

## Overview of Shelf Reading

Shelf reading is the process of checking the collection for improperly shelved books. The purpose of shelf reading is to maintain proper order in a library collection. Shelf reading helps patrons and staff find materials and reduces the likelihood that books will be tagged as missing.

Library staff should be proficient in the classification system used in the collection before they can begin shelf reading. Coordinating shelf reading between staff can be done through a variety of means such as using visual tags, or by assigning staff to a certain area.

When a staff member is shelf reading, they check each book on the shelf to make sure it is in order. If a book is out of order the best practice would be to bring it back to the Circulation desk at the end of the shift to be discharged. This will remove any potential unwanted statuses such as being marked as missing or in-transit. However, this method is very time intensive and may not be feasible due to time constraints and staffing. Alternatively, books can be reshelved in the correct location and their potential statuses can be removed when they are found while searching missing or in-transit lists.

If a book is found far from its correct location, or if it is from another collection you should always bring it to the Circulation desk.

After you finish reviewing a shelf be sure to front the shelf by aligning the spines of the book with the front of the shelf. This will give your collection a neat and professional look and assist with keeping the collection in order. Each shelf should have either a wire or free-standing book end at the end of the shelf, unless the shelf is completely full. If the shelf is missing its book end, please replace it with one from your local supplies.

Always alert Collection Management staff if you notice any problems when shelf reading a collection. Common problems include lack of free space in an area, large sections of incorrectly shelved items, water damage, mold on books, vandalism, books that have damaged or missing call number labels, and items that do not belong in the collection.