

Section I: Description of the Collection

Subject: Literature

The Sonoma Valley High School Library is estimated by its teacher librarian to contain 20,000 items, of which approximately 2,400 are classified in the Literature/ Dewey 800's collection, not including the novels shelved separately as 'Fiction'. In one bank of shelves the fifth book on the third shelf of each section was pulled for random inspection—of the 5 books pulled, only one was published after 1984; only one of the five had been checked out in the last 5 years. These books exemplify the problem with the collection. Though the size of the 800's seems comparable to or larger than that of other major subject designations, like other areas of the collection it is composed mainly of books more than 20 years old--often more than 40, and consists predominantly of works published for general adult use. The general appearance of the shelved books is dark, old-fashioned, and unexciting; the brighter colors and modern graphics of the few more recent titles tend to stand out, and often reflect a multicultural or Latino perspective. Though sometimes worn, the books are clean and well maintained, and the collection is impeccably shelved, which may be because no one ever seems to go near it. No use of shelved material was observed during the writing of this evaluation.

Subunit: Shakespeare

In the "Shakespeare" subject area of "Literature", the school catalogue lists 218 items. This does not include 19 VHS tapes, which cannot be checked out to students and are housed in a separate area of the library, though it does include 32 boxed CD's, which are also unavailable to students. Twelve of the items classified as "PRO" (professional) are curriculum planning support material for teachers, also unavailable to students. The collection holds 39 separate Cliffs Notes covering the major plays. Three fictional works on Shakespeare are grouped in this section, 9 biographies, 77 books of critical or supporting material, 1 copy of the sonnets, and more than 70 copies of the individual plays or collected works. Of this entire collection, only one item was checked out: *Romeo and Juliet/West Side Story*.

Section II: Evaluation of 15 Selected Items

Evaluative Tools and Method:

The "Literature" and "Shakespeare" collections were evaluated using a combination of criteria provided by the instructor for Libr 266, the Arizona State Library's *Collection Development Training* website, *School Library Journal* reviews, and the *ALA Workbook for Selection Policy Writing*. To acquire the desired number of sample items, in the closed stacks--professional literature and non-print media section--the reviewer pulled one item for every ten; in the reference and open stacks, one item for every fifteen.

Evaluations:

1. PRO 822.33 Professional Development/Curricular Support

One of the curriculum guides was last checked out May 7, 1996; the other had no record of use. The curricular guides are in an obscure corner of a back room in the library and their existence may not be generally known. It is clear this section receives virtually no use.

The end user of this professional material is the teacher. Assessing this material using the Arizona standards, it is appropriate for "the subject, style, and reading level" of the teacher user community. In both samples, the lesson plans were creative and well planned, However, as listed

in the class criteria, the material does not “relate to the curriculum, target audience”, because none of the plays represented are part of the current curriculum. One guide studied *Twelfth Night* and *Othello*, which have never been included; the other supports *The Taming of the Shrew*. Although curriculum guides from the Center for Learning have an excellent reputation among teachers, use of this play has been abandoned in recent years, and so this guide also lacks relevance to its target audience of teachers. Perhaps if teachers examined some of the thoughtful and timely content in this guide, which definitely meets some of the ALA’s more lofty criteria, motivating students to “examine their own duties... and privileges as participating citizens”, and also exposing “historical forces” with “emphasis on recognizing and understanding social and economic problems”, they would recognize the value of wrestling with this problematic play.

The plans are well done and contain sound basic ideas which could be generalized to curricular plays; the drama instructor might also be an interested user. However, the plans also do not reflect the changing demographics and learning styles of students. Using the Arizona criteria, material should be relevant to the community. These guides were purchased using Gifted and Talented Education monies, and have high expectations for the engagement and abilities of student participants. They do not contain suggestions for support of language learners or struggling readers, and may not appear broadly useful to many teachers today.

All of the sets of criteria mention physical appearance and quality of the book. Both guides were clean and intact, though dated in their cover designs and colors. *The Shakespeare Set Free* series sample was attractively designed and was of appropriate construction quality. However, the CFL bindings are unsatisfactory. The editions are difficult to remove from the shelf, because the tops of the wire bindings have intertwined; when checked out, these are a book bag hazard.

2. Non-Print Media

The non-print media is not available to students, though teachers sometimes check out audio books or VHS tapes and loan them to students in need. Non-print media does not have checkout slips attached. The non-curricular tape, *As You Like It*, is pristine and did not appear ever to have been played, while the curricular VHS recording, *Macbeth* proved on viewing to be worn and damaged. Three issues are considered in assessing this media: the style of the material, demand for the material, and the condition of the material.

The ALA considers currency of information; currency of aesthetic approach should also be considered. As the Arizona criteria ask—“**is the material suitable for the style of the user community?**” In a viewing of excerpts from the VHS films, both appeared to have the ALA’s requisite artistic merit, but the sound was often mushy, and the appearance of the productions was dated. These are especially unacceptable when considering that a much newer and praised production of *As You Like It* is available for a very low price. Both productions are videotapes of live stage productions, and lack the more realistic and engaging production values of modern alternatives. The ALA Standards require “material integral to the instructional program”. *Macbeth* is a curricular play, but what is the use envisioned for *As You Like It*? It would not be appreciated as a reward film, and isn’t related to curriculum. The drama teacher might use it to showcase the excellent performances, but again, she would probably choose the newer film.

Both *Macbeth* and *As You Like It* are VHS recordings. Most teachers have now purchased DVD players and prefer that much less cumbersome technology to the ancient school VHS players; “demand for the material” (Arizona) in this form is now low. The Arizona standards also ask if the material will stand up to multiple circulations, which the *Macbeth* tape has certainly done, but it is now very scratched and jumps in spots, and would have to be considered “damaged” by the Libr 266 criteria. The controversial production itself certainly relates to the

school curriculum, and is especially useful to show in conjunction with excerpts of other productions of the play, but the format now has limited appeal and the tape itself is unacceptable.

Although not directly related to curriculum, the Kenneth Branagh *Much Ado About Nothing* from the very limited DVD collection, could be useful for drama instruction, and could serve as a reward or ‘end of Shakespeare unit’ film in English classes. The production is more lively, colorful, and appealing to contemporary students than the previous comedy. This DVD is new and, for teachers who have them, could be used with a computer and projector, and so is suitable for its intended use to a much greater degree than the VHS films (ALA). Since DVD’s take up much less shelf space, are more durable, and are the preferred format, the collection planner can be more flexible in retaining extracurricular material.

Former worn and low-quality cassette tapes have recently been replaced with *The Complete Arkangel Shakespeare* [CD]. *School Library Journal* calls this set “an impressively done, brilliant masterwork”. Containing every play in an easy to use audio format, it satisfies the Arizona criteria for durability, usefulness, and bibliographic considerations, and reflects the ALA’s requirement for “artistic value and merit”. The SLJ review does caution that, since not all the plays will be used in a high school, the purchase might be better suited to an academic library, but this set was donated new. Its availability needs to be publicized among teachers.

Overall, the suitability and condition of VHS tapes is very poor, though the curriculum is represented. The DVD sample (which was actually the sole DVD in the Shakespeare area) was of high quality, but not directly related to curriculum. The CD collection is excellent.

3. Reference

The reference samples, which cannot be checked out, are assessed for condition, authority and currency, quality of content, and suitability of material.

Evans and Saponaro write in *Developing Library and Information Center Commons*, “One of collection development’s proverbs is that one person’s trash is someone else’s treasure” (297). Both these samples are older books, one of great charm. The tissue-protected illustrations of the Clarendon Press volumes are beautiful. The physical condition (Friday) of the Clarendon item is fair—the spine is somewhat weak but the high-quality paper is in good shape. The *Pronouncing Dictionary* volume is very sturdy and clean, though plain and dull-looking. It should not be replaced when worn, because it is available on Google books, which will be sufficient.

Sadly, assessed by the standards of Cassell and Arizona, the books would not be the first choices for high school reference. Judged by Arizona’s standards, the book is not “the type of publication...appropriate for” this library, as heavy old bindings with gold lettering, though they may attract bibliophile librarians, often repel modern students. In its sophisticated, scholarly constructions the content of the Clarendon volumes is not entirely suitable for a high school. Although the prose is clear and the syntax straightforward, the books were clearly intended for an adult user, and would not be chosen if attempting to “Obtain materials that are appropriate for the high school user” (Cassell).

However, by other standards on Cassell’s list, both books still score well. The interiors of both contain good quality paper in very good condition, not yellowed or brittle. Both books are set in clear type of sufficient size and well-laid out on the page.

Both books have strong authority--the Oxford University press is unimpeachable, and the *Pronouncing Dictionary’s* author was the diction director at Carnegie Hall and head of a well-known acting studio. The standards in Cassell stress currency of information: the factual content concerning clothing, crafts, and practices remains accurate, and the arrangement of the book for

use (Cassell) is excellent, with three separate indexes facilitating specific searches. The *Pronouncing Dictionary* is easily searchable, organized alphabetically by name.

Bearing in mind ALA cautions concerning clarifying historical tensions and representing various views, the Clarendon chapters on colonization and exploration were carefully reviewed and found to be surprisingly broad and humane in their approach. An exemplar quote from a discussion of the slave trade illustrates the quality: “He followed a bad example, and these dark deeds in the history of the Atlantic had still darker sequels” (184).

