

Show: Tech Bytes

Host: Todd Miller

Guest: Cate Levinson

Overview: Tech Bytes is a technology podcast, produced by the Digital Services department at Niles-Maine District Library about technology news and useful technology tips.

Episode: Tech Bytes #39 - The Journey of a Book

Episode Description: In this episode, part of a mini series on the Journey of a Library book, we discuss the collection development process with Youth Services Librarian, Cate.

[Music - Tech Bytes theme]

Hi, and welcome back to Tech Bytes. I'm your host, Todd, and today, we're starting a series of episodes that will follow the path of a book from being a glimmer in the eye of a librarian, to when it gets into a reader's hands.

First up, we'll talk to Cate, a Youth Services Librarian, about the process for selecting, purchasing and promoting a book.

We'll be right back.

[Music - Tech Bytes theme]

Todd: Like I said before the break, we're here with Cate, who's a youth services librarian. Thanks for being here, Cate.

Cate: Happy to be here.

Todd: Cate, how long have you been a librarian?

Cate: 15 whole years.

Todd: 15 years. So before we get into what has changed in that time, can you first tell us what is collection development?

Cate: Collection development is just the management of all the materials a library holds. So that includes materials that are purchased and coming in and the materials that get weeded and are going out.

Todd: So in the 15 years that you've been a librarian, how would you say that collection development has changed? How has that process changed?

Cate: It's changed a lot. When I first started, every librarian was doing collection development. And we still, most of the librarians are still doing collection development, but particularly, in the

non-fiction department, the way we used to do it is everybody had like, different Dewey numbers that they had to collect for and some of them got like really granular and so and you know, sometimes books just don't come out on that subject for, you know, ever or many years or whatever and so, each librarian was so hyper focused on a very variety of different subjects that it was sort of hard to know, to see the whole non-fiction collection as a whole. And that, so I always found that very confusing. And we've sort of streamlined the process so that people have either a type of material specialization or a subject area specialization.

I do all the picture books and the nonfiction and some other smaller collections, but I also kind of oversee a lot of the big picture of the collection as well.

Todd: And so when you're ordering picture books and nonfiction books, do you have the time to read all of those books that you're purchasing?

Cate: Not before we purchase them because I tend to purchase like three months in advance. I mean, I do purchase some things in real time as well, like once they're released but that sort of those particular titles have been set aside because what I mainly use is professional review journals. What I really feel like is great now as opposed to when I first started is - when I first started, we were using all of the paper journals. so you had to like, it was really, you know, comparing different reviews from different publications on a single title was such a headache. Now, our main vendor, Ingram, takes all the reviews and puts them on the entry for that title, which is an amazing amount, which is amazingly helpful. I can have a huge search and each title has all that information I need to make a decision on it.

That being said, there are smaller vendors that will come in and bring me like five enormous tubs full of books and hand those, and I can see, those are usually the non-fiction like series and I can get at least one or two like samples of what that non-fiction series is gonna look like. So I can put my hands on those books before I purchase them.

But that being said, so I don't really get to read them in advance, but once the books are purchased and they're processed by Materials Services, I do, then they're brought into the Children's department and Arianne and I both take both take turns reviewing the entire cart because that's sort of, then I really do read almost every book that comes in, or least peruse it as much as I can, to make sure that it's going to be shelved in the right place. And so, that exercise is, that's like my favorite part of the whole process. That being said, sometimes I'm like, 'I wish the reviews were more accurate.' Because maybe I wouldn't have purchased this or I would have considered this more closely.

And the third part is there are books that I set aside because the reviews are a little, don't convince me quite enough. And so I wait for that book to be published, purchased by another library. Then I put it on hold and it comes in and that's when I make my final decision on whether or not to purchase that.

Todd: That's a good trick.

Cate: Yeah.

Todd: And so do you ever find yourself kind of championing a title that you have purchased and you really want it to succeed and you want it to get checked out? Do you find yourself doing that?

Cate: I do. I wish I could do it for every book I really want to champion, but there are definitely a few opportunities that I take to really push them forward. One is a bibliography. I wish the bibliographies got a little bit more attention, but they're another piece of paper in a big sea of brochures that we hand out to patrons. So sometimes they do get attention, but I wouldn't say that's the most effective way. My favorite way is, but it's a very narrow number of books I can do this with, I put them on our, the table in front is called Favorites at Your Fingertips. And so if there's a picture book that I think is just incredible, I think everyone should read it, or it's just quirky enough to get hidden in the shelves and not make its way, not flashy enough to get the attention I think it deserves. I'll put it on that table. And I get really excited when I see the circ numbers go up on that, because we got like five copies and there's one book that I put on there that was definitely hidden in the stacks called *I Can Be Anything*. And it's a book about a child and their mother playing charades and the child is relentless and torturing their mom with this game of charades and it's just like a beautiful interplay between them and it's so funny. And I've seen that book go from no checkouts to almost never being on the table.

Todd: So that's great. Well, thank you for being here and pulling back the curtain on collection development. We really appreciate all the insights and all of the information.

Cate: Sure. Thank you, thanks for having me.

[Music - Tech Bytes theme]

Thanks again to Cate for taking time to talk about collection development.

In our next episode, we'll talk to Elbert. Elbert works in Materials Services, and he's going to tell us about the process for getting an item ready to go on the shelf.

Tech Bytes is recorded in Studio A on the lower level of the Niles-Maine District Library, where Niles-Maine cardholders have access to the recording equipment and software that were used to produce this episode.

Thank you for listening, and if you have any technology questions, you can find us on the lower level, at the Library's technology desk. You can also email us at digitalservices@nileslibrary.org.

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[Music - Tech Bytes theme]