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CASE STUDY

Library Suite

The Book Return Game

How Jen Miller Turned Library Data Into Student Action



Jen Miller
Teacher Librarian, literacy advocate

The challenge

Make missing books more visible without making the work punitive

A book-return campaign can easily become a reminder about what is overdue or missing. Jen Miller took a different approach. She used data to create a shared, visible goal that could invite students into the work of caring for the library collection.

Her starting point was a practical question:
Which books should be part of the return game?

Rather than choose titles at random, Miller, or @MeetMeintheMediaCenter as she's known on social media, went into the Follett Destiny® Library Manager's Back Office and used the dashboard and filters to understand the collection more closely. Jen likes to use the dashboard view because it clearly presents data in a graph. The dashboard showed a total of 436 books marked lost. After applying another filter, she narrowed the focus to 135 books for the game board.

> This is what I love about Destiny data. I can go in and grab all the data I need to support the library from the Back Office. We have so much information at our fingertips and it's all user-friendly.
>
> **Jen Miller**
> Teacher Librarian, literacy advocate

That process gave the game a clear purpose. The board was not simply asking students to return books. It was showing students which books the library was trying to bring back into circulation.

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FROM DASHBOARD TO GAME BOARD

Jen translated the filtered list into a physical board that students could see. Each return represented progress toward a shared goal. The board made an operational task legible and motivating: students could understand what was missing, see the campaign move forward, and recognize that their actions affected the library they used.

By making the goal visible and collective, the game helped students see themselves as part of a community that cares for shared resources. It strengthened community awareness by showing that each student's action could improve access to books for everyone.

It also helps students learn about library policies they may be unaware of, such as holds. Adding unique sounds for each type of return added to the fun. The early signal was clear: the visual progress was creating interest and participation. As Jen states, "I created the Book Return Game so students were motivated by the data they were creating themsleves."

> I want kids to get excited about books.
>
> **Jen Miller**
> Teacher Librarian,
> literacy advocate

The role of Destiny Library Manager was not to replace Jen's judgment or her relationship with students. It gave her reliable data for deciding what to feature and a way to keep the campaign connected to actual collection data.



THE DATA BEHIND THE STORY

Jen's return game is one example of how a librarian can use information from the Destiny Library Manager dashboard and reports in everyday decision-making. Jen uses the Back Office to view information about holds, top books, checkouts, and other library activity in one place. She also uses reports and filters, including grade-level views, to look more closely at what is happening in the collection.

That visibility supports more than one campaign. It can help a librarian:

- Identify which books or categories need attention
- Understand how students are using the collection
- Create goals that are grounded in actual activity
- Share library progress with students, staff, and administration
- Use circulation patterns to inform collection decisions

The broader lesson is simple: data becomes more useful when it is connected to a decision and a human purpose.



WHY THE GAME WORKED AS A LIBRARY STRATEGY

The book-return game worked because it combined three things:

1. A focused question
Jen did not begin with every possible data point. She began by identifying the books she wanted students to help bring back.

2. A visible goal
The board gave students a way to see progress. The data moved out of a staff-only workflow and into the shared life of the library.

3. A human invitation
The campaign framed returns as participation in the library's success, not simply correction of a problem. Students could help improve access to resources their peers might want to read.

WHAT LIBRARIANS CAN TAKE AWAY

A data-informed student campaign does not need to be complicated. Librarians can start with one question, one reliable report, and one visible way to show progress.

For example:

1. Choose a library goal, such as returns, checkouts, holds, or participation.
2. Use the Destiny Library Manager dashboard or reports to establish the starting point.
3. Narrow the data to a manageable set of titles, grades, or categories.
4. Turn the goal into a visual format that students can understand.
5. Share progress to celebrate wins and not shame individual students.
6. Use what the campaign reveals to inform the next library decision.

Jen's approach shows what can happen when a library treats data as an invitation. The dashboard supplies the evidence. The librarian supplies the context. Students become part of the outcome.

Want to make library data easier to use in everyday decisions? Explore Follett Destiny Library Manager.

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