

Beyond Keeping Warm: Optimizing Crafts Resources at Santa Cruz Public Libraries

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ABSTRACT: Collection on crafts is one of the most popular categories at Santa Cruz Public Libraries. Despite its popularity, it is not without challenges. Book funding, for instance, has not only seen no increase since 2003, but is also faced with possible budget cuts with today's economic downturn. In this paper, the author seeks an optimization of crafts resources within the limits of budget, space and energy.

July 2008 marked the second anniversary of my new collection development responsibility in the subject area of Applied Arts. On the eve of my new assignment, I was at once excited and vexed with misgivings. My excitement rose from the fact that applied arts, commonly known as crafts, are always a familiar and fascinating subject to me, being a [knitter\[1\]](#) myself. My misgivings, on the other hand, were weighty. A brief glance at the collection told me that the existing books showed serious signs of aging: a great majority of craft books in the catalog of Santa Cruz Public Libraries were dated back in the 90s or earlier decades. "It is a very popular area," I was duly warned. My predecessors were seen to spend a substantial part of their time, filling and filtering large stacks of user requests. "Do I have any time left after my other collection responsibilities and cataloging/reference duties?" I asked myself time and again.

Two and a half years later, I have not only survived my former misgivings, but also reaped abundant positive experiences in the increasing popularity of nonfiction in general, crafts in particular. In addition, I have gained valuable insight into optimizing crafts resources with a limited book budget and unlimited user expectations. Unlike my predecessors, I am not burdened with users' requests during my normal working day. They do come in regularly, but only in a trickling manner. So what is the key to this turnaround? More importantly, what does this popularity signify to us as library professionals? The following is a summary of my experience.

I. Community's Enthusiasm for Crafts

Santa Cruz County is situated on California's Central Coast, 65 miles south of San Francisco and 35 miles north of Monterey. It boasts a population of 251,747 based on the U.S. Census Bureau 2007 estimate[2]. Flanked by 29 miles of sun-drenched beaches and the redwood forested Santa Cruz Mountains, it holds an average temperature of 68.7 °F (20 °C) in summer and 57 °F (13 °C) in winter. Like many communities in the Greater San Francisco Bay Area, Santa Cruz County has a high concentration of musicians, artists and craftsmen, born locally or settled down from all over the world. They are attracted by its mild climate, beautiful landscape, and liberal politics, which in turn have fostered and nurtured artistic creations and skillful craftsmanship.

In Santa Cruz County, art events and festivals are held all year round by local organizations such as Santa Cruz Art League, the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, the Santa Cruz Institute of Contemporary Arts which presents [First Friday Art Tour](#) each month, and the Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County which hosts [Open Studios Art Tour](#) every October. Apart from the above events, festivals and tours, a substantial component of a crafts movement exists around us. People of all ages are inspired either by the artistic community, or motivated by personal, spiritual or social reasons, especially after September 11 of 2001 and the Iraq War of 2002. They express themselves by hand-made containers, covers and supports with natural materials such as clay, glass, wood, fiber and metal. As President Jimmy Carter sums up most eloquently, "The beauty of craftsmanship is that it has the capacity to engage each of us in activities that nurture our humanity, satisfy our need to express ourselves, and give us the opportunity to learn with our hands in ways that are not possible with our minds alone." [3]

In November 2006, Tina Baine, a Santa Cruz newspaper writer, proclaimed in her *Do It Yourself* column that "If you browse in the crafts section of your local library or bookstore, you'll discover that the majority of craft books are written about quilting and knitting. There are others there (scrapbooking is definitely taking some space on the shelves these days), but it appears that the vast majority of crafty people are creating practical items to keep their families warm, just as their great-great-grandmothers did more than a century ago." [4] To a great extent, the statement has captured the community's enthusiasm for crafts. There are at least six popular crafts in Santa Cruz County: knitting/crocheting, quilting, ceramics, glass, woodworking and jewelry, among which knitting/crocheting and quilting are two most popular media. Because of this factor, combined with my personal knowledge and practice, this paper will be weighted heavily toward the subject area of knitting/crocheting. A further consideration lies in the fact that "Being able to 'work in any medium,'" as Vasari contends of the fine artist, "has never been true of the craft artists. Each craft area remains distinct and quite separate within its own material domain. Each is centered on specific techniques, techniques dictated by its specific

material, so much so that technical knowledge and technical manual skills acquired in one area usually do not carry over to another." [5]

II. Crafts: Beyond Keeping Warm

Knitting

Knitting. [87 titles]

Search also under: Afghans (Coverlets) (22 titles)

Search also under: Knitted lace (4 titles)

Search also under: Machine knitting (3 titles)

Knitting -- Bolivia. [1 title]

Knitting -- Channel Islands -- Guernsey -- Patterns. [1 title]

Knitting -- Iceland -- Patterns. [1 title]

Knitting -- Ireland -- Aran Islands -- Patterns. [4 titles]

Knitting -- Latvia -- Patterns. [1 title]

Knitting -- Norway -- Patterns. [1]

Knitting -- Patterns. [225]

Crocheting

Crocheting. (35)

see also narrower term Afghans (Coverlets) (22)

see also narrower term Lace and lace making. (9)

Crocheting -- England. [1]

Crocheting -- Patterns. [71]

The above is a snapshot of collection on knitting/crocheting, residing currently in the [catalog of Santa Cruz Public Libraries](#). In the fiscal year of 2006-2007, I bought more than 77 titles on knitting/crocheting, nearly three times that of previous annual orders. However, library users' insatiable demand is unprecedented. As soon as new orders appear in the library catalog, newer request on knitting will be made. There are eleven branches in Santa Cruz Public Libraries, among which Felton, La Selva Beach and Outreach are the smallest branches. Normally, these three branches do not have high demands for nonfiction titles. Knitting/crocheting, however, is an exception. I have been asked time and again to assign to them more knitting titles. They are circulating and people cannot have enough of them.

