

3. Preparing the Library Room

What are your library room needs?

Once the library committee has been set up, your next task is to decide where to put the library. There is no such thing as an ideal library room. A library can be big or small, with many books or just a few. The best library is one that people visit often and where it is easy for users to find the books they want to read. In a primary school, you might decide to establish classroom libraries (see chapter 1 for more details).

The library room should be big enough for at least one class of students to visit at the same time. Space limitations may stop you from providing a study area. If this is the case, you could put floor cushions or mats in a corner of the room for leisure reading. This is especially good for primary school students and will make the library a popular place for storytelling.

Windows are essential. They should provide good reading light and ventilation. If the climate is hot, position windows to catch any cross-draft. A hot room makes people want to sleep, not study. In humid countries, books may be spoilt by mould if the library room is damp. Good ventilation helps reduce this problem.

Water spoils books, so the library needs a well-maintained roof and overhang. You may like to add a plastic pipe or bamboo gutter to collect any rainwater. Remember to clean the gutter (or put insect netting across it) or readers may contract illnesses such as malaria. Shutters also protect stock against heavy rain. If there is any risk of seasonal flooding, make sure it is possible to move books to higher shelves quickly.

Libraries can look very different. Figure 3.1 shows one building style that has been used to make a successful library. A community library or a centralised school library (see chapter 1) should be kept in a separate, lockable room and have well-publicised opening times.

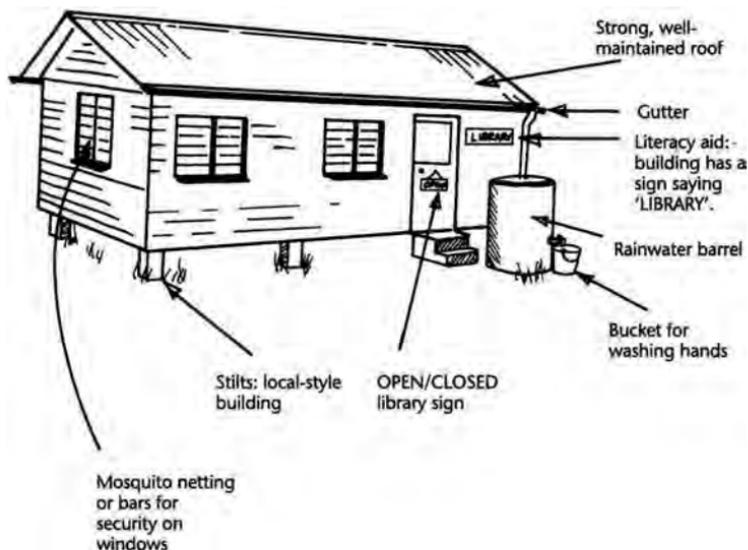


Figure 3.1. A design for a library.

How to make your library secure

For most libraries, the biggest problem is security. It is important that your library room is secure. The best way to stop theft is by making it difficult for anyone to take books. Put locks on the door and make sure that windows can be closed with shutters, glass, or close-fitting bars. Mosquito netting makes it difficult to pass books out of the window.

If the library is used for other purposes, if windows are broken or covered by torn mosquito gauze, or if staff forget to lock doors, books will go missing. Librarians say your library stock will be safer if it is kept in a separate room or building, with only one entrance/exit and with the librarian's desk placed near the door. It is recommended that you lock your library when staff or library monitors are not in the room.

Your methods of preventing opportunities for people to remove books may not work 100 percent. However, even if security continues to be a problem at your library, make every effort to keep the library open as often as possible

and to have well-publicised opening times so that people can make the best possible use of the books.

We keep the library open on the weekends. The support staff (security) unlock it for the students. But there is no borrowing on the weekends.

*- Khombisa Lukhele,
Librarian, Woodlands High, Swaziland*

Another way to improve security is to keep essential books in lockable cupboards. If you decide to do this, make sure a list of titles is pinned up where readers can easily see it and ensure you have regular times when they can use these books.

This practice helps protect the stock and students continue to come to the library; if all the important books are lost students will never come to the library.

*- Daniel Aidoo, former library assistant,
Central Regional Library, Ghana*

Daniel Aidoo also found that theft and the tearing out of pages was reduced if readers knew photocopies could be organised. This may only be possible for libraries near a town that has reliable photocopying facilities. If theft is still a problem, you could try the method used by Cynthia Stirrup, whilst working in The Gambia; she notes, 'We needed a glass-fronted, lockable bookcase for the most desirable books, such as school textbooks and the African Writers Series.' This keeps important stock safe and allows people to see which books are available.

