

Things to think about when planning a toy library

WHO IS THE TOY LIBRARY FOR?

1. For which groups would you like to provide the Toy Library Service? This will have an impact on the toys & games you buy for the toy library.

- Young children Birth - 3 years, 3 - 5 years or 5 - 7 years
- School-going children aged 7 - 9 years, 9 - 13 years or 13 - 18 year
- Children with Special Needs - some groups need specialised toys especially children with a physical disability and children with poor vision
- Youth, adults and the elderly - with or without special needs

VENUE

1. A fixed venue needs to be accessible to members
 - (a) What are its good points?
 - (b) What problems might there be, and how will you overcome them?
2. You may be planning a mobile toy library using a van, a bus etc.
2. Where are you going to store your toys?

FINANCE

1. Make a list of what you need to spend money on.

e.g. Toys, fixing up the venue, stock book, membership records, pens for marking, cleaning materials, repair kit, photocopies of agreements, receipt book, travelling expenses, telephone, storage containers, rent, pamphlets, accounting records etc.
2. Estimate how much money you will need to start with.
3. Plan how to raise the funds.
4. Make sure you know who is going to keep track of spending and take care of the bank account.

Your records should show Income (specify where it comes from), and Expenditure - At first, costs for setting up the toy library (toys, shelves, a van etc) and later your Daily Running Costs (rent, salaries, stationery, cleaning materials etc)
5. You need to decide if you will be charging fees and how much the fee will be.

STOCK

1. What are the aims of your toy library? The aims will affect the toys you buy.
2. You need to estimate how many toys you will need. This depends on factors like
 - * how many members you plan on having in each group
 - * whether you will be lending the toys out or whether the members will come and play at the toy library
 - * if you are lending the toys out, how many toys can be borrowed at one time
3. You need to find out where you can buy toys and games; who will give you a good price.
4. A classification system is needed when allocating numbers to the toys.
5. Once you have bought some toys, you need to:
 - (a) Mark every toy including all loose parts and individual pieces with the allocated number as well as the container - lid and base if applicable.
 - (b) Give extra protection to toys and containers which may need it
 - (c) Remember to check your toys for non-toxic paint and other safety points.

WHO IS GOING TO BE INVOLVED IN THIS FIRST PREPARATION OF THE TOYS?

MEMBERSHIP

1. Be clear about who can be members of your Toy Library - special needs children, general community, pre-schools etc.
2. Advertising your toy library is very important.
 - (a) Editorial in local publications
 - (b) Notices in public places - shopping centres, Libraries, Clinics
 - (c) Inform groups who may be interested in referring children - doctors, nursery schools, therapists, centres for disabled children etc.
 - (d) Pamphlets to hand out at nursery schools, clinics and to anyone who comes to enquire at the toy library.
3. You need to develop various forms for members including a membership form that provides contact details and perhaps an agreement form so members agree to the rules and understand that the toy library is not liable in the case of injury.
4. The rules of the toy library should be clearly stated.

DAILY ADMINISTRATION

1. Someone counts the toys when they are taken out and when they are returned, sometimes even if they have been played with at the toy library. Counting is essential but time-consuming. No one really enjoys it, but toys with missing pieces are frustrating to children and eventually end up being written off - a loss to the Toy Library.
2. One of the staff members should be able to advise parents on suitable toys.
3. A record must be kept of the toys being borrowed
4. Toys need to be cleaned often and disinfected at times.
5. If a toy or box is damaged, it is better to repair it when it is first noticed. If it is left, it may become much harder to repair.

This information is not completely comprehensive, but we hope that it is useful to you.

Contact **ITLA** if you need more information - info.itla@gmail.com or contact a link person in your country - click on the link at the end of the About Toy Libraries page.

Good luck with starting your toy library!