

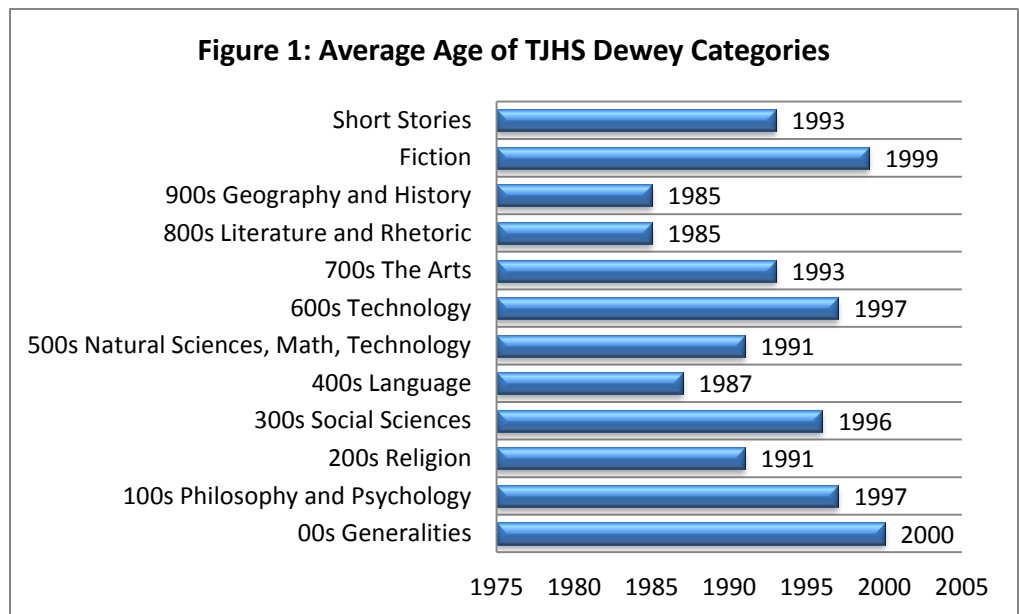
TO: Mrs. Tarr, TJHS Principal
 FROM: Shawn Lees-Carr, TJHS staff
 DATE: April 18, 2011
 RE: Media Center collection concerns

Dear Mrs. Tarr:

We recently reviewed our media center collection and uncovered several very weak sections requiring immediate attention. Several categories fall far below the acceptable copyright range, representing outdated information, biased language and underrepresented minorities. Our circulation within these categories indicates that our collection is not meeting the needs and interests of our staff and students. In comparing our results with those of the state of Maryland and the national American Library Association, we realized we are not providing the most relevant, current and interesting materials for our students, staff and community members. Research strongly connects student achievement to a well-managed media center collection, and as our population shifts, we must ensure our library materials support the needs of these students.

Currently the overall average copyright of our collection is 1992, or 19 years old as of 2011. We have more than 7,800 items older than 1991, or older than 20 years. Although we have already weeded 911 items this year, many books still must be removed. We are the second oldest library in the county and have books printed as early as the 1900s (figure 1). In fact, many books in our nonfiction sections have a copyright date in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Not only is this startling, but it borders on irresponsibility when our mission is to educate and support students and staff in the pursuit of meaningful, relevant and accurate information.

Figure 1: Average Age of TJHS Dewey Categories



FIRST PRIORITY

To begin the “modernization” of our collection, we plan to heavily weed and update the 500s, which contain mostly science and math materials. Currently,

Although there are pockets of high-interest, relevant texts, circulation figures indicate that these titles are being overlooked. Not only are students not accessing this collection, but math and science teachers are not collaborating with the media specialist to strengthen and utilize resources. This is especially alarming when considering the National Common Core Standards and STEM initiatives, which place more emphasis on content literacy within these fields.

The average age of these materials is 15 years old, older than some of our students. A closer look shows there are materials that are much older than our students’ parents (figure 2). Within this category, according to professional sources, books older than five years must be closely examined to determine the currency and relevance of information.

Figure 2: Museum or Media Center?

These 10 titles only represent some of the oldest. There are many other titles representing outdated information, gender descriptions and minority representations.