It is inevitable that books will be lost and damaged at your library. Staff at big libraries expect about 2 percent (two out of every 100 books) of their stock to be missing or unusable by the next stocktake. The best approach is to be realistic about theft and damage. Try to prevent damage or theft from happening, but remember when you are thinking about security that the library is meant to be

an inviting place for readers to study in or visit, so do not make it look like a prison!



Figure 3.2. A library room in Lesotho before it has any books.



Figure 3.3. The same library with well-organised books and educational posters on the wall.

What furniture does the library need?

Essential library furniture

- Bookshelves
- Desk and chair for librarian

The basic furnishing equipment for a library is bookshelves. Books last longer and are easier to find if they are displayed on shelves. You can make shelves from many materials: wood, bamboo, bricks, and even metal. Before you make or buy shelves, remember to think about the height of your readers. Shelves at primary schools should not be higher than 120 cm (4 feet). At secondary schools or community libraries, the top of your bookcase should not be higher than 180 cm (6 feet). A 180 cm bookcase with five shelves would hold about 150 books. If your library has no bookshelves and no money, use something else instead – tea chests, for example, or wooden packing cases/boxes.

Chris Lane, working in Kenya, has a warning for anyone making furniture for their library:

Bookshelves should be at a suitable height for your students. It is a common fault to make them too high. Wall shelves can be taller than free-standing shelves, which should be kept low to give a feeling of space. The air must be free to circulate around books. This will cut down on mould and problems with insects.

Why use bookshelves?

Bookshelves have many uses:

- They organise the library's stock so that it is easy to find books.
- If books are not being used and are stored badly, they can become damaged – a box of books could be eaten by insects or mice.
- A shelf of books is much easier for you to check.
- Bookshelves can help prevent water damage if there is a flood.

- Bookshelves can also be used to display magazines, project boxes, and audio-visual stock.

Look at figures 3.4 to 3.7 for ideas about how to make different types of bookshelves.

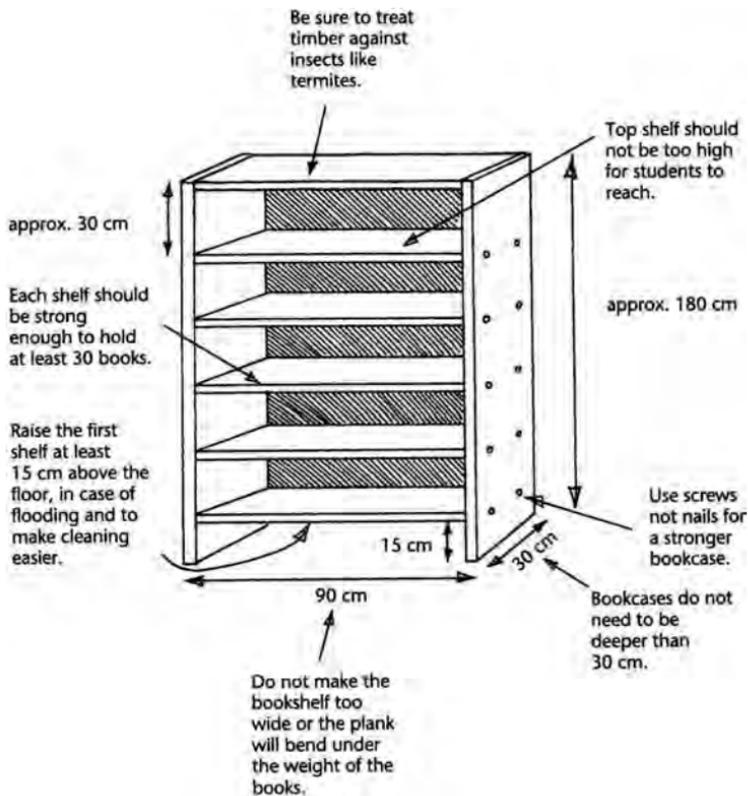


Figure 3.4. A wooden five-shelf bookcase.

