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WEEDING

Weeding is as important to collection development as selection. Books which are in poor physical condition, out of date, inaccurate or rarely used and shelves which are overcrowded frustrate the public and lead to a general lack of credibility for the library.

Staff in small libraries need not see themselves as custodians of the printed word. With the present interlibrary loan system, there is access to virtually any material. For this reason, small libraries staff should view their collections as current, vital, primarily popular resources required by their communities.

As part of the on-going collection evaluation, material which meets certain criteria can be weeded from the collection. The result is an attractive collection which meets the needs of the community and is well used.

Why weed?

- to make effective use of available space
- to maintain reliability and credibility
- to give the library a fresh, inviting appearance
- to find items that need to be repaired or replaced
- to provide good library service to your community
- to increase circulation

Remember, an attractive collection circulates!

What not to weed

- local history
- out of print and still useful
- items necessary to maintain a balanced viewpoint on a particular subject



How to weed

- ❑ establish the criteria for weeding. Two examples are included in the appendixes of this *Sourcebook* section.
- ❑ establish a schedule for weeding. Weeding should be regarded as an ongoing process. If the library's collection has not been weeded in some time, the initial weeding should be a priority.

In accordance with the collection policy, if other staff are involved in weeding materials, the final decision to weed an item is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

The usual reasons for withdrawing an item are that it is:

- ❑ out-of-date
- ❑ unused
- ❑ damaged

Books that are dirty, torn, damaged or have pages missing are all candidates for withdrawal. When such a book is returned to the circulation desk, it should be set aside and discarded as soon as time permits. Rebinding is not recommended unless the item is of value to your collection and irreplaceable.

Books that date quickly such as travel guides, annuals and cumulations should be weeded on an established schedule. When a new edition is purchased, the oldest edition should be discarded. Incorrect information is often worse than no information.

Community expertise could be solicited when weeding specialized subjects. Local doctors, lawyers, science teachers, other patrons or staff with subject specialities can be asked to evaluate a specific portion of the collection. Items which do not become dated, such as cookbooks, literary criticism and some biographies can be kept as long as they are useful and in good condition.

The public exercises its own selection criteria through its usage of the collection. Check the last date the book circulated. If the book has not gone out in a specific time period (e.g. two or three years) consider it a candidate for withdrawal.



PROCESS FOR WITHDRAWAL

1. Remove book from collection.
2. Stamp the book “discard” in several places.
3. Pull the book card from the pocket.
4. Use the book card to pull the corresponding catalogue cards or delete the record from the library's database. This should be done as quickly and carefully as possible to keep the catalogue accurate.

Refer to the *Sourcebook* section called *The Catalogue* for more detailed instruction on withdrawing a card set. If the book was also entered into a regional database or union catalