



# HOW TO... Stock Your bookshop

Article Author:

[Brian Joyce](#) [1]

[7](#) [2]

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How to...

Byline:

**Brian Joyce** who runs a bookshop at **St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School** suggests it's important to **Learn from Your customers.**

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I open the bookshop every day and ever since it started in September 1978 I have kept a record of every sale in a file. I enter not only the title of the book but also the date, price, sex of child and classroom number.

This was, as it turned out, an extremely useful piece of forethought. Using the details I can work out sales trends over the terms using pie graphs. Although using cold figures and percentages with children can be dangerous, it is most effective as a source of information on what the children want and what the children think they want but later discriminate against. General patterns are visible and it is evident that the teacher when ordering should listen to this silent voice. Teachers tend to choose well-proven literature for fear of failure and to show to outsiders that their bookshop maintains a high standard of stock. Both these views should be looked at closely. Children must have a chance to choose 'poor' literature as well as 'good' so that they can through a process of years learn to praise, criticise and discriminate.

By studying the graphs you will notice a gradual decrease in fiction until it reaches a plateau of 20%. The first term's stock reflected my choice but gradually through the terms the children have dictated the choice of fiction and other categories. By the fifth term, for example, the sale of religious books has multiplied enormously - prayer books, missals and bibles mainly. We are a Roman Catholic school and therefore have our specific needs. Each school serves a community whether it's geographical, social or religious, and each teacher must understand those needs and then allow and cater for them with bookshop stock and books in the classroom.

Looking through the sales file once more I noticed a sudden spell of sales of TV/film tie-ins; these sales petered out until the very popular **Grange Hill** and **Worzel Gummidge** series. To discover why, I asked the children buying these books a few questions. The results to the questionnaires were unexpected. 36% of the tie-ins sold were not read or not finished. The reason? The stories did not live up to the expectations of the film or series. Although the film or TV series reached a wide age range, the books were usually limited to a higher reading age.

Running a school bookshop has helped us to eradicate waste. We can browse through new paperbacks, discuss their values, both educational and cost. And by monitoring sales, talking to the children and listening to their comments, we are learning something about our children's interests and dislikes.

Page Number:

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