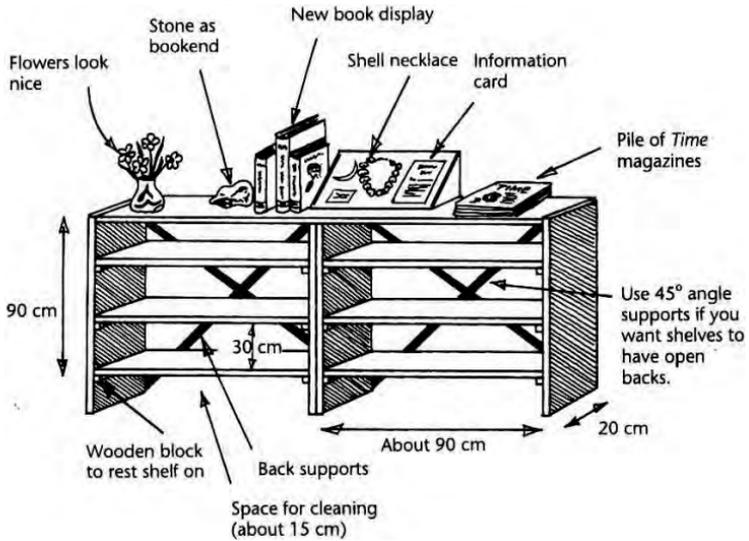


Figure 3.5. Low wooden shelves with display surface.

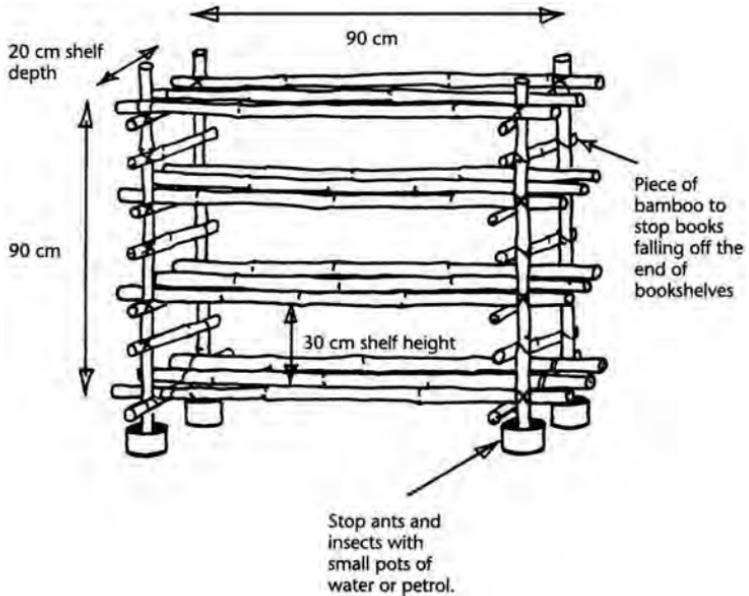


Figure 3.6. Bamboo bookshelves.

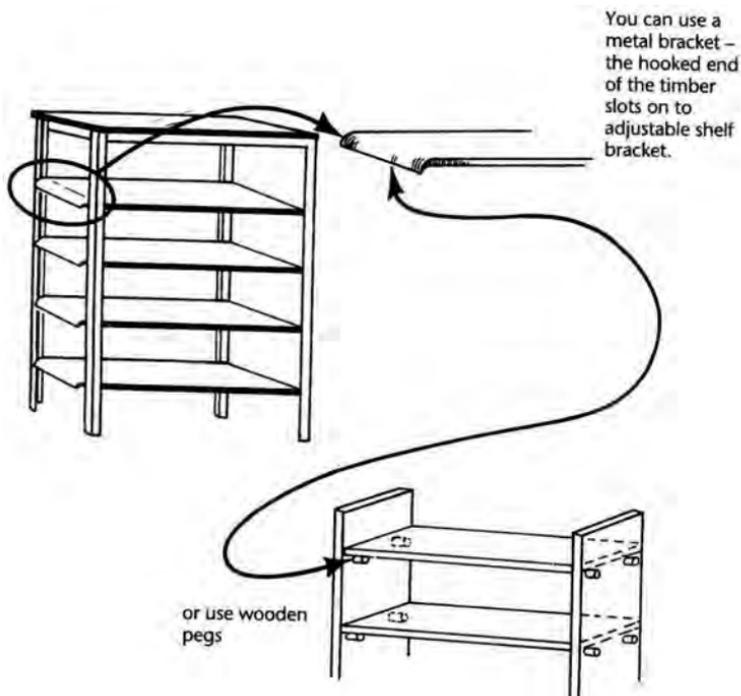


Figure 3.7. Adjustable shelves can be made locally. They provide light and airy shelf space that helps to prevent mould. They are very useful if some of your books are too large to put on standard bookshelves.

