

WESTCHESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY

COLLECTION WEEDING MANUAL

WEEDING - An analogy - Noxious weeds can choke your garden of resources. Pull out the weeds so that the beauty of your garden can be seen and the use of your collection will be guaranteed to increase.

"Books are for use."

- Ranganathan's First Law of Library Science.

PURPOSES AND BENEFITS OF WEEDING

Your ultimate goal should be to increase the use of your library's collection. You should work toward your goal by striving to meet the following objectives.

1. Improve the accuracy, reliability and currency of the collection.
2. Improve the attractiveness and appeal of the collection.
3. Reduce searching time.
4. Reduce housing costs.
5. Provide feedback for continued development of the collection.

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The task of developing a library collection is not limited to the function of only adding new materials to the collection for it is not your role to acquire and store a comprehensive collection of the wisdom and folly of all ages. Collection development is the ongoing process of improving the use and potential usefulness of your collection within the limits of your financial resources. The ultimate usefulness of your collection is dependent upon your ability to strike a balance between the quantity and quality of your material resources, and your ability to retrieve pertinent items and information from your collection for use by your patrons.

It is often much more practical to think about why an item should be kept in the collection than it is to determine why it should be discarded. Establish sound reasons for retaining items in your collection and weed the others ruthlessly.

Another practical method would be to apply your regular selection criteria to items on the shelves. Ask yourself, "If the library didn't have the item on hand, would it be a worthwhile purchase?"

You may often find that the item you've just discarded will answer the next reference question. Don't let such a possibility freeze you into inaction and prevent you from weeding. Sometimes it is much more preferable to admit that you lack an item or coverage in a subject area than it is to give a patron an item that is factually inaccurate or woefully obsolete.

Sometimes the person that selected an item finds it very difficult to discard that item if it hasn't circulated. Be careful that you are not keeping items on the shelf in an attempt to justify the original selection decision.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the subject of weeding. Most of the newer methods that have been developed acknowledge that weeding should be both a subjective and objective process.

On the subjective side, you must make some subjective decisions about what you think "should" be in your library's collection. For instance, should a medium sized public library have the complete works of Mark Twain...should it have a complete collection of the New England Journal of Medicine? Subjective decisions should be used to define your core collection and provide materials that you think your patrons will need.

On the objective side of the problem, you can employ objective criteria to identify the materials that your patrons want through a study of what they have borrowed in the past. Studies by Stanley J. Slote and others have concluded that among circulating materials 98% of all of the materials used by patrons in libraries were circulated within the past 3 years. 99% were used within the last 4 years. A total of only 15% to 25% of all of your materials are likely to be used again.

The ideal focus of an objective study would be on determining how long an item sits on the shelf without being used and how long an item is being kept by a patron when it circulates. Computerized circulation control can provide us with this data for weeding purposes.

What follows is a modified objective method of weeding with some sample objective criteria....

THE PROCESS

1. Familiarize yourself with the library's goals, objectives, avowed roles, selection policies, selection criteria, subject strengths and special collections.
2. Assemble bibliographies and reading lists of core works in major subject areas and authors of lasting popularity or value for use in the process.
3. Establish your general weeding criteria for all areas of your collection according to the age of items, circulation frequency, content and condition.

4. Review each item on the shelf according to weeding criteria and other selection tools, separating items recommended for withdrawal. A marker can be used to draw a line across the top of retained volumes to indicate they have been reviewed. Materials of permanent value can be marked in red.
6. Complete evaluation form for deselected items, place in volume and load cart.
7. Identify and maintain records of underdeveloped subject areas or areas of extreme popularity as the review process proceeds.
8. Proceed with recommended disposition.
9. Periodically repeat the process with special attention to those items that may have been in circulation during the previous review.

350 Government	15/X/MUSTY
370 Education	10/5/MUSTY
390 Etiquette, Customs	
Etiquette	10/5/MUSTY
Folklore, Customs	15/5/MUSTY
400 LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE	10/5/MUSTY
500 PURE SCIENCE	
510 Mathematics	15/5/MUSTY
570 Biology and Natural History	15/5/MUSTY
580 Botany	15/5/MUSTY
Other 500's	10/5/MUSTY
600 APPLIED SCIENCE	
610 Medicine	5/5/MUSTY
630 Agriculture	10/5/MUSTY
640 Home Economics	5/5/MUSTY
690 Manufacturing	10/5/MUSTY
Other 600's	5/5/MUSTY
700 ARTS AND RECREATIONS	
745 Crafts	15/5/MUSTY
770 Photography	10/5/MUSTY
Other 700's	15/X/MUSTY
800 LITERATURE	X/X/MUSTY
900 HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY	
910 Travel and Geography	

Guidebooks	5/5/MUSTY
Narratives	15/5/MUSTY
920 Biography	X/X/MUSTY
Other 900's	15/5/MUSTY
FIC FICTION	X/5/MUSTY
JUV JUVENILE - Use Adult Criteria	
VF VERTICAL FILE	5/5/MUSTY
COLLEGE CATALOGS	2/X/MUSTY
PERIODICALS AND NEWSPAPERS - Schedule retention list	
LOCAL HISTORY - Keep all	