

We buy books one by one and build a collection over time based on any number of disparate variables: evolving interest or lack of interest in a given topic, favorite author or genre, recommendations from friends, the need to gain practical information, or simply the design of the cover.

**SHELF LIFE** is a series of **actions** and a starting point for **examining** larger systems of **power** a reader might **overlook** for the merits or **enjoyment** of an individual book. These actions invite you to **reflect** on how your **collected knowledge** may be **incomplete**, even if there are some sections that feature a **diversity** of voices. Are there **other** areas where you may need to **seek** out more authors, resources, or publishers, and continue **expanding** your **perspectives**?

**RELATED TACTICS** invites you to join us as we examine our personal collection of books to consider what knowledge has the opportunity to be created and what systems of power are unintentionally reinforced in the privacy of our home through the books we consume.

**Shelf Life** was created by **Related Tactics** for **Added Value: An Alternative Book Sale**, a project commissioned by **Public Knowledge**, a partnership between the **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art** and the **San Francisco Public Library**.



## HOW TO MEASURE YOUR SHELF LIFE

**STEP 1:** Go home and pick any book in your home library.

**STEP 2:** Using the stickers and criteria on the inside of this handout, mark your book's spine with all of the stickers that apply.

**STEP 3:** Place your book back on shelf, spine facing out. Repeat above steps for all books in your library.

**STEP 4:** What do you notice about your collection based on the stickered spines? Are there particular topic areas that contain a higher density of stickers? What does this sort of archiving suggest about your own reading habits and the sorts of perspectives readily available to you from the publishing industry?

**STEP 5:** We all can work harder to intervene in dominant and normative perspectives of mainstream publishing and knowledge production. Related Tactics and SFMOMA have curated a list of books that can be added to your collection to break up fields of stickers and normative publishing. Take a photo of your Shelf Life and tag **@publicknowledgesf** with the hashtag **#shelflifesfmoma** to be entered into a raffle to receive a title.

ATTACH STICKER SHEET



**ADD A RED STICKER . . .** if queer, people of color, women, or indigenous people are *not* central to the book as complex and productive characters or community perspectives.

**For example:** Is the author of this cookbook a white chef who has been championed for cooking the dishes of other cultures with little engagement with said culture or at a higher price point than chefs from that culture can maintain?

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**ADD A BLUE STICKER . . .** if this book is written about a particular culture, people, and/or place but presumes a readership *not* of that culture, people, and/or place. This may include histories, artistic forms, travel, cooking, and romance.

**For example:** Is this a travel guide to a non-European country with little information about the complexity of local histories?

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**ADD A GREEN STICKER . . .** if this book is authored by or if the narrative is focused on a white man.

**For example:** Do the only women and or people of color in this story die or become victims of violent trauma? Who is the hero of this book? Who has a backstory or cultural context?

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**ADD A YELLOW STICKER . . .** if this book is written with the presumption that the audience is heterosexual, cis-gendered, and/or able-bodied.

**For example:** Does this cookbook assume that one is able to carry a five-gallon pot of boiling water? Does this novel assume sympathy for a straight male character?