DeClutter Your Collection
Tips for Weeding Library Collections

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"...Weeding out requires more knowledge, forethought and power of discrimination than is ordinarily brought to bear in the selection of books."
**Thomas Aldred, *Book Selection and Rejection* (March 1901)**

"I know no rules for discarding that eliminate possibility of error. We all make mistakes but most of these mistakes I am convinced stand on the shelves."
**Gladys Allison, *Suggestions on Discarding* (December 1938)**

“Next to emptying the outdoor bookdrop on cold and snowy days, weeding is the most undesirable job in the library. It is also one of the most important.”

“A good library collection is like a good haircut. It’s not what you cut—it’s what you leave.”
**Anne Felix, Grand Prairie (Texas)**
WHY DON’T YOU WEED?

- It’s sacrilege to throw out a book
- It makes me look bad, if I weed a book I selected
- Someone may want it someday
- I don’t know how
- I don’t have time
- Something is better than nothing
- Books are lost/stolen every day
- It might be worth something
- It seems arbitrary, unstructured
WHY SHOULD WE WEED?

Relevance

- inaccurate, bias, sexist or racist
WHY SHOULD WE WEED?

Currency - outdated info

Someday, man might go to the moon.
WHY SHOULD WE WEED?

Appeal
-users want clean, attractive books
WHY SHOULD WE WEED?

Circulation

-small, but useful just makes good sense
WHY SHOULD WE WEED?

Accessibility
-it is easier for people to find what they want
WHY SHOULD WE WEED?

Space
- you can’t keep everything
- need space for other things (programs, seating, computers, etc)
WHY SHOULD WE WEED?

Cost
-space costs money
WHY SHOULD WE WEED?

Cost
-save your patron’s time
WHY SHOULD WE WEED?

Collection Development
- can see collection needs
- constant feedback
WHY SHOULD WE WEED?

"They said so"

- minimum of 3%

In Service to Iowa:
Public Library Standards
Fifth Edition - 2010

State Library of Iowa
WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH?

A BETTER COLLECTION!

1. Removal of materials that are dated or inaccurate
2. Retention or relocation of materials that are most useful to the public
3. Improved access to the collection
4. Retention of items of historical significance
5. Gives you good data for future collection development
IF……

Milk is curdled, outdated lumpy would you...

• Keep it because you don’t know when you might get to the store?
• Give it to a neighbor to keep in her house?
• Keep it because otherwise the refrigerator would be empty?
• Donate it to a food pantry for hungry children?
SO IF……

A book is outdated, with misinformation why would you?...

- Keep it because you don’t know when you can replace it?
- Give it to another library, because they have more space?
- Keep it because if you weeded everything that needs to be weeded, the shelves would be empty?
- Send outdated resources to be used by children in another country?
WHERE TO BEGIN?

• **Gather information:**
  – Mission statement and goals, collection development policy, community info, usage statistics, lists, check your shelves, interlibrary loan titles

• **CREW**
  – 1970’s, 2008
  – Selectors should be the same as the weeders
  – Libraries aren’t in the business of accumulating physical objects
WHAT TO WEED?

- **Poor appearance:** worn out or poorly bound, torn pages, shabby, small print or poor quality pictures, missing pages, yellowing, brittle pages, outdated jackets or cover art.
WHAT TO WEED?

- **Poor content**: outdated, obsolete, trivial, mediocre, inaccurate, series, superseded editions, resources not on standard lists, unneeded duplicates, self published or small press materials that are not circulating, biased, racist or sexist.
WHAT TO WEED?

- **Unused**: not circulated in 3-5 year, duplicates, hot topics over 5 years old, formats not popular anymore, no longer important.
CONSIDER

- Date—when was the item published? When was it added to the collection?
- Author—is the author still read or likely to be read in the future? Is the book a lesser work?
- Publisher—was the book self-published or published by an ‘instant’ press that may not have taken care in editing and printing?
- Physical condition—are there any factors that make the item unattractive?
- Additional copies—are more copies available that may be in better condition?
- Other books on the same subject in the collection—if this book is discarded, what else is available?
C R E W

Continuous Review, Evaluation and Weeding

http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ld/pubs/crew/
MUSTIE

- **M** = Misleading (and/or factually inaccurate)
- **U** = Ugly (worn and beyond mending or rebinding)
- **S** = Superseded (by a truly new edition or by a much better book on the subject)
- **T** = Trivial (of no discernible literary or scientific merit; usually of ephemeral interest at some time in the past)
- **I** = Irrelevant to the needs and interests of your community
- **E** = The material or information may be obtained expeditiously Elsewhere through interlibrary loan, reciprocal borrowing, or in electronic format
CREW IN 10 STEPS

1. Make weeding a part of your policy
2. Get circulation statistics reports
3. Build weeding into the year’s work calendar
4. Gather circ stats, sticky notes, pen, crew manual, book cart, disposal slips
5. Study the whole area-use post-its and disposal slips
CREW IN 10 STEPS, continued

6. Inventory?
7. Check pulled books against lists
8. Treat according to slips
9. Replacement checking and ordering
10. Set up displays
Are some materials sacred?
What do you think?

“Multiple copies of high quality popular books are more worthwhile than having single copies of many books that aren’t being used.”
GETTING RID OF MATERIALS

DO …

• Sit down with staff and trustees and explain the process
• Save samples of the most blatant examples of materials that should not be in the collection
• Make weeding an ongoing process
• Check city or county policies on items paid for with tax dollars
DON’T …

- Make your weeded books a problem for someone else
- Pile them somewhere in the library for someone to trip over
- Keep hundreds in the attic or basement just in case someone objects
- Bring hundreds to the landfill
So what is stopping you now?
IDEAS FOR DISPOSING OF WEEDED BOOKS AND MATERIALS
SELL IT

• Book sale (on-going in the library or annual Friends of the Library sale)
  – Have a "$1 per bag" sale for the last day or few hours of the sale - as many books someone can fit into their bag (or box) for $1
  – Set out leftover books in "Free" boxes after the sale

• Sell books through:
  – Zubal Books
  – BookProspector.com
  – Powell's Bookstore (Portland, OR)
  – Thrift Books
DONATE IT

• Donate books to:
  – Hands Across the Water
  – GotBooks.com
  – Books for Soldiers
  – Goodwill or Salvation Army stores (contacting the store first might be a good idea)
  – Furniture stores and restaurants are sometimes interested in books, as they use them as props in their displays
  – Jails and prisons often take books, but often will only take certain kinds
  – Nursing homes or group homes (particularly useful for getting rid of old Large Print materials)
TRADE IT

- Sell books on consignment:
  - BetterWorldBooks.com: “Let Us Sell Your Discards & Donations Online! Our NO COST program is simple. We sell discarded and donated material from libraries across the United States on over 17 online marketplaces—generating funding for both libraries and non-profit literacy initiatives. “
  - B-Logistics
  - Other libraries
Try an art or altered book project, such as:
- **This Into That** (building furniture with books)
- **Altered Books**
- **Sorted Books** (arranging books so their titles spell meaningful phrases)
- Donate books to an artist who works with books

Most paperbacks can be recycled, today, many hardcover books can also be recycled, especially if the covers are removed
DESTROY IT

- Last resort
- Throw them away. It’s ok, really. It’s hard, but sometimes there is a reason why a book hasn’t circulated in 5 or 10 years.
So what is stopping you now?