Libby App Curation for the Virginia Librarian

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ABSTRACT

Libby curated lists are essential to tailor the Libby experience to your own community. Lists in Libby can also be leveraged to cross-promote other library services and programs.

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Have you ever wondered why your library guests use Libby in the way that they do? As the e-services librarian and gadget tutor, I watched new users try Libby for the first time for years before I was put in charge of e-library acquisition and curation in our public library. After downloading the Libby app, a new user would often ask, "What should I search for?"

"Who's your favorite author?" I would say.

"I like James Patterson," they would reply, and type in his name and find his newest book. "His new book has a long wait? Why is there a wait? It's an e-book! What if I tap 'what's available?' I'll try that. This is James Patterson's book from last year! I read that one already!"

Cue major frustration, as I tried to help them think of any other author's name or any e-book title right off the top of their heads.

I had one guest who was learning to use Libby practically shout, "I just want something good to read!"

The default Libby searches seem engineered to frustrate users and show them things they either can't borrow or have read already. What's New…wait list. What's Available…last year's best sellers. What's popular…also old best sellers, and they *also* usually have a wait list. Libby teaches the users to gravitate toward "what's available" to avoid disappointment when they can't find anything new to check out, but "what's available" is often disappointing. It's old news.

The lists that are automated on Libby also feature unavailable e-books and audiobooks at the top, and the topics tend to be very generic. They are designed, after all, for Libby libraries all over the country, not for Virginia libraries. Your library has unique priorities in what you collect and would like to promote.

In order to get something both appealing *and* available at the top of the Libby app and your library's Overdrive page, a library can make Libby Lists that have specific appeal to local users, both for Virginia and for your region.

To make a Libby List, in your Overdrive Marketplace, choose "Curate" and "Standard Curation" in the menu to get started with a list for display in your app.

Curated Libby Lists can be tied to library programming. For example, a Libby List could curate all books by visiting authors or could pull together titles that fit the theme of the summer reading program. A list could highlight new databases and services. For example, we featured a list called "DIY in December" with "also check out our Creativebug database!" as part of the list description. Our Virginia library is in Appalachia, so when Appalachia is in the news or on social media (such as when the movie "Hillbilly Elegy" was streaming), we post the list entitled either "We Love Appalachia" or "O Appalachia." You can cross-promote other streaming services using Libby such as Kanopy or Hoopla. Libby Lists can feature titles that have been adapted for films or television shows that are offered on other services.

For the month of Damascus Virginia Trail Days, we have a "Trail Days" Libby List with e-books and audiobooks about hiking and the outdoors. We also have a Libby List that is simply called "In Virginia" for books set in the Old Dominion. When we did a campaign for people to join the Friends of the Library with a "Love Your Library" theme, we made a Libby List called "Love Your Library" with books set in libraries. If a Libby List is about an event, you can put the actual link to the event on your library website in the list's description. The link will not be clickable, but Overdrive allows URLs to be included in the description for a Libby List.

If you struggle to fit e-book licenses into your library budget, you can use Libby curation to leverage your backlist and drive circulation of older titles. I googled "scariest audiobooks of all time" and found several already in my consortium's collection. We owned old audiobooks of "Carrie" and "Cujo" by Stephen King, but if a user typed in "Stephen King" they would be so far down the results list that users would be unlikely to find them.

Your Overdrive collection contains old e-books and audiobooks with one-copy/one-user licenses that will never expire. Go find them and put them on display in a list! Your users will say, "Wow! I never knew they had that!"

On the other hand, you may own two-year metered licenses for titles that are not best sellers, and tend to not be borrowed during that second year when they are no longer new. A Libby List that highlights these titles in the second year of the license can reboot them and squeeze out a few more circulations.

Curating Libby lists is a lot of work at first. A library Overdrive administrator cannot, as of this writing, copy books from one list to another or select and add multiple titles to a list at once. The only way to add to a Libby List is to search and add, search and add, title by title. However, you can rework old lists into new ones (pull titles about aliens from a big Sci-Fi list), or recycle your lists repeatedly with new e-book purchases added at the top and a new Libby List name. When publishing a Libby List, I always select "Show all titles, but show available first" as a Custom sort for the list, so that something available is the first thing they see in each Libby List.

If you need help, ask your Overdrive Content Specialist, who will be happy to assist you with list curation.

As soon as new lists are available in Libby to browse, our library posts a colorful graphic with accompanying text to Facebook informing Facebook users that new lists have appeared in Libby and the names of the Libby Lists.

Libby provides a much better experience for the user and a lot more bang for the Overdrive licensing dollar when the displays are tailored to your Virginia library, your programming, your public relations campaigns, and your community's interests.

The links below have basic information from Overdrive on curating Libby Lists to get you started.

https://resources.overdrive.com/curating-collections-for-your-library/.

https://company.overdrive.com/2018/08/13/curating-collections-for-your-digital-library/.

https://company.overdrive.com/tag/curation/.

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