Unlike their great-great-grandmothers over a century ago, today's quilters and knitters are no longer performing their crafts just to keep their families warm. These two crafts are no longer just for grandmas. "The quilting community is now 27 million strong. The number of quilters in the United States has more than doubled in the past ten years, according to a 2006 survey commissioned by the National Quilter's Magazine and the International Quilt Market and Festival." [6] In Santa Cruz County, there are many quilting clubs and organizations, most noticeable of which is the

Pajaro Valley Quilt Association that has just completed its 30th annual county fair in the city of Watsonville.

Knitting, on the other hand, shows an even greater number. "According to a 2004 survey by the Craft Yarn Council of America (CYCA), 53 million women nationwide knit or crochet."[\[7\]](#) Since then, neither their number nor enthusiasm has shown any sign of slowing down, based on the latest "CYCA's tracking research, which was initiated in 1994, has documented knitters' and crocheters' passion for their crafts, and their enthusiasm is continuing strong in 2008."[\[8\]](#) In Santa Cruz County, Knitting Guild of Santa Cruz is open to knitters of all skill levels. Members meet regularly the third Tuesday of each month for the day meeting, and the second Tuesday of each month for the night meeting. The annual [Santa Cruz County Fair](#) has special prize categories for knitting and crocheting. There are five major outlets for yarn and supplies in the area, namely Beverley's Fabrics, the Golden Fleece, the Yarn Place, the Swift Stitch, and Luminous Threads. They have their own websites and blogs, echoing a nationwide trend: "The last few years have seen record-breaking yarn sales, a burst of knitting-inspired blogs and Web sites. A TV program called Knitty Gritty and several new fiction books ('knit lit' that have as their premise the friendship formed in knitting circles."[\[9\]](#) For such an old craft as knitting/crocheting, a new and vital renaissance has taken place in this community.

1. New Understanding

Today's knitters, especially those younger knitters in their 20's and 30's, have found knitting a satisfying avenue for DIY (Do It Yourself). To create something at once beautiful and functional out of skeins of yarn is not only an eloquent way to satisfy human being's basic creative urges, but also an effective way to resist commercialism and mass consumption. Through this DIY with their own hands, knitters have come to a new understanding with the world, for "Unlike the machine which is characterized by unlimited power and endless production, the human hand is limited in size, strength, skill, and even endurance and speed. These limits not only establish the scale of craft objects, but because they are limits shared by all humans, whether craftsmen or not, they also give us a sense of how to relate to other things in the world, man-made as well as natural. In doing this the hand provides a basic, universal gauge of what constitutes the human in terms of scale and proportion, material and form; it offers a standard with which to judge quality and to differentiate abundance from excess."[\[10\]](#)

2. New Connectivity

Knitting involves a complete social network either in person or digitally. It requires connectivity and human interaction during the process of fermenting a project idea, purchasing accessories and supplies, and completing the project. Mary Colucci, Executive Director of CYCA, points out that "These enthusiasts love to share their talents and time to help others. One-third made a project for charity last year and they

told us what they'd like to see more of. For instance, they like gathering together with other knitters and crocheters to share ideas and network."[\[11\]](#) The craving for sharing ideas and network is one of the charms of knitting. The creation of knitters' web sites, blogs and wikis is by no means accidental. They display their accomplishments as well as discuss their immediate problems and concerns. Three out of the five yarn outlets mentioned above in Santa Cruz County: [Golden Fleece](#), [Swift Stitch](#) and [the Yarn Place](#) provide both collective and private classes to customize students' time schedule. The class fee is minimal, with the goal to help them learn knitting basics, and accomplish specific projects. Sometimes an emergency class is called for when a student stumbles on an insurmountable obstacle during the process. In essence, people knit or learn to knit, not just to keep their families warm by making such practical items as covers, sweaters and hats. More importantly, they need each other as a support group.

3. New Meditative/Therapeutic

Knitting is very meditative. "The meditative and spiritual qualities of knitting can also yield inward revolutions. It can be healing to stitch in a corner by yourself or in a group, working with your hands to create something beautiful out of a ball of string. For one thing, you can't rush. You have to slow down and focus on what's directly in front of you—a salve for the over-processed, over-analytical mind."[\[12\]](#)

Nowadays, many women suffer from various cancers. "In 2007, an estimated 178,480 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed among women, as well as an estimated 62,030 additional cases of in situ breast cancer."[\[13\]](#) Under such stressful circumstances, knitting has become one of the good companions for cancer patients to have as they go through their medical treatments and therapies. Creating new projects takes the mind off imminent surgeries, debilitating chemotherapies and irritant radiation therapies. Completing knitting projects brings them new hope and enhances a positive attitude toward life. The whole process has proven therapeutic.

