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Where to Buy Children’s Books

James S. Jacobs

I once asked a group of teachers this question: “Your principal has given you $1000 to be used exclusively for new children’s books to add to your classroom library. Where do you spend the money?” Because their answers were hesitant and tentative, I presented the same question to other teachers. Those responses were equally unsure—and have been with almost every group of educators I’ve asked since. Could one reason for small classroom libraries be that teachers need more information about how to build an in-room collection with relative ease?

“Yes,” said some. “But an even bigger problem is getting the money to spend.” Agreed. We never have enough cash to do all we wish. Yet most progress is made with small, consistent steps. Adding a book or two at a time, repeated again and again, soon develops a respectable collection. To find a hundred dollars—or even a few hundred—try these ideas.

1. Ask the principal. Even in tight times, budgets are not always spent clean. Make your logical request verbally, accompanied by the essential points on one piece of paper. To hasten a “Yes,” show how you can forego some scheduled items (a workbook or some ditto sheets is a good place to start) if you can have that money for books.

2. Book drive. Organize the children to do the work. Send announcements to all homes. Accept all books. Separate the spoils into two stacks: (1) Keep and (2) Not Keep. Turn the Not Keep into cash by selling in the supermarket parking lot on Saturday morning for bargain prices: 25¢ each, 75¢ per pound, $1 per foot in a stack, or a combination.

3. Ask the PTA for some funds.

4. Hold a garage sale with donated items.

5. Ask a service club for support.

The simple truth is that we find funds when we get serious about pursuing them. But the focus here is to spend money wisely. As in all consumerism, no one source has all the advantages. Following are better-than-average sources with pluses and minuses noted.

Book Clubs

One of the best (very good books, fewer pizazz items like posters and stickers, and generous bonus program which provides free books for the classroom) is: The Trumpet Club, P.O. Box 604, Holmes, PA 19043. Two separate clubs -- grades 1-3 and grades 4-6.

+ Inexpensive. Relatively quick—3-4 weeks.

- Limited titles. Some are made smaller than regular book store editions.
2 BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

Bookstores
Ask about educational discounts (if you can’t get 19-20%, look elsewhere). Inquire about minimum orders. Some stores give no discounts on small purchases. Take the school’s tax-free number to avoid paying sales tax.
+ Immediacy. Books are available today.
- Discount is small. Availability limited to stock on hand.

Local Wholesalers
Check the Yellow Pages under “Magazines—Distributors.” Many have large selections of paperback children’s books. Call and see what is available, what kind of discount is offered to educators, and what their procedures are for buying paperbacks for the school.
+ Immediacy. Many copies of available titles.
- Limited stock. Discounts only moderate. Found seldom in towns under 125,000.

New Hardbacks and Paperbacks
Baker and Taylor, 380 Edison Way, Reno, NV 89564 will sell to teachers and schools. Call 1-800-648-3944 and ask for new accounts to see if your school is already on the list. If not, it can be with little work. Hardbacks discounted 30%—no minimum order. About 5% shipping. Paperbacks discounted 10-40%, depending upon the number of copies of each title ordered. Cataloging and processing available for libraries. Full kit 89¢ per book -- five cards, pocket, spine label and mylar cover.
+ Wide selection. Discounts on hardbacks. Cataloging service available.
- Limited discount on small orders of paperbacks.

New Paperbacks
Any paperback available in America can be ordered through Adams News Co., 1555 West Galer Street, Seattle, WA 98119. Tel: 800-533-7617. Send for a catalog to follow their procedures for ordering. No minimum order, a straight 35% off the cover price, and no shipping charges
+ The best discount available anywhere. Can order just one or two. Fast professional service.
- Limited to paperbacks.

Paperback Publishers
Many paperback publishers sell titles for about a dollar each, but ship only to schools—no private addresses. Requests must be on school letterhead. Up to six books at a time can be ordered. Check the catalog for details, usually found under “Examination Copies” near the information on ordering. If your library does not have a catalog, request one from the publisher. Remember to specify K-6, 7-12, or both. Three which offer this service are:
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Avon books, 959 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019
Bantam books, 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10103
Dell Publishing Co., 245 E. 47th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017

+ Wide Selection. Inexpensive.
- Limited to six titles (upon arrival of order, another request may be sent, over and over).

Remaindered Books

When a book goes out-of-print, the publisher frequently sells the remaining copies in bulk to a remainder house. These books are then available at tremendous savings, often for 20% of the original price. Different catalogs for elementary, junior high, high school, and general are available. Specify which catalog(s) you want. University Book Service, 2436 West Granville Road, Worthington, OH 43085. Tel: 614-889-1955.

+ Enormous savings on new books. Sell to individuals, as well as institutions. Thorough and helpful catalog. Both hardbacks and paperbacks.
- Somewhat limited selection.

Used Books

Some book stores specialize in used books and have decent ones for greatly reduced prices. Thrift stores have better prices, but the pickings tend to be slimmer. Garage sales? Spotty.

+ Very inexpensive.
- Very limited selection.

Remember that no one source will have all the titles you will want. Even businesses with large inventories find that some back-ordering (having to order directly from the publisher) is a fact of life. Back-ordering generally takes from 4-8 weeks.

Final note. Those who have limited budgets often find very dependable lists in CBC Features. The Children's Book Council, 67 Irving Place, New York, N.Y. 10003, publishes CBC Features twice annually for a lifetime subscription price of $25 for both individuals and institutions. As long as you apprise them of your address changes, you will receive CBC Features as long as you live. Among the short articles, announcements, and book-lists, look for notices of the annual CBC social study list, science list, and fiction list. These are the most successful titles published in a given year, according to teachers and students in a variety of elementary schools who have seen all the trade books published that year and have tested them in classrooms.