TITLE	COPYRIGHT
Patterns of culture	1934
Down to earth	1936
An illustrated manual of California shrubs	1939
The development of mathematics	1945
Ancient plants, and the world they lived in	1947
Number theory and its history	1948
American spiders	1949
America before man	1953
First came the family	1958
Mathematics in fun and earnest	1958

Blindly eliminating the 257 items older than 1990 would increase our average copyright date to 1998, which is still 13 years old. To bring the average age up to acceptable copyright range (2005), more than 600 items would have to be eliminated from this category alone, leaving 400 items (there are approximately 40 items with no recorded copyright). Of course materials can not be discarded based on copyright alone. Circulation, relevance, professional recommendations, etc., are all other variables that must be considered.

Using a combined approach of careful weeding and thoughtful replacement, however, we:

- increase the average age of information,
- increase the number of high-interest, professionally-reviewed, relevant titles,
- increase the range of materials written at different reading levels,
- increase circulation,
- provide students and staff more resources per student, and
- eliminate old, misleading texts.

PROPOSAL for IMPROVING 500s:

We need funding to replace and update materials. According to the School Library Journal’s average book prices, 2011 estimations are: \$21.55 for a hardback children’s titles, \$24.97 for a hardback young adult title, and \$27.67 for an adult nonfiction hardback. We will be purchasing a range of titles to meet diverse reading needs and using the average cost of \$24.73.

ACTIONS	FUNDING	BASIC OUTCOMES	MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS
Eliminating 600 items Purchasing no new titles	NONE	Leaves 400 items in a category that should have approximately 1,500 Ratio of material t student: 0.24	NO
Eliminating 600 items Purchasing 600 new titles with an average copyright of 2008	\$14,838	1,000 items remaining in a category that should have approximately 1,500 Ratio of materials to student: 0.59	Copyright average increases greatly Number of materials per student unacceptable
Eliminating 257 items Purchasing 600 new titles with an average copyright of 2008	\$14,838	Category will have 1,381 titles Ratio of materials to student: 0.81	Copyright average increases slowly Number of materials per student unacceptable
Eliminating 257 items Purchasing 1,000 items with an average copyright of 2008	\$24,730	Category will have 1,734 titles Ratio of materials to student: 1.02 (We also must consider nonprint and digital resources)	Copyright average increases Number of materials per student barely acceptable.

Although funding continues to evaporate, the investment of \$24,730 over the next year or two will pay off significantly. The longer we wait to update these resources, the more costly it becomes in many ways, from the prices we pay to the students who do not have the access they deserve to instructionally sound materials. Unfortunately, the 500s represents only one of several categories that need updating. Attached to this initial memo are additional figures and data providing an overall assessment of our media center. We know this expensive process will require creative solutions, and we will purse grants, business partnerships and additional financial sources.

Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to meeting with you and the school improvement team to further discuss these details.