4. New Way to Continue Tradition

According to Carol Sauvion, Executive Director of *Craft in America*, "American craft, with a history that begins before the written word, continues to evolve. The past two centuries in particular have provided a stimulus for craft artists—artists who work with clays, fiber, metal, and wood, rather than paint or watercolor—who find a wide and varied audience and market for their creations. Our communities and schools, our ethnic and religious groups have all played a part in this ongoing story."[\[14\]](#)

Fiber, one of the four major natural materials for craft artists, provides knitters/crocheters with a firm footing in both nature and culture. By using the same tools, i.e., needles and material, they are preserving the tradition of knitting/crocheting skills and advancements brought from the old countries, passed from mother to daughter, teacher to student and friend to friend. Furthermore, they are continuing the

commitment to excellence and craftsmanship in a new stylistic form of the 21st century. It confirms the conclusion of Claude Lévi-Strauss, a French structural anthropologist, that "The survival of a custom or a belief can in fact be explained in two ways. Either the custom or belief is a survival without any other significance than that of an historical residue spared by chance or as a result of extrinsic causes, or else it has survived because through the centuries it has continued to play a role and because this role is the same as might account for its initial appearance."[\[15\]](#) Apparently, the popularity of knitting/crocheting belongs to the latter.

III. Impact on Libraries: Collections

Writer Anne Lamott defines most aptly the basic role of our libraries, "A free library is a revolutionary notion, and when people don't have free access to books, then communities are like radios without batteries. You cut people off from essential sources of information—mythical, practical, linguistic, or political and you break them. You render them helpless in the face of political oppression. We were not going to let this happen."[\[16\]](#) In the same breath, she outlines the rare role of librarians, "We were there to celebrate some of the rare intelligence capabilities that our country can actually be proud of—those of librarians. I see them as healers and magicians. Librarians can tease out of inarticulate individuals enough information about what they are after to lead them on the path of connection. They are trail guides through the forest of shelves and aisles—you turn a person loose who has limited skills, and he'll be walloped by the branches. But the librarians match up readers with the right books: 'Hey, is this too complicated? Then why don't you give this one a try?'"[\[17\]](#)

Here Lamott has made home two important points: 1) To empower our communities, our libraries need to provide them with essential sources of information; and 2) To further empower our communities, we librarians need to match up our users with the right books or information. Looking back at my past year's experience, I am happy to recall that I have stayed focused on these two points for my collection development in the area of Crafts.

1. Core Collection to Guide

For two years in a row, I have been following as guidance Brad Hooper's *Top Ten Books on Crafts & Hobbies* published annually in the December issue of *Booklist*.[\[18\]](#) When first starting the crafts collection, I didn't have such guidance in the crafts selection. Against the 2006's top ten list, I was only able to locate two titles in the whole catalog of Santa Cruz Public Libraries, i.e., *Michaels Book of Wedding Crafts* and *Luxury Knitting*. In order to constantly present to library users a complete spectrum of crafts titles, I immediately added eight titles to complete the yearly list. The following year was just the opposite: I only added two more titles after the publication of the 2007's top ten list, as I had already purchased the majority of titles on earlier occasions. Recently, I have revisited them and found them all utilized by our patrons. Needless to say, those top ten lists have served as a core guideline for our

users to pursue and be informed of new approaches to the world of crafts. The following is an example from 2007's list.

1. Amigurumi! Super Happy Crochet Cute / Elisabeth A. Doherty.
2. The Big Book of Cross-Stitch Designs: Over 900 Simple-to-Stitch Decorative Motifs.
3. Crafts in America: Celebrating Two Centuries of Artists and Objects / Jo Lauria and Steve Fenton.
4. Crochet in No Time: A Simple, Stylish Collection of 52 Quick-Crochet Projects / Melody Griffiths.
5. Domiknitrix: Whip Your Knitting into Shape / Jennifer Stafford.
6. Get a Hobby! 101 All-Consuming Diversions for Any Lifestyle / Tina Barseghian.
7. Handmade Greeting Cards for Special Occasions: Step-by-Step Techniques & Original Creative Projects to Make / Amanda Hancocks.
8. Knit Kimono: 18 Designs with Simple Shapes / Vicki Square.
9. Knitting with Balls: A Hands-on Guide to Knitting for the Modern Man / Michael del Vecchio.
10. Stitch It: Over 20 Specially Commissioned Projects for Stylish Soft Furnishings / Katie Ebben.

2. *Anticipating Needs vs. Passively Filling Requests*

I prefer to order as many new titles as possible, if I can find good ones from *Booklist*, *Publishers' Weekly* and specialized publishers' catalogs. In the fiscal year of 2007, I filled 57 requests but ordered 138 new titles on popular craft titles on clays, metal, woodwork, pottery/ceramics, beading, glass, paper art as well as on quilting and knitting. By doing so, I have drastically reduced my time on filling users' requests. More often than not, my order has anticipated and met their needs. In this way, I stay ahead of the curve, rather than passively one step behind users' demands. This is a very good PR (public relation) for the library to show that their tax money is being used efficiently.

3. *Readers Advisory (RA) for Both External and Internal Users*

In *Exploring Nonfiction*^[19], Neal Wyatt outlines four powerful elements for RA librarians to consider: narrative, subject, appeal and type, of which I especially find the last three elements beneficial in my RA work.

i. Power of Subject

A year ago I received a request for *Lion Brand Yarn Just Throws/Shawls* from one of our eleven branch libraries. Since I purchased four available titles from the Lion Brand Yarn Just Series and did not have any recollection of Throws/Shawls as a part of title, I contacted the patron by email and suggested the last title listed below.

1. Lion Brand yarn just bags. (1)
2. Lion Brand yarn just hats. (1)
3. Lion Brand yarn just scarves. (1)
4. Lion Brand yarn just wraps. (1)

The reason why neither the patron nor the branch staff was able to identify title #4 lies in the fact that shawls are a subject heading, but not part of the title to retrieve.

Shawls.

Knitting -- Patterns.

Crocheting -- Patterns.

