



Guide No. 2 Selection and acquisition of stock

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1. Acquisition policy

Most Quaker meetings have at least an informal acquisition policy – guidelines about the kind of books wanted for the library. “Quaker” books will be at the core, while the range of other topics will depend on the size and character of the meeting, and reflect the members’ interests. Meetings with bigger budgets may be able to collect more general religious books, or peace and social issues material. A written and publicised policy is a good idea, particularly when space is short. Gifts of books, though generous, may not be suited to the library’s purposes, and an explicit policy can help explain why. Similarly, requests for new books cannot always be met, and clear reasons need to be given.

2. Budgets

Many meetings agree an annual budget for the purchase of books and periodicals for the library. An agreed budget is helpful because you can then plan expenditure over the year, although there may be special circumstances when you need to ask for additional funds to buy books, e.g. for a study programme. Others pay for books on an ad hoc basis, with no formal budget: in that case it is useful for a new meeting librarian to start by getting an idea of the amount of money usually available. It is important to keep an up to date record of how much is spent, or committed. A simple method would be a notebook for orders, and a cashbook or spreadsheet for expenditure. Keeping a record of expenditure throughout the year will help you estimate the amount you are likely to need next year.

3. Selection

The meeting librarian needs to stay informed about relevant new publications and current needs of the meeting. The following are some sources of information that may help in selecting books (see contact information at end of this guide for addresses, telephone numbers, websites and email addresses).

Publicity about new books, e.g.

- *Books of the month* from the Quaker Bookshop, circulated in clerks' monthly mailings and on the meeting librarians's cluster, announcements of new books published by Britain Yearly Meeting in *Quaker news*, launch events in the Quaker Centre, etc.
- New publications from US and other Quaker publishers announced on the Quakers Uniting in Publications website www.quakerquip.org/.
- Other publishers' catalogues, such as SPCK <http://spckpublishing.co.uk/>.

Reviews, e.g. new book reviews in *The Friend*, *Friends journal*; book reviews by readers on social reading websites like Goodreads www.goodreads.com/ or LibraryThing www.librarything.com.

Browsing in bookshops, e.g. Quaker Bookshop at Friends House, bookstalls at Quaker events, local general and specialist bookshops in your area.

Browsing online (see the website of QUIP – Quakers Uniting in Publications – for links to Quaker booksellers worldwide, as well as Quaker publishers, www.quakerquip.org), e.g.

- Quaker Bookshop at Friends House, www.quaker.org.uk/shop
- American Quaker bookseller websites such as FGC Quakerbooks catalogue on-line, www.quakerbooks.org/
- General non-Quaker websites, such as Amazon, which often include reviews and the ability to “look inside” a book www.amazon.co.uk/

Reading lists, particularly those followed by study groups or discussion groups.

Suggestions or requests by members of the meeting. Some meeting libraries provide a suggestions book for this purpose. Having a clear acquisitions policy helps when the suggested titles may not be suitable for the meeting library.

4. Evaluation

Each item needs to be evaluated on its own merit. Here are some tips for what to consider. Does the item:

- Help us learn about our faith and beliefs?
- Fill a gap in the library's coverage?
- Is it going to be of interest to Friends? Are members likely to read it?
- Is there already something else like it in the library?
- Is the author credible and reputable?

- Is it well written and produced?
- Are there any reviews of it you can read?
- Is it well made? Will the binding last?
- Is the print easy to read?
- Is it a reasonable price for this type of book?

5. Purchase

There are several ways to purchase goods from the Quaker Bookshop

- In person Monday to Friday – opening hours at www.quaker.org.uk/shop
- On-line www.quaker.org.uk/shop
- Mail order
- Book boxes - contact the Quaker Bookshop for further information.

Besides purchasing books in stock from the Quaker Bookshop, or other local or specialist bookshops, you may be able to order books not in stock (many booksellers will readily do this). You can also order on-line from other booksellers and publishers – e.g. American Quaker booksellers (links on the QUIP website), or general booksellers such as Amazon (www.amazon.co.uk/) and Waterstones (www.waterstones.co.uk).

6. Gifts to the meeting library

Members of the meeting can be a useful source of book donations. Local Quaker authors can be encouraged to present copies to the meeting; other Friends are happy to pass on new books they have read. Some Friends may be able to pay for books the meeting could not otherwise afford.

If, however, the library gets an offer of books that do not fit into the meeting library's stated or understood acquisition policy (perhaps out-dated books in poor condition), it may be necessary for the librarian to decline the offer politely, perhaps with the suggestion of an alternative destination for the books. For advice on disposing of books, see also guide 5, *Disposing of unwanted books*.

7. Accessioning

Once the books or pamphlets have been received, paid for and price recorded, they should be identified as the meeting's property. Some meetings may have bookplates or ink stamps; others will need to write the name of the meeting somewhere fairly prominent, such as on the top right hand corner of the flyleaf or title page (or the cover of a pamphlet). The identification should be obvious enough to help Friends avoid mislaying the item among their own books.

Ideally, meetings should maintain an accessions register, recording date, purchase or donation information, and a unique number for the book (which should also be written on the book itself). This can be important as a record of ownership, and should be updated if the book is later discarded, particularly in the case of valuable books. See also guide 3, *Cataloguing and arranging the meeting library*.

8. Publicising new stock

Make sure Friends make good use of new stock by drawing it to their attention. Announcements after meeting, small displays or new book lists are all good ways to publicise new additions.

9. Contact information

Quaker Bookshop www.quaker.org.uk/shop
Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ Tel: 020 7663 1030
Email quakercentre@quaker.org.uk

FGC Quakerbooks www.quakerbooks.org/
338 Plush Mill Drive, Wallingford, PA 19086, USA Tel: +1-215-561-1700 x3044

QUIP (Quakers Uniting in Publications) www.quakerquip.org

10. Further advice

For further advice please contact the Library at Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Phone 020 7663 1135. Email library@quaker.org.uk.

Join the Quaker Life Network cluster for Quaker Meeting Librarians, for email discussion with other meeting librarians. Email library@quaker.org.uk to register.

Other leaflets in this series to download from <http://www.quaker.org.uk/meeting-librarians>

1. The Role of the Meeting Librarian
2. Selection and acquisition of stock
3. Cataloguing and arranging the meeting library
4. Equipment for a meeting library
5. Disposing of unwanted books
6. Caring for your books
7. Promoting the meeting library
8. Online resources for meeting librarians

Disaster preparedness: guidance for meeting librarians, clerks and custodians of records (Guides for custodians of records, no. 10)

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