Sincerely,

Shawn Lees-Carr

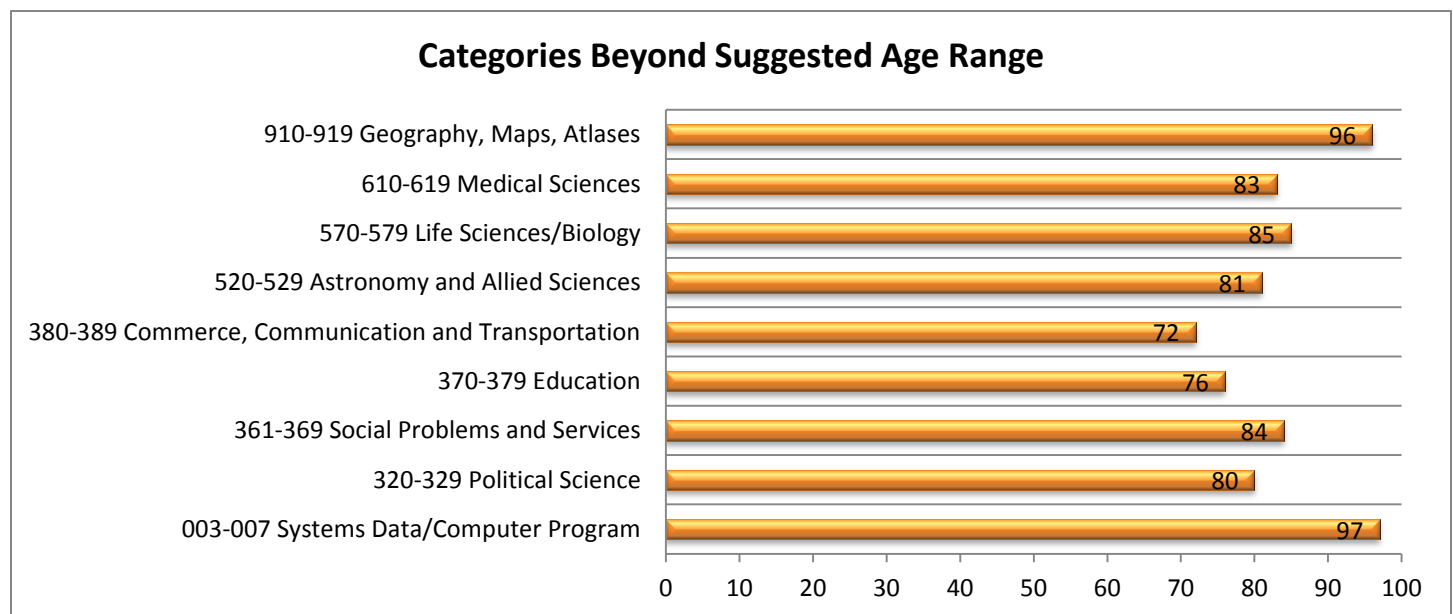
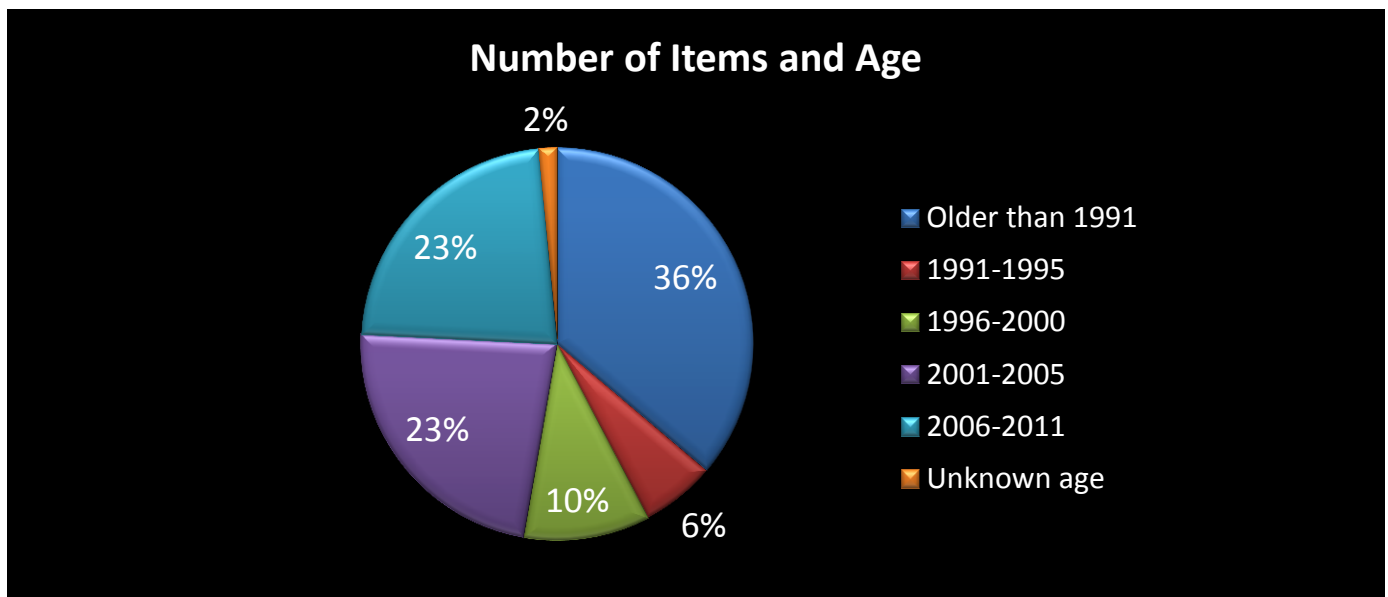
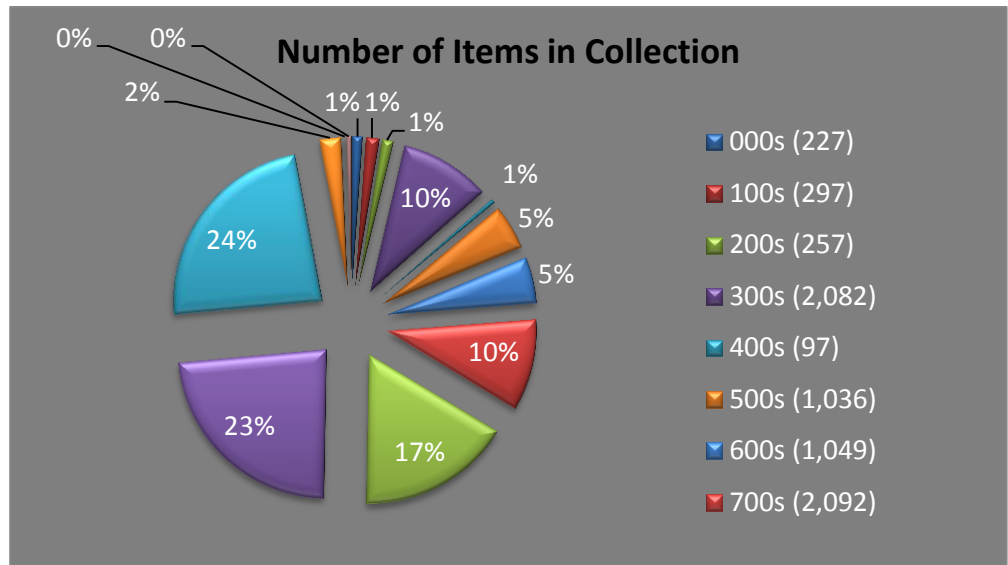
General Collection Overview