Hours after I emailed the patron[20], a reply came in:

"I think that the title I am looking for is Just Wraps. Can I request that through you or should I go into my local Garfield Park Branch. (They are always so helpful there)."

ii. Power of Type

During my monthly branch weeding visits, I am often asked to suggest some craft books for their book displays or recommendation. Resorting to power of type is one of my strategies, e.g., 100 series by Jean Leinhauser and Rita Weiss:

1. *100 afghans to knit & crochet*
2. *100 crochet projects*
3. *100 hats to knit & crochet*
4. *100 knitting projects*
5. *100 purses to knit & crochet*

iii. Power of Appeal

Power of appeal is another strategy to meet the needs of users at different levels and ages. In the last two years, I have managed to build and strengthen collections in the following areas.

a. Trendy & Luxurious Appeal, e.g.,

1. Cousins, Suss.

Hollywood knits style : a guide to good knitting and good living.

New York : Stewart, Tabori & Chang, c2004.

2. Hansel, Alison.

Charmed knits : projects for fans of Harry Potter.

Hoboken, N.J. : Wiley Pub., c2007.

3. Karapetyan, Berta.

Runway knits : 30 fashion-forward designs.

New York : Potter Craft, c2007.

4. Knight, Erika

Glamour knits at home : 15 sensuous designs to knit and keep forever.

New York : Potter Craft, c2007.

b. Hip & Chic Appeal, e.g.,

1. Carron, Cathy.

Hip knit hats: 40 fabulous designs.

New York: Lark Books. 2005.

2. Chia, Wenlan.

Twinkle's big city knits : thirty-one chunky-chic designs.

New York : Potter Craft, c2007.

3. Ibomu, Afya.

Hip hats & cool caps.

Newtown, CT : Taunton Press, c2006.

4. Moreno, Jillian..

Big girl knits : 25 big, bold projects shaped for real women with real curves.

New York : Potter Craft, 2006.

More big girl knits : 25 designs full of color & texture for curvy women.

New York : Potter Craft, c2008.

c. Ethnic Appeal, e.g.,

1. Hamann, Helen, 1954-

Andean inspired knits : designs in luxurious alpaca.

Loveland, Colo. : Interweave Press, c2006.

2. Hollingworth, Shelagh.

Traditional Aran knitting.

Mineola, NY : Dover Publications, c2006.

3. Isager, Marianne, 1954-

Knitting out of Africa: inspired sweater designs.

Loveland, Colo. : Interweave, [2006], c2005.

4. Square, Vicki, 1954-

Knit kimono : 18 designs with simple shapes.

Loveland, Colo. : Interweave Press, 2007.

d. Political Appeal, e.g.,

1. Christiansen, Betty.

Knitting for peace : make the world a better place one stitch at a time.

New York : Stewart, Tabori & Chang, c2006.

2. Del Vecchio, Michael.

Knitting with balls : a hands-on guide to knitting for the modern man.

London ; New York : DK Pub., c2006.

3. Ross, Share.

Punk knits : 26 hot new designs for anarchistic souls and independent spirits.

New York : Stewart, Tabori & Chang, c2007.

4. Tapper, Joan.

Shear spirit : ten fiber farms, twenty patterns, and miles of Spirit.

New York : Potter Craft, c2008.

e. Basic Tools Appeal, e.g.,

1. Barnden, Betty, 1948-

200 knitting tips, techniques & trade secrets.

New York : St. Martin's Press, c2008.

2. Brant, Sharon.

Ultimate Knitting Bible: A Complete Reference with Step-by-Step Techniques.

England : Collins & Brown, c2008.

3. Eaton, Jan.

Encyclopedia of crochet techniques.

Kent, UK : Search Press, c2006.

4. Yordanou, Joanne, 1964-

Twelve months of knitting : 36 projects to knit your way through the year.

New York : Potter Craft, c2008.

IV. Impact on Libraries: Optimizing Resources

Upon accepting my collection development responsibility in crafts, I studied the collection profile and decided to adopt a different approach, i.e., to purchase more titles, instead of more copies. More copies will be added, however, if the demand rises to warrant such an addition. In the past, some librarians tended to purchase one copy for each branch, partly because of their projections of potential needs, partly because of a lack of sufficient interlibrary delivery system, which was very minimal before July 1997 when there was only one driver operating the library van around the whole county[21]. But now there are 2.5 FTE drivers making two delivery routes per day, one covering the south county and the other, the north county.

To reach the dual goals of meeting potential public demand for library material while minimizing the library's operating cost demands a delicate balancing act. The funding allocation for certain types of material that experience sporadic demand can be monitored and adjusted according to relevant transaction data. The tendency of making one copy available in each branch in the system, while it would almost certainly guarantee meeting demand should one arise, puts disproportionate pressure

on smaller branches which see comparatively less traffic as well as less space and funding.

Prior to April 2005, each patron was allowed a maximum of two renewals on each item charged, and the maximum renewal number has been adjusted from two to four times since then. That translates to a maximum loan period of six weeks before April 2005 and ten weeks after that. For the sake of analysis, this section assumes that each patron fully utilizes that maximum number of renewals allowed, thereby simulating the highest possible load on the system. The purpose of this method is to assume the worst case scenario for the material in question, such that the surplus of possible transactions represents the absolute minimum that can be referenced in policy making and future purchasing decisions.