On balance, these books are representative of the Shakespeare reference section. They are old, but in good shape. Their content, though housed in perhaps unappealing bindings, still provides sound and accessible information for student researchers. In the absence of funding for modern replacements, these carefully husbanded volumes are a good source for specific Elizabethan subject searches, especially with adult assistance available.

4. General Critical and Supporting Material

This section was evaluated for format, condition, curricular connections, and accessibility for the target audience. For these three volumes, the most recent check out date was in 2001. Although two of the three have strong curricular connection (ALA), many searches required by assignments on Shakespeare are for basic factual information. For such searches the current student is more likely to turn to subdivided reference sources or to the Internet. Considering the Arizona criterion “Potential Use”, evidence suggests that for such searches the book format has low demand and is not relevant to the community. However, in a school with a large percentage of low socio-economic level students who do not have Internet access at home, it would seem important to retain material which can be checked out for home use.

The condition of the books examined was good (Friday). The copy of *Shakespeare and His World* was sound and clean. *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What it Tells Us* is one of the newer works on Shakespeare in the library, and its cover graphics and range of topics could make it more attractive to modern students.

In content, two of the books examined are closely allied to curriculum. The subject matter of *Shakespeare and His World*—everyday life in Elizabethan times—is used extensively in freshman assignments. The varied contents of the chapters in *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What it Tells Us* connect to the school curriculum in their focus on State Standard content areas such as imagery and metaphor. Overall, this material is “integral to the instructional program” (ALA).

The report on the suitability of the sample material for the intended users is mixed. Although *Shakespeare and His World* has not been checked out, it appears to have been consulted, as there were two recent-looking post-its inside. The reading level of the plain prose, though perhaps more accurately described as middle school, will be helpful for language learners and struggling readers, and the maps and illustrations are clear and instructive. Once again, remembering the ALA focus on an appropriately sensitive, balanced, and broad perspective, the content was carefully assessed and found to be uncontroversial and appropriate. *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What it Tells Us* is not appropriate in style and reading level (Arizona) when compared to the needs of many students. It was clearly not written for high school users, but for college or adult academic use. However, the book is divided into discrete chapters, and if a student only needed to use a limited amount of the material, with adult guidance it could be navigated by many and prove useful.

The last sample is indicative of an overall problem in the 800’s and the Shakespeare section. By any of the standards used, *Shakespeare: Time and conscience*, last checked out in 1996, is inappropriate for its target audience. The writing is dense and complex, the print is very

small, and this translated analysis by a Russian film director has no curricular use. The librarian explained that this book, like many in the collection, was a donation. Lacking any significant funding for newer material and surrounded by a vocal retired community who will actively track the fate of their donations, she tends to accept most remotely relevant donations in good condition.

5. Individual copies of Shakespeare's Plays

The last books sampled by pulling every fifteenth book were all small, approximately 4x7 inch paperback copies of the individual plays. Though some are 70's or 80's reprints, they all retain their distinctively 1960's covers, and many of them do not appear enticing to the modern reader in general. Their paper is yellowed and soft, and their print is small—they would not meet the standards in the Libr 266 criteria for physical condition. The plays and appended material certainly fit the ALA requirement for “literary merit”, and the notes on the text are thorough and placed to be useable. However, the introductions and critical attachments are written for an audience of adult enthusiasts and scholars; they do not fit the needs of the students (ALA) for support through these difficult texts. The format and auxiliary material are not geared to the target audience (Friday) and the condition of the books is too fragile to allow them to be used as scripts.

Section III: Evaluation/Recommendations

This collection is old and is not used. Much of the material stands the test of time well: even though there is no representation of Stephen Greenblatt or the New Historicism, the books examined contained no egregiously outdated commentary or inaccurate information, and their physical condition was on the whole good. The collection contains material which is relevant and useful in support of the school curriculum and the California State English-Language Arts Content Standards. The weakness of the collection is that most of the material is not, as recommended in the *ALA Workbook for Selection Policy Writing*, “appropriate for the reading level and understanding of students in the school”; in most cases it was not intended for young adults. An important subsidiary concern is the general appearance of the material. Not only does it fail to attract the teen reader, but its heavy bindings or outdated covers may actually discourage them from going near the shelves.

