How We Increased Our Budget and Collection — Painlessly

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Topsail Middle School in Hampstead serves grades 4-7 with a county budget of $1.50 per student. At the beginning of this school year, the library desperately needed a way or ways of increasing its offerings to meet student interests within a very limited budget. A budget double what we had would, we felt, be workable. We determined to double our budget and, as

this library is served only three days a week, we searched for ways of doing this without the headaches and consumption of time associated with "selling something."

As all children seem to love movies and our school is located twenty miles from the

nearest city with a theatre, films are still a delightful novelty for many of our students. We decided, therefore, to offer in-school movies as one way of increasing our budget. Modern Sound Pictures, Inc. of Omaha, Nebraska was our choice for ordering. Their excellent catalog, available on request, features a very complete line of Walt Disney films of good lengths for showing to the age group we work with. We chose a film for each month of school, prepared and sent home a letter to the parents explaining what we hoped to accomplish, and determined that with a rental cost of $20.00 to $30.00 per film, we could sell tickets at twenty-five cents per film and realize a nice profit, which would then be used to purchase paperbacks. We chose Disney films dealing with animals — Rusty and the Falcon, Stormy the Thoroughbred, and Little Dog Lost, to name but three — and scheduled them for Friday afternoons during the school year. The service we received from Modern Sound was flawless — all films arrived on time and in perfect condition and were thoroughly enjoyed by the audience. And we were right — we realized a profit of about thirty dollars on each film. The children knew that all profits from the film festival would go to the library and eagerly looked forward to the new books they would see on the shelves each month. During the year the film festival earned the library approximately $270 and we feel it more than exceeded our hopes.

The Book Fair, that standby of many school libraries, was also successful this year. The previous year we earned a small profit but spent much time counting and inventorying; somewhere, we felt, there must be a better arrangement. After several phone calls, we found it very close to home. Service News Company, a jobber for paperbacks in Wilmington, offered to bring a wide selection of books out to the school, unload and set them up and come to collect them after the fair, which we arranged to coincide with an evening PTA meeting to attract parents. No counting or figuring was done on our part; we were not to worry about missing books, though we were urged to use reasonable caution in supervision. Our share of the profit was 25%, which we were pleased to note was higher than many book fair companies allow. In addition, any paperbacks purchased from Service News in the future would receive a straight 25% discount. It is testimony to the efficiency of Service News that we realized $125.00 from our two-day book fair.

We increased our collection painlessly by announcing at a PTA meeting that we were collecting paperbacks of all descriptions and condition. We are fortunate to have in Wilmington a paperback exchange which allows credit of 40% on books traded in. Any book in stock may then be purchased at 60% of its original cost. We took three large cartons of parent-donated paperbacks to the exchange and brought back a carton and a half of childrens' paperbacks in good condition, all different titles from what we had on our shelves.

New ideas? Not radically different from what could be done in any school library and certainly worth it, as we more than doubled our county budget with very little work. As a result, we are ending the year with the feeling that we are more adequately meeting the needs and interests of our students, which to us is the most important area of school library work.