If, as we are assuming, every borrower of crafts books keeps the book out for as long as is permitted, then a single copy can be borrowed by only a limited number of people in a single year. Before April 2005, this would be at most 52 divided by 6 weeks, which yields 8.6 people. From April 2005 onwards, this would become 52 divided by 10 weeks and thus only 5.2 people a year. Calculated from the date first becomes available we call this figure the To Date Supply (TDS) in the following two charts. (If books are returned before the maximum loan length, then availability increases, but usage would not increase unless a new borrower requested it very promptly).

In addition, MYU (Maximum Yearly Usage) represents the highest possible number of orders in that year, which takes into account the final circulation date on each copy, and subtracts the number of that particular copy from the total number of transactions of all copies. The limited availability of circulation data dictates that we must allow for the worst case scenario, such as if all demands of one copy occurs in one particular year. The likelihood of that occurring is low. Further analysis is not possible due to the privacy policy regarding library users.

TDU (To Date Usage) represents the total number of orders to date. Again since we do not have data on the breakdown of circulation data, this analysis will use the last transaction date of each copy, and subtract one from each year for each copy that has a later last-transaction date than that year.

DIF stands for the difference between TDS and TDU.

Lastly, TDSUR (To Date Surplus) is the to-date surplus of available transaction that was not utilized, in terms of how many copies of the book can be eliminated up to that date.

Case 1

Scheffler, Carol. *Family crafting: fun projects to do together*. New York: Sterling Pub. Co., c2000.

Date	2001	Apr. 2002	Apr. 2003	Apr. 2004	Apr. 2005	Apr. 2006	Apr. 2007	Apr. 2008
TDS	n/a	71	151	229	307	353	400	447
MYU	n/a	<=71	<=117	<=117	<=111	<=99	<=66	<=53
TDU	n/a	<=73	<=108	<=109	<=111	<=113	<=115	<=122
DIF	n/a	n/a	>=43	>=120	>=206	>=240	>=285	>=325
TDSUR	n/a	n/a	>=2	>=4.3	>=5.4	>=5.6	>=6.1	>=6.2

TDS: To Date Supply

MYU: Maximum Yearly Usage

TDU: To Date Usage

DIF: Difference between TDS and TDU

TDSUR: To Date Surplus

Case 2

Ragsdale, Linda. *Creative cardboard: making fabulous furniture, amazing accessories and other spectacular stuff*. New York: Lark Books, c2002.

Date: As of	Apr. 2003	Apr 2004	Apr 2005	Apr 2006	Apr 2007	Apr 2008
TDS	51	129	207	252	297	342
MYU	<=95	<=92	<=92	<=73	<=66	<=66
TDU	<=51	<=87	<=87	<=89	<=90	98
DIF	n/a	>=42	>=120	>=163	>=207	>=244
TDSUR	n/a	>=2.8	>=5.2	>=5.8	>=7.1	>=6.5

TDS: To Date Supply

MYU: Maximum Yearly Usage

TDU: To Date Usage

DIF: Difference between TDS and TDU

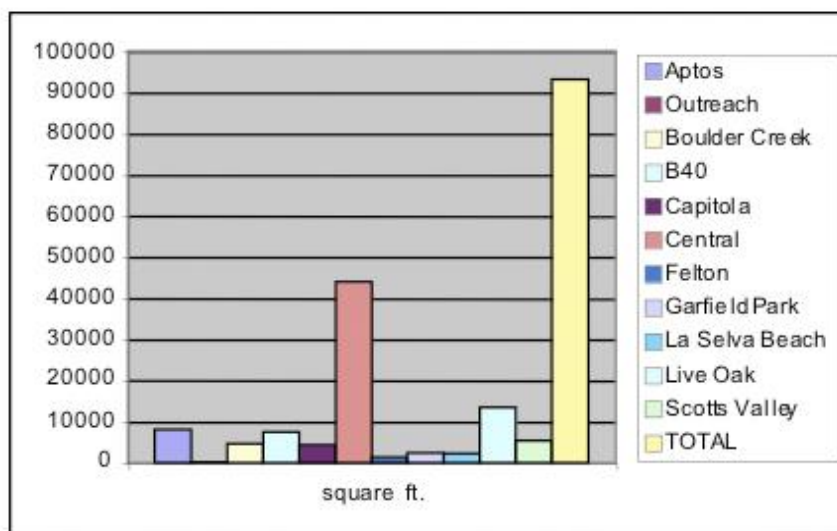
TDSUR: To Date Surplus

What we see is that the only time that the book supply was not apparently greater than demand is during the first year, in which we have no data for its initial circulation. After that first year, assuming the maximum duration of time for each transaction, at least two copies worth of total supply were not utilized, and that figure for both cases grew to over six copies at the time of the data acquisition. Thus, keeping one copy at

each branch can be shown to contribute to over-supply, which not only fails to better serve the public, but also takes valuable resources away from other possible titles that could be purchased.

From the detailed circulation history of Carol Scheffler's *Family crafting*, and Linda Ragsdale's *Creative cardboard*,^[22] we notice a number of distinctive tendencies:

- 1) Circulation numbers are low with 32 times as their highest number, even though they were inventoried in 2001 and 2002 respectively;
- 2) Some copies stop circulating as early as 12/03/2003 vs. inventory date: 05/30/2001 and 11/23/2002 vs. inventory date: 09/07/2002;
- 3) In the former example, only two out of nine copies remain circulating in 2008. Despite the fact that the latter example had half of the copies active in 2007, and two active in 2008, the remaining titles, plus the overall low circulation numbers, can hardly justify the need to purchase 8 copies; and
- 4) The unequal space allocation among 11 branches might not accommodate each branch with one copy of each title:



To reach a delicate balance between small branches' limited shelving space and meeting the needs of particular communities, my approach of more titles and less copies has proven successful and effective in the optimal use of library resources.

