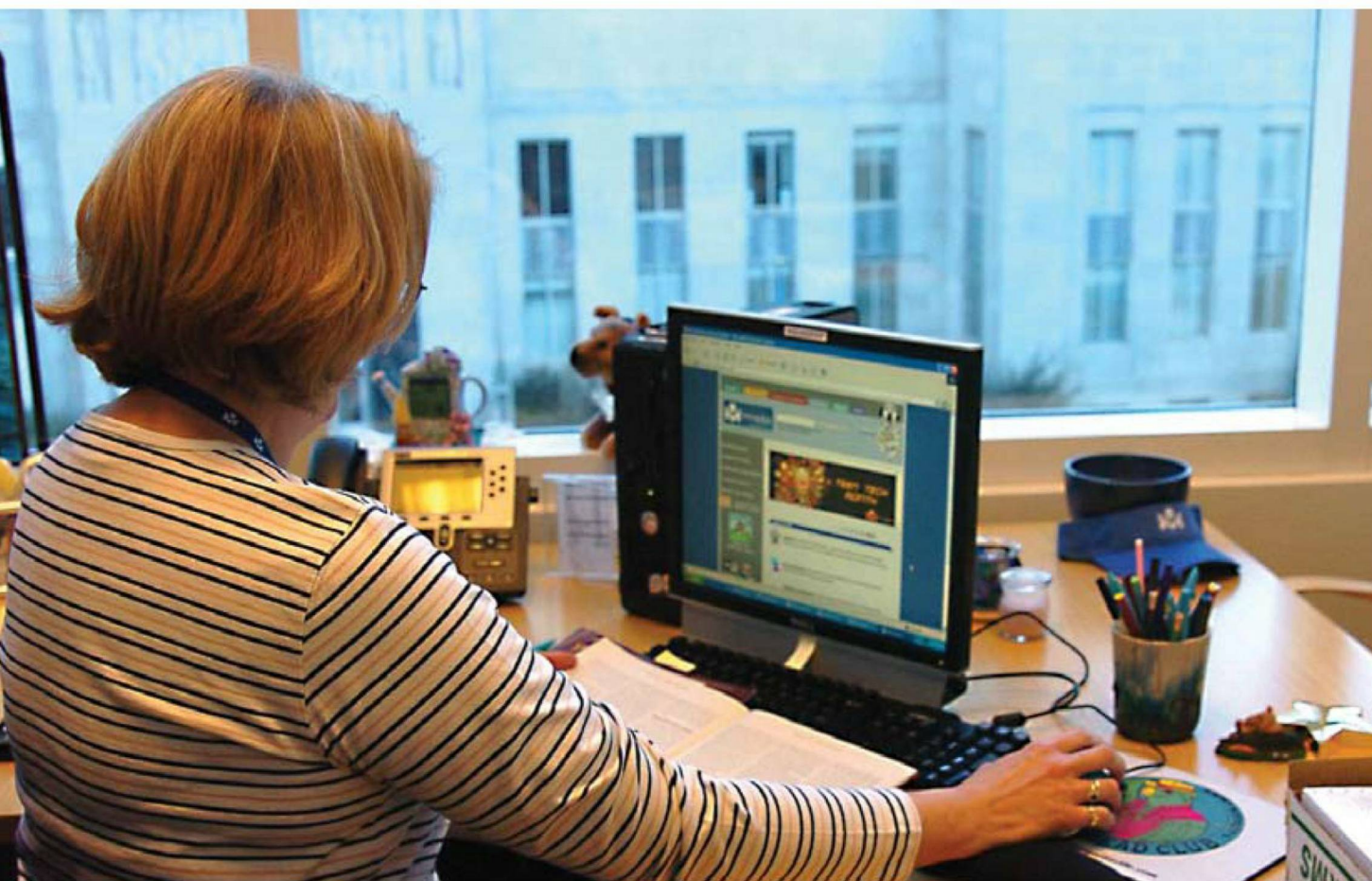


# Selecting The Best



Materials Selection Manager Janet Brooks

**E**very library staff member plays an important role in linking the public to the library material it needs and wants, but not many people know what the process is that locates the best material among the thousands of book, CD, and DVD titles that are published each year.

# Best

That's where the Metropolitan Library System Materials Selection team enters the picture. The 11 staffers in the Materials Selection office are responsible for finding the items you want to check out.

"A surprising number of things we buy," said Materials Selection Manager Janet Brooks, "come from customer requests. People find out about something they think we should buy and let us know. Most of the requests come to us via the MLS website, [www.metrolibrary.org](http://www.metrolibrary.org)."

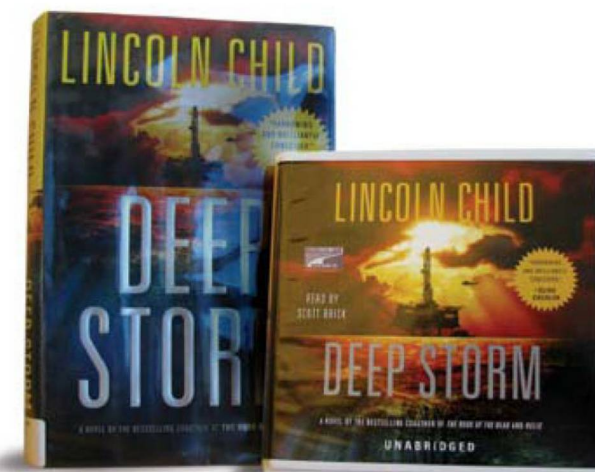
Janet estimates that her office receives 300-400 requests for all media formats each week from the public.

"We can't buy it all, of course, but we get what we can within budget constraints if it meets our selection criteria. For instance, we've just begun building a core collection of feature films on DVD. We try to get the established classics, winners of major awards,



movies that are literature-based, and the ones that are on film industry 'Best Of' lists."

But suggestions from the public are not the



book, for people who like to listen to books while they drive, and we have the movie version on DVD. We also have several Turow audio books available for download from our emedia collection on the website.

"Another example would be

a classic like *Pride and Prejudice*. We have many editions of the book, including large print, plus the two latest movie versions on DVD, the book on CD, a movie soundtrack



only source of potential purchases. Twice each year the Selection team visits each library in the system. Library staff gets a chance to chat with the Selectors to let them know what kind of material each library needs. One library may be experiencing a run on Young Adult novels, and another may need new titles in the science section. Selection follows need.

"We also use the statistics the library generates," Janet said. "We can find out exactly how many times a particular item has been checked out, and what the demand is for particular subjects."

"And we talk among ourselves and take advantage of staff's specialized knowledge."

Once the Selectors understand the kind of material that is needed in each location, they turn to "review media" to find individual titles. They read *Publisher's Weekly*, *Library Journal*, *The New York Times Book Review*, and other sources of reviews of books, CDs and DVDs.

"We will also buy the same title in more than one format. Take for instance Scott Turow's book *Presumed Innocent*. We have it in book form, but we also have it as an audio

on CD, and even a study guide on DVD. We're replacing our video cassette collection with DVDs, but we still have the BBC Television production on VHS."

Materials selection is a challenging process, but it's very worthwhile and provides a lot of fun for the people who do it.

"We're the ones," Janet said, "who always know the answer when someone asks us, 'What's new?'"