Number of holdings: 21,227

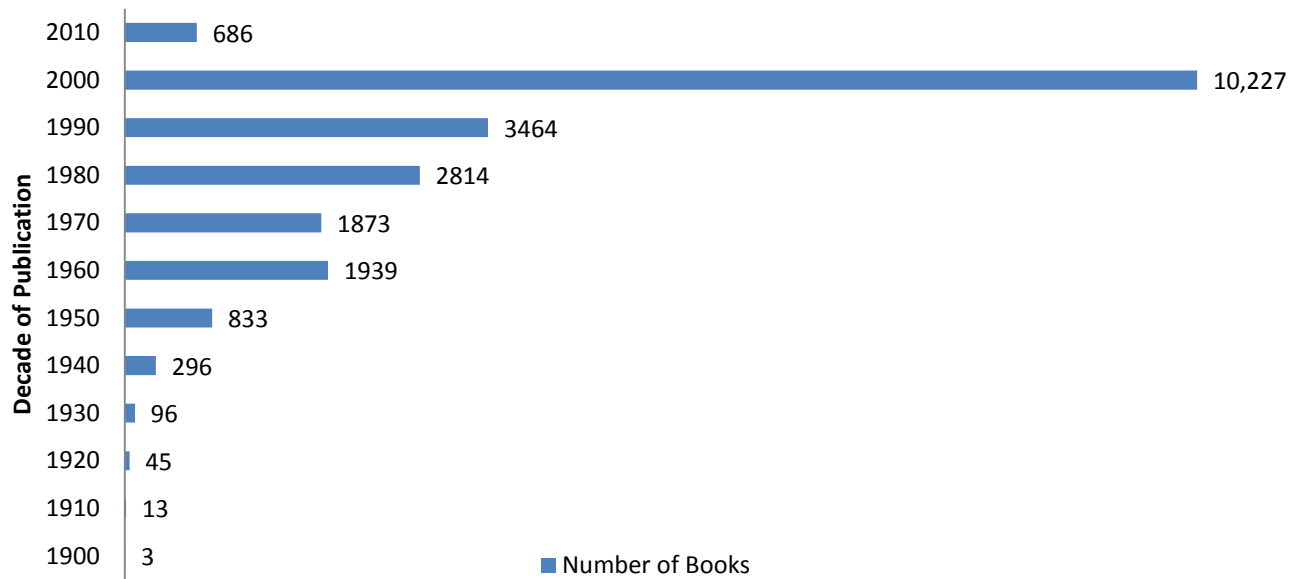
Current Enrollment: 1,700

Books per a student: 12.49

Average Publication Year: 1992



How Old is Old? Number of Books Published in Certain Decades



See [worksheet I](#) and [worksheet II](#) for additional charts and data.