1. Balance between demand and limited book budget

Despite the increasing popularity of crafts, my Applied Arts fund has remained not only unchanged, but slightly decreased since 2003. It is very unlikely that it will see any increase in the foreseeable future, with the melt-down of housing market, and

high inflation on gas and basic food items, as the library operating funding is sourced significantly from sales and property taxes. Like consumers elsewhere, county residents have tightened their belts by spending less.

BUDGET HISTORY OF CATEGORIES[\[23\]](#)

Category	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Applied Arts	11,000	13,000	13,000	10,200	8,140	8,140	8,140	8,140	8,140	8,120
Fiction	30,000	37,000	40,000	30,289	21,750	19,053	21,000	24,000	24,000	26,000

Users' expectations today are mirrored in the variety of newly published titles prominently displayed in local or online bookstores. The practice of fewer titles with multiple copies for each branch is out of step. Users prefer more and fresher titles in the library, more akin to their browsing experience in bookstores. That is one of the reasons why titles are immediately requested as soon as they appear in the library catalog.

To further increase reader satisfaction, we might want to revisit the "Slote Method." Stanley J. Stole introduced a well-known method of weeding library collections in as early as the mid-1970s. "Slote defines a weeding variable which helps us to determine whether or not a particular volume belongs to the core collection. He calls this 'shelf time period' That is the 'the length of time a book remains on the shelf between circulations'."[\[24\]](#) To test his theory, Slote conducted and published a series of studies of library book usage, notably his "Five Library Study" in 1969, the Harrison Public Library Study in 1973, and the Larchmont Public Library Study in 1980. Contrary to what one might expect, he found out that reducing the number of books on the shelf would increase circulation if the reduction was done by weeding the least used. The implication was that by removing the least attractive books, the average attractiveness of the books on the shelves increased and so usage was stimulated even though the total number of books was reduced.[\[25\]](#)

2. Equilibrium between demand and actual utilization of books

Again from the previous cases of Carol Scheffler's *Family crafting*, and Linda Ragsdale's *Creative cardboard*, we fail to find the equilibrium between the need for multiple copies and actual utilization, judged by numbers of transactions and current circulation status, especially in smaller branches. The un-circulated copies housed in smaller branches can mean that they prevent newer or more popular titles from sitting on the shelves. Such under usage is in fact an opportunity lost for other titles.

More titles with fewer copies, on the other hand, can be one of the effective ways to realize such equilibrium of being demanded, but not at total users' expense of a long

waiting time. By average usage, we are seeking an optimal number of copies of no more than five and no less than two. By doing so, we are able to make sure that there are always one or two copies available for different branches to request at all times. The following two contrasting cases illustrate my endeavors to reach such equilibrium:

Case 1: One or More Copies Available at Any Given Time

a)

Gardiner, Kay. *Mason-Dixon knitting: the curious knitters' guide : stories, patterns, advice, opinions, questions, answers, jokes, and pictures*. New York: Potter Craft, c2006.

BOULDER CREEK (Branch Library)

1. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 746.432 GAR NONFICTION --
Available

BRANCIFORTE (Branch Library)

2. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 746.432 GAR NONFICTION --
CheckedOut

SCOTT VALLEY (Branch Library)

3. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 746.432 GAR NONFICTION --
CheckedOut

CENTRAL (Library)

4. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 746.432 GAR NONFICTION --
Available

LIVE OAK (Branch Library)

5. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 746.432 GAR NONFICTION --
CheckedOut

b)

Cousins, Suss. *Wedding knits: handknit gifts for every member of the wedding party*. New York: Potter Craft, c2007.

APTOS (Branch Library)

1. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 746.432 COU -- NONFICTION --
Available

SCOTTS VALLEY (Branch Library)

2. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 746.432 COU -- NONFICTION --
CheckedOut

CENTRAL (Library)

3. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 746.432 COU -- NONFICTION --
CheckedOut

Case 2: Too Many Copies Are Under Usage

Handcrafted weddings: over 100 projects & ideas for personalizing your wedding. Minnetonka, Minn.: Creative Pub. International. 1999.

APTOS (Branch Library)

1. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5941 HAN -- NONFICTION --
Available

BOULDER CREEK (Branch Library)

2. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5941 HAN -- NONFICTION --
Available

BRANCIFORTE (Branch Library)

3. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5941 HAN -- NONFICTION --
Available

LSB (Branch Library)

4. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5941 HAN -- NONFICTION --
Available

SCOTTS VALLEY (Branch Library)

5. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5941 HAN -- NONFICTION --
CheckedOut

CENTRAL (Library)

6. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5941 HAN -- NONFICTION -- Available

LIVE OAK (Branch Library)

7. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5941 HAN -- NONFICTION -- Available

CAPITOLA (Branch Library)

8. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5941 HAN -- NONFICTION -- Available

BOOKMOBILE (Branch Library)

9. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5941 HAN -- NONFICTION -- Available

3. Balance between logistical practicality and limited impact

My budget for crafts is only 0.79% of the whole library book budget of \$1,022,000 for fiscal year 2008-2009, or 2.9% of the nonfiction (which is 36% of the whole budget). In a word, the percentage of craft titles is relatively small, compared with other big categories such as fiction whose budget is nearly three times that of crafts as we have seen from "Budget History of Categories" listed above. A smaller budget can also mean less impact on the inter-library vans and the drivers' workload. To overcome the space problem in smaller branches, I assign most titles to larger branches that serve as hubs from time to time, for they are where the county population and foot traffic are concentrated. Since our turnaround time is less than three or four days from initiating and filling a request, users from smaller branches can request and obtain the books they want in person or online.

