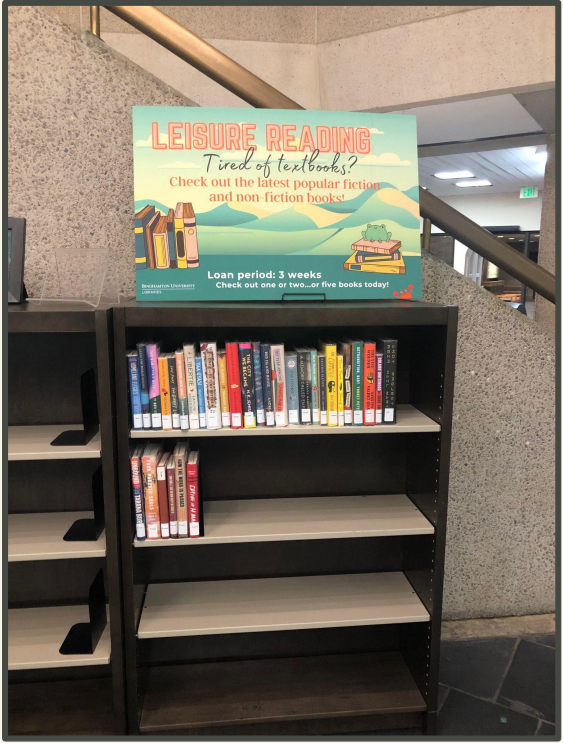
Planting the Seed & Talking to Stakeholders



LEISURE READING COLLECTION WORKFLOW MAP



Starting the Space



Leisure Collection (Fall 2021)



Sustainability Collection (Spring 2022)

Establishing the Space



Leisure Collection (Summer 2023)



Sustainability Collection (Spring 2023)

The Loft Collection: Popular Reading



-03-

*Promoting Science in
Popular Reading*





Book Displays

Collections (3)



Sustainability Collection

Our collection features books on climate research, environmental justice, and sustainable living! Browse through and check out books to learn more about gardening, harmful industries, zero waste, species migration, sustainable fashion, social justice, foraging, and more!



Outreach & Engagement

Collection Spotlights

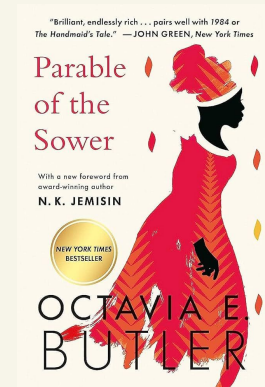
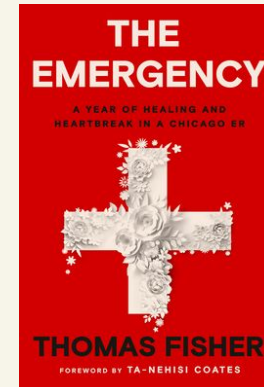
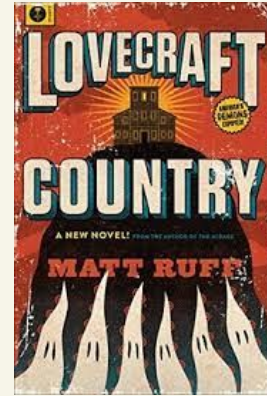
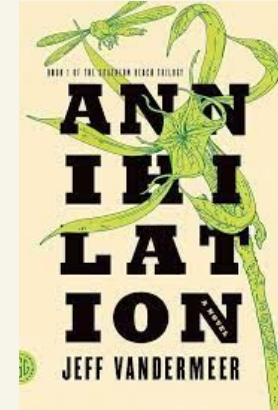
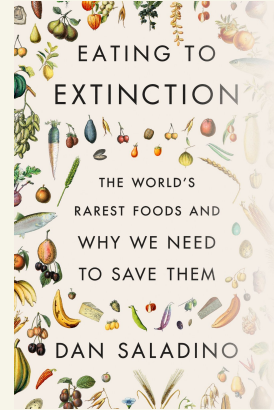
Sustainability Book Collection

Emphasis on practice-based educational and recreational materials, such as:

- Foraging
- Growing plants in a variety of environments
- Mending clothes
- Practical sustainability acts of change
- Climate science & Climate fiction

Popular Reading Collection

Emphasis on creating a robust popular science nonfiction collection, as well as plenty of sci-fi and fantasy choices.





-04-

*Strengths, Challenges,
and The Future*

Strengths

1. Usage numbers
 - Sustainability Books: 287 check-outs, 203 total books
 - The Loft: 207 check-outs across 47 science/fantasy titles
2. Word of Mouth
 - Great feedback and excitement when discussed in meetings, classrooms, and around campus
3. Partnerships
 - Has created opportunities to partner with other campus entities on events/collection highlights



Challenges



1. Managing Expectations
 - Exciting project, many want to grow it much faster than is feasible
2. Advocating for its Importance
 - Still some that do not see the value of any non-research or curriculum-specific collection development
3. Location Issues
 - Location impact on usage, and creating browsability online.


The Future: Growth Opportunities

- Continue to update and upgrade the spaces
- Create interactive collection activities (i.e. recommendation requests, staff picks, etc.)
- Continue to buy more sci-fi and cli-fi titles
- Partner with student clubs and organizations to host events that tie into the collection
- Expand the online browsability of the collections.



THANKS

Questions & Discussion

The background features a dark blue night sky filled with white stars. In the upper right, a green and yellow UFO is shown in flight. Below the sky, a stylized city skyline is depicted with various building silhouettes in shades of teal and black. Some buildings have small antenna-like structures on their roofs.

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