Given the current economic realities for California public schools, any sizeable infusion of cash is unlikely. The librarian has clearly made the best choices she could in this section given her finances, and there are areas of the library where the currency of material is of far greater concern than in the Shakespeare collection. With the small amount of money available, all the VHS material should be replaced with the currently preferred DVD format. Some of the donated older books, such as *Shakespeare: Time and Conscience*, should be weeded to clear space for future use and a lighter appearance. If more money is found, new non-print material such as the Takeaway preloaded MP3 players sold by Follett should be purchased and made available to students. At a higher level of financing the next step would be to discard all the old individual paperback editions of the plays, and replace them with parallel text, hardcover versions which contain notes written for the use of high school students. Finally, in an ideal world of financing, almost all of the older critical material should be replaced with current scholarship in accessible and attractive editions, and contemporary professional material should be added.

- Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records. (2008).
Collection development training for Arizona public libraries. 2008.
<http://www.lib.az.us/cdt>
- Evans, G.E., & Saponaro, M.Z. (2005). *Developing library and information center collections*. (5th ed.). Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.
- Friday, A. *Libr 266 Collection Management Assignments* [Word document]. Retrieved from Fall 2009 Libr 266-04/266-14/Friday Web site:
https://liffey.sjsu.edu/section/default.asp?id=FALL_2009-SJSU-SLIS_3
- Mandell, P. L., & Stockwell, H. J. (2004, February). The complete Arkangel Shakespeare. *School Library Journal*. 50(2).
- Office for Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association. (2009). *Workbook for selection policy writing*. Retrieved from
<http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/challengeslibrarymaterials/essentialpreparation/workbookslctn/index.cfm>

List of 15 Sample Items

PRO 822.33

O' Brien, P. (Ed.). (1995). *Shakespeare set free: Teaching Twelfth Night and Othello*. New York: Washington Square Press.

[Replacement cost: Out of Print--\$14.04 used through Amazon]

The checkout slip shows no use.

PRO 822.33

Costello, M.E. (1992). *The Taming of the Shrew curriculum unit*. USA: Center for Learning.

[Replacement cost: \$19.95 from the publisher]

Last checked out May 7, 1996

VID 822.33

Stratford Festival (Producer), & Heeley, D. (Director). (1983). *As you like it* [VHS Recording]. USA: Madacy Records.

[Out of Print—can be purchased used through Amazon for \$41.00]

VHS recordings do not have checkout slips on them, but the tape is pristine. It did not appear ever to have been played.

VID 822.33

Nunn, T. (Producer), & Casson, P. (Director). (1978). *Macbeth* [VHS Recording]. USA: HBO.

[Replacement cost: DVD \$11.49 Amazon]

822.33

Branagh, K. (Producer, Director). (1993). *Much ado about nothing* [DVD]. USA: MGM.

[Replacement cost: DVD \$11.49 Amazon]

822.33

Shakespeare, W. (2004). *The complete arkangel Shakespeare* [CD]. North Kingstown, Rhode Island: BBC Audiobooks America.

[Replacement cost: \$420 Amazon]

REF 821.33

Clarendon Press. (1950). *Shakespeare and England—An account of the life and manners of his age* (Vols. 1-2). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Out of Print—can be purchased used through Amazon for \$97.00]

Can no longer be checked out--Reference

REF 822.33

Irvine, T. (1944). *A pronouncing dictionary of Shakespearian proper names*. New York: Barnes and Noble Inc.

[Out of Print—can be purchased used through Amazon for \$4.50]

Can no longer be checked out--Reference

822.33

Brown, I. (1964). *Shakespeare and his world*. New York: Henry Z. Walck, Inc.
 [Out of Print—can be purchased used through Amazon for \$2.00]
 Last checked out April 3, 2000

822.33

Kozintzev, G. (1969). *Shakespeare: Time and conscience*. (J. Vining, Trans.). New York: Hill and Wang.
 [Out of Print—can be purchased used through Amazon for \$4.50]
 Last checked out April 3, 2000

822.33

Spurgeon, C. (1999). *Shakespeare's imagery and what it tells us*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
 [Out of Print—available used through Amazon for \$38.70]
 Last checked out December 18, 2001

822.33 --Individual Copies of the Plays

[Replacement cost: There is a price range of comparable replacement editions available for all these books on Amazon, starting from \$5.99 for the Folger edition, up to \$18.00 for some of the Arden.]
 None of the check out slips on these books shows any activity.

822.33

Shakespeare, W. (1988). *Antony and Cleopatra*. New York: Penguin.

822.33

Shakespeare, W. (1988). *Antony and Cleopatra* (B. Everett, Ed.). New York: Penguin

822.33

Shakespeare, W. (1968). *The Pelican Shakespeare Hamlet* (W. Farnham, Ed.). Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books

822.33

Shakespeare, W. (1973). *Henry VI, part II* (Wright, L., & LaMar, V. A., Eds.). New York: Washington Square Press Pocket Books.