2008-2009 MATERIALS ALLOCATION SUMMARY B Y MATERIAL TYPE[\[26\]](#)

MATERIAL TYPES	% OF TOTAL	79% Adult	21% YP	TOTAL
PERIODICALS & MICROFILM	8.5%	80,251	7,100	87,351
REFERENCE	23%	204,573	35,000	238,598

MEDIA	14%	134,695	29,360	168,651
FICTION BOOKS	17%	108,662	78,300	185,144
NONFIC BOOKS	36%	279,399	64,118	339,362
TOTAL	100%	807,580	214,420	\$1,022,000

4. Balance between new and older titles

In September 26, 2007, the Library Staff Development Committee of the Greater Bay Area held its third part of the Future of Libraries at San Francisco Public Library conference. At the conference, Linda Rosenblum, director of Hayward Public Library, talked about how "Link+" let us get rid of lots of stuff. She found out that customers did not like to check out older materials. To resolve the problem of space and too many old titles, she opted to weed uncirculated titles older than 5 years. Instead of purchasing out-of-print titles, she used Innovative Interfaces Library system's "Link+" to request for out-of-print titles through interlibrary loan.

While unable to weed so drastically as Linda, I am gradually withdrawing multiple copies that either are under use or stop circulation. At the same time, I am systematically withdrawing out-of-fashion types of crafts, such as dry flower arrangement. To encourage book usage, we do need to bear in mind what Asa Wynkoop said in 1911, "It has been shown by experiment again and again that a collection of best books, when grouped by themselves, receive twice as much use as when scattered among old and obsolete material." [\[27\]](#)

V. Impact on Libraries: Enhancing Subject Headings

The reason why Tina Baine, the local newspaper writer mentioned in section I, was unable to locate sufficient titles in the crafts section of the library may be manifold. First of all, it might be true that we have failed to keep up with users' new needs. There is still more room for us to improve. Secondly, the subject headings we have copied and adopted from Library of Congress (LC) authority files might be too slow and inadequate to respond to our timeframe and practical needs. Both Jo Lauria and Steve Fenton, authors of *Craft in America* are of the opinion that "Here in the first decade of the twenty-first century, we find craft at a high-water mark. Perhaps it is a need to find and hold on to tradition and comfort and trust in a world turned upside down. Perhaps it is that many people today have the means to acquire the finest examples of the craft tradition. But whatever the cause, the effect is clear: craft is recognized, perhaps as never before, as an important part of our national heritage and psyche."[\[28\]](#) On the other hand, owing to the overwhelming enthusiasm for knitting at a national level, a new layer of meaning has been added to CRAFT, "Craft, once the homely suffixlike appendage to 'arts', has in the last few years woven itself into

mainstream culture. From Martha Stewart to knitting circles held in dive bars and user-produced videos on YouTube.com, the do-it-yourselfer in each of us can customize a mode of self-expression."[\[29\]](#)

In front of those great social and historical changes, LC does not seem to be well-equipped or well-prepared. For instance, APPLIED ARTS is not a valid LC subject heading (LCSH). Neither is CRAFT nor CRAFTS. It has to be either combined with other terms such as "Crafts & decorating," or "Craft and art," or has to be suffixed and then cross-referenced as in the following example:

Crafts (Handicrafts)

Search under: Handicraft (441 titles)

- Handicraft. (441)
 - see also narrower term Balloon sculpture. (4)
 - see also narrower term Bible crafts. (1)
 - see also narrower term Bread dough craft. (5)
 - see also narrower term Burlap craft. (0)
 - see also narrower term Candlemaking. (9)
 - see also narrower term Collage. (16)
 - see also narrower term Cornhusk craft. (1)
 - see also narrower term Egg decoration. (2)
 - see also narrower term Eggshell craft. (0)
 - see also narrower term Eskimo craft. (1)
 - see also narrower term Face painting. (13)
 - see also narrower term Glass craft. (22)
 - see also narrower term Hobbies. (1)
 - see also narrower term Indian craft. (9)

It might also be true that there is a lack of necessary cross-references to other related subject headings, which makes it very hard to retrieve, thus rendering it user-unfriendly. For instance, the same HANDICRAFT is not cross-referenced under DECORATIVE ARTS:

- Decorative arts. (7)
 - see also narrower term Antiques. (20)
 - see also narrower term Art metal-work. (6)
 - see also narrower term Art objects. (0)
 - see also narrower term Bamboo work. (3)
 - see also narrower term Basketwork. (4)
 - see also narrower term Calligraphy. (26)
 - see also narrower term Carving (Decorative arts) (2)
 - see also narrower term Costume. (59)
 - see also narrower term Decoration and ornament. (112)

- see also narrower term Decoupage. (13)
- see also narrower term Enamel and enameling. (6)
- see also narrower term Figurines. (0)
- see also Folk art. (9)
- see also narrower term Furniture. (8)
- **HANDICRAFT unlisted**
- see also narrower term Jewelry. (14)
- see also narrower term Lacquer and lacquering. (1)
- see also narrower term Leather work. (4)
- see also narrower term Mosaics. (14)
- see also narrower term Needlework. (32)
- see also narrower term Porcelain. (5)
- see also narrower term Pottery. (22)
- see also narrower term Tapestry. (2)
- see also narrower term Textile fabrics. (16)
- see also narrower term Woodwork. (180)

Additionally, many titles might be in dire need of subject headings that are at once general and specific. For instance, GOURD CRAFT is neither under the umbrella of HANDICRAFT nor DECORATIVE ARTS. Furthermore, no further cross-reference has been provided on the part of LC. To retrieve titles under GOURD CRAFT or other similar subject headings, users have to bear the burden of coming up with proper subject headings themselves. This user-unfriendly and clumsy retrieval phenomenon might be the reason that so many nonfiction titles in general, and certain types of crafts books in particular, are languishing on the shelves.