Old shelves and planks were brought by kids, and we fundraised and hired the services of a carpenter who built us remarkably beautiful bookshelves. So, between 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. from Monday to Thursday, everyone at school, even the support staff, grabs a book and reads. Just imagine that scenario.

*- Prince Kunene M., Librarian,
St. Paul's Methodist Primary,
Swaziland*

Optional library furniture

The following items are useful if your library has sufficient funds:

- Filing cabinet or lockable drawer for librarian's use.
- Desks and chairs where people can study. These can be made of local materials. Students may prefer to use mats or cushions, especially younger children at primary schools.
- Browser boxes. These are useful boxes in which the librarian can place books for younger children so they can choose their own reading book from a selection of books at a suitable skill level for their age and ability (see figure 3.8).
- Magazine display racks.
- Display boards fixed to the walls. Flour sacks or grain bags nailed to the wall make a good display area (attach notices by pinning them to the fabric).

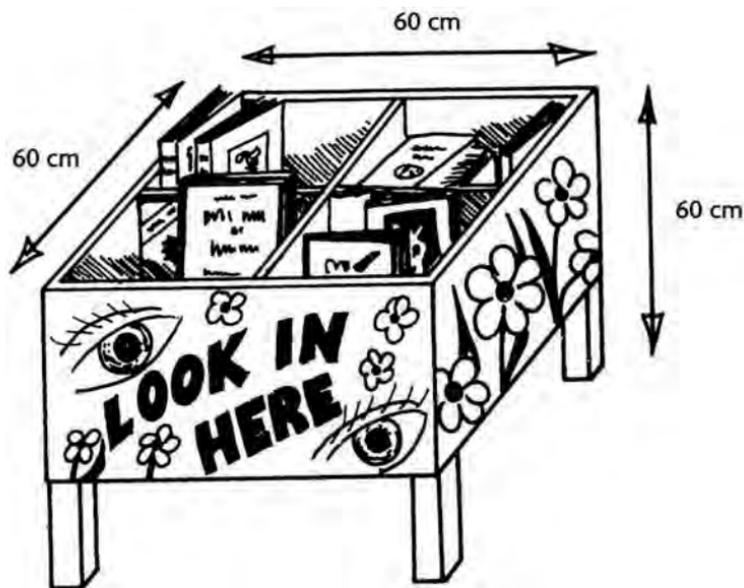


Figure 3.8. A browser box, particularly good for primary school children and for sorting odd-sized and large books or magazines.

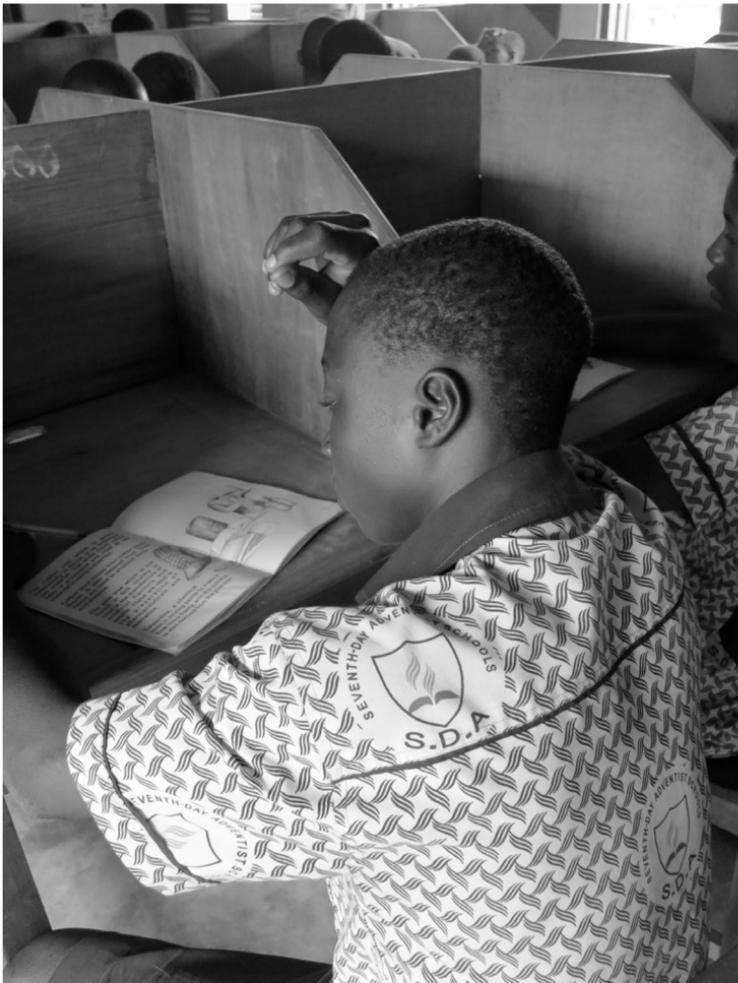


Figure 3.9. This library in Ghana has cubicles where students can read.

What equipment does the library need?

In order to run the library efficiently, you will need some office equipment. Your school may already own many of these items.

Essential office equipment

- Two record or issue boxes, long and narrow to fit record or index cards of a standard 125 x 76 mm (5 x 3 inch) size. You could use a shoebox.
- Lockable cash box for keeping any petty cash, stamps, or library fine money safely.
- Cleaning utensils: broom, dusters, etc.
- Kerosene light (if no electricity) and kerosene. Make sure you store these in a safe place, away from paper and books, to reduce the risk of fire.
- Rubber stamp of school's name and ink pad.
- Ruler.
- Scissors (or knife). These should be kept in a lockable drawer, as they can be dangerous.
- Stapler.

Optional office equipment

- Date stamp.
- Pencil sharpener. You can use a knife, but remember to keep this out of reach of younger children.
- Hole punch.
- Typewriter.
- Wastepaper basket.

What stationery does the library need?

Below is a list of stationery that will be needed to help run the library.

Essential stationery

- Ballpoint pens.
- Coloured marker pens. Indelible ink, waterproof pens are best. Felt pens are acceptable.
- Envelopes.
- Glue. Rubber-based glues are good; so are glue sticks. Buy both, if you can. There are many types of glue for sale in shops, but some are not suitable for use by

young children. Spray glue and extra-strong 'super' glues should be avoided.

- Ink pad refills.
- Strong wide packing tape for book repairs.
- Ledgers for accession register and for visitor log.
- Several exercise books, including one for accounts, one for book or magazine orders, one for borrowing records, and one for queries and/or suggestions.
- Paper clips.
- Pencils.
- Paper.
- Staples.
- Masking tape or coloured sticky 'electrical' tape, dots, or labels (plain ones can be coloured with pens).
- Cut and ruled record cards (sometimes called index cards or guide cards). These are sold in packets in a variety of standard sizes. The recommended size is 125 x 76 mm (5 x 3 inches), but as long as they fit the record or issue box, it does not matter what size they are. If you find these cards hard to obtain, you could make your own. To make your own record cards, cut up stiff paper. You could also try asking printers for paper offcuts, if you have very little money to make library purchases. Make divider cards of 125 x 85 mm (5 x 3.5 inches) in the same way, but from coloured card.

Optional stationery

- Stencils (for making neat posters and shelf guides).
- Typewriter ribbon.
- Carbon paper (use this to copy your letters).
- Clear tape can be useful, but it tends to dry, shrink, and fall off. For small book repairs, you could use glue or clear sticky tape.
- Drawing pins.

LIBRARY TIPS

1. A bookcase with five shelves of 180 x 90 cm (6 x 3 feet) will hold about 150 books. If your library has this number of books and only one bookcase, there may be a problem when students come into the library. They will find it difficult to reach the books on the top shelves and there will be such a crowd that it will be hard for students to find the books they are looking for. In this case, it is best to have several lower shelves arranged around the library room, rather than just one bookcase.

2. You could ask the woodwork teacher to help you make the library and its furniture. Remind him or her to protect the shelves against warping and insects. If possible, try to make some shelves adjustable (see figure 3.7), so that larger books can be arranged on them too.

3. Ask readers to help you make two issue boxes in which you can file the title cards and, depending on your lending method, book tickets. A good alternative is to use clean shoeboxes. Some librarians make a small hole at the bottom of all index cards and then put a thin stick through all the title cards to prevent their alphabetical order being accidentally confused. This device saves a lot of time if the box is ever dropped.



Figure 3.10. A colourful display of books on the shelves attracts students (Botswana).