

Preparing Your Annual Budget Review

In order for school libraries to successfully implement the Iowa School Library Program Guidelines, sufficient funding must be secured to improve library collections, whether that is print, non-print, or digital. Library facilities also need regular attention to assure they are functional and inviting to students and staff.

In regards to school libraries, the Iowa Code states that, "A plan for annual updating and replacing of library materials, supports, and equipment is in place" (IAC) 12.3(12)). The Iowa School Library Program Standards, adopted in 2019, further state:

- The teacher librarian and the principal (and the district level supervisor, if applicable) cooperatively plan the library budget
- The library budget allocation represents an appropriate proportion of the building budget
- The library budget allocation is sufficient to update resources in support of curricular needs

That's the goal, but how do we get there? This document will help you find the way.

What's in the Library Now?

The first step in preparing your annual budget review is knowing what is currently in your library. Take inventory and run reports from your circulation system. What section of your collection—picture books, STEM topics, biographies, for example—is woefully out of date? What kind of books are checked out the most—romance and fantasy? Humor and graphic novels? Make a note of what you find.

Next, go to your shelves and consider the physical condition of your collection. You're looking not only for individual books that are messy and need replaced, but entire sections. Those sections are probably messy because those books are so popular! Look for new titles in those sections to keep students coming back.

Conduct a collection analysis and diversity audit to really dig into your collection. Look at data from the annual statewide library survey and compare your library to those in districts around you and of comparable size. Complete your library survey every spring so you can compare your own library's progress year to year. For assistance, contact your AEA's Teacher Librarian.

You should also take a look at your library's physical space. Consider the physical layout and arrangement of furniture and shelves in your library. Does it encourage student and staff use? Designate areas in your library for active learning, small group work, large group meetings, and quiet study. Simple additions like posters or beanbags can spruce up a space, and it's amazing what a fresh coat of paint can do. If a new building or library is on your school district's horizon, speak to your administrators about being on the planning team. Your expertise is invaluable.



What's Missing?

Meet with your teachers about their curricular needs. Maybe the sixth grade team does an inventors unit every year but the newest invention featured in your print collection is the World Wide Web (invented in 1991). This is a *school* library, after all, and it must meet the needs of the educators in your school. Consider how your library can support learning not only in reading, but math, science, social studies, and social-emotional learning.



Ask your students what they're reading and what they'd like to see in the library. Create an online book suggestion form and make it easy to find on your library website.

You obviously can't read every new book to be placed in your library, and that's why professional reviews exist. Read *School Library Journal* and other trade publications to get recommendations. Keep up with book awards such as Iowa Children's Choice Award, Newbery Medal, Caldecott Medal, Alex Awards, and others, and purchase those that would engage your school community and diversify your collection.

What's it Going to Cost?

Before you start seeing dollar signs, look at the information you've already gathered. Separate your wish list into immediate, short-term, and long-term needs. Make a spreadsheet with broad categories such as:

- Print books (fiction, nonfiction, graphic novels, Iowa award titles, etc.)
- Periodicals
- Digital resources (ebooks, audiobooks, databases)
- Software licenses (Destiny, WeVideo, PebbleGo, e.g.)
- Makerspace supplies and equipment
- Library supplies
- Furniture



Each year's March edition of *School Library Journal* includes statistics about the average price of hardcover books. In 2020, the average cost of hardcover books for libraries vary, from \$17.95 for a fiction book for children and \$37.68 for a young adult nonfiction book.

In addition to school funding, seek out additional monies such as county foundation grants, STEM Council scale-up awards, PTO mini-grants, and book fairs.

Advocate for Your Program

Before you schedule a meeting with your principal or superintendent, make an annual report to showcase the great things you are doing or have planned for your library program. Remember, administrators speak fluent DATA and the more you can demonstrate the impact the library has had in the lives of your students, the better. Include things like circulation statistics and the average age of the collection. Don't forget to share your plans for next year, particularly efforts to collaborate with classroom teachers. Focus on district goals and emphasize what you are doing to help meet them. You are the most important advocate for your program, so this is no time to be shy. Toot your own horn!