Last but not least, LC has shown its inconsistency in providing apt and comprehensive subject headings to reflect the book content. It did wonders with a 1997 publication in the usage of "Papier-mache:"

Ronald, Nick. *Grand illusions : paint effects and instant decoration for furniture, fabric, walls and floors*. North Pomfret, VT : Trafalgar Square Pub., 1997.

House painting.

Furniture painting.

Textile painting.

Papier-mache.

Interior decoration.

However, it managed only to provide basic and partial subject headings to describe the whole content of *100 hats to knit & crochet* by Jean Leinhauser & Rita Weiss, published by Sterling in 2005. The title is so evident about hats, but none of its two subject headings addresses the topical area:

Knitting -- Patterns.

Crocheting -- Patterns.

It is equally true with a further instance:

Griffiths, Melody. *Crochet in no time : a simple, stylish, collection of 52 quick-crochet projects*. Pleasantville, N.Y. : Reader's Digest, c2007.

Crocheting -- Patterns.

Clothing and dress.

Dress accessories -- Patterns.

In reality, the book's 52 projects cover "Scarves", "Wraps", "Hats", "Gloves", "Jackets", "Sweaters", "Tops", etc. Neither "Clothing and dress," nor "Dress accessories" can precisely inform users of the true content.

While a list of such instances is endless, an interesting challenge arises not only for selection librarians who should be familiar with their subject areas, but also for our catalogers to do necessary subject enhancements to ensure a satisfactory retrieval and optimal usage of library collections. The practice of copy cataloging does not mean merely the process of copying a record from LC or OCLC. Catalogers, copy or original, need to examine the content and add more values or metadata if necessary. The assurance of quality content management is key in the era of Web 2.0 when we encourage our users to do more self-touring and self-service in their own environment. Subject headings, being vital access points to the content, are one of the important mechanisms to guarantee such a success.

Appendix: Detailed Circulation History

Scheffler, Carol. *Family crafting: fun projects to do together*. New York: Sterling Pub. Co., c2000.

APTOS (Branch Library)

1. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5 SCH -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 05/30/2001; LST TRNS DATE: 09/21/2006; No. of loans: 10

BOULDER CREEK (Branch Library)

2. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5 SCH -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 05/30/2001; LST TRNS DATE: 12/29/2004; No. of loans: 9

FELTON (Branch Library)

3. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5 SCH -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 05/30/2001; LST TRNS DATE: 02/24/2005; No. of loans: 6

GARFIELD PARK (Branch Library)

CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5 SCH -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 05/30/2001; LST TRNS DATE: 04/16/2008; No. of loans: 10

SCOTTS VALLEY (Branch Library)

CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5 SCH -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 05/30/2001; LST TRNS DATE: 06/19/2008; No. of loans: 30

CENTRAL (Library)

. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5 SCH -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 05/30/2001; LST TRNS DATE: 06/26/2007; No. of loans: 14

TECHNICAL SERVICES DISCARD

. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5 SCH -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 05/30/2001; LST TRNS DATE: 12/29/2005; No. of loans: 3

LIVE OAK (Branch Library)

8. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5 SCH -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 05/30/2001; LST TRNS DATE: 12/03/2003; No. of loans: 6

CAPITOLA (Branch Library)

9. CALL NUMBER: OVERSIZE 745.5 SCH -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 05/30/2001; LST TRNS DATE: 01/06/2006; No. of loans: 32

Ragsdale, Linda. *Creative cardboard: making fabulous furniture, amazing accessories and other spectacular stuff*. New York: Lark Books, c2002.

APTOS (Branch Library)

1. CALL NUMBER: 745.54 RAG -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 09/07/2002; LST TRNS DATE: 10/04/2007; No. of loans: 18

BOULDER CREEK (Branch Library)

2. CALL NUMBER: 745.54 RAG -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 09/07/2002; LST TRNS DATE: 08/11/2006; No. of loans: 7

BRANCIFORTE (Branch Library)

3. CALL NUMBER: 745.54 RAG -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 09/07/2002; LST TRNS DATE: 06/04/2008; No. of loans: 13

OUTREACH

4. CALL NUMBER: 745.54 RAG -- NONFICTPBK -- Available

Inventory: 09/07/2002; LST TRNS DATE: 11/23/2002; No. of loans: 3

GARFIELD PARK (Branch Library)

5. CALL NUMBER: 745.54 RAG -- NONFICTPBK -- Available

Inventory: 09/07/2002; LST TRNS DATE: 06/23/2007; No. of loans: 7

CENTRAL (library)

6. CALL NUMBER: 745.54 RAG -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 09/07/2002; LST TRNS DATE: 05/27/2007; No. of loans: 28

LIVE OAK (Branch Library)

7. CALL NUMBER: 745.54 RAG -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 09/07/2002; LST TRNS DATE: 06/21/2007; No. of loans: 7

CAPITOLA (Branch Library)

8. CALL NUMBER: 745.54 RAG -- NONFICTION -- Available

Inventory: 09/07/2002; LST TRNS DATE: 08/23/2008; No. of loans: 20

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