

Behind the Stacks

April Ide, Library Director

As a librarian, I get asked a lot about how we manage the mountains of books, movies, and other resources you see lining the New Ulm Public Library shelves. It's a complex balancing act, but one that ensures our collections stay relevant, engaging, and well-maintained. Let me give you a peek behind the curtain!

First, there's collection development. We consider what our patrons are interested in – from the latest bestsellers to local histories for New Ulm buffs. We analyze usage data, consider patron suggestions, and keep an eye on trends. It's a constant conversation, ensuring our shelves reflect our community and offer a window to the world.

But how do we make space for the new when shelves are already packed? This is where "weeding" comes in. We remove outdated materials, worn-out copies, and items with low circulation. This frees up space for new and relevant items, ensuring our collection remains vibrant.

We use a library management system, essentially a giant digital card catalog, to track our collection. This allows you to easily find what you're looking for, whether browsing online or using catalog computers in the library. Our online catalog allows our patrons to search for specific titles or browse by genre from the comfort of their homes, and place requests that can then be picked up in the library when the item is available.

We've also increased the number of items available through Libby, our digital collection of ebooks and eaudiobooks. Libby caters to patrons who prefer a more convenient format, while still offering the access to the latest fiction and nonfiction titles.

New Ulm Public Library is also part of a consortium of libraries, the Traverse des Sioux Library System. As part of this consortium, we receive a number of benefits including our shared library management system, cataloging services, and access to the collections of other member libraries. This greatly increases our access to all of the books, movies, and more that are published each year. We work together with other libraries to share and track materials as they move throughout our nine-county region. And if we can't find the item you're looking for in our region, we can request it from libraries in greater Minnesota. You have access to millions of items with your library card!

Ultimately, collection management is about ensuring our libraries are dynamic, responsive hubs of information. It's a constant process of building, weeding, organizing, and adapting to meet the needs of a diverse and ever-changing community. So, the next time you browse the shelves, remember, there's a lot more going on than meets the eye!

I'd like to say a special thank you to New Ulm Garden Club members Deb Steinberg and Julie Gartner for weeding the landscaping outside of the library and making recommendations for how we might continue to improve its beauty. I very much appreciate their expertise and the time and energy they donated to the library.

New Ulm Public Library is located at 17 North Broadway and is open Monday-Thursday from 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m. and Friday-Saturday from 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. The library will be closed on Monday, May 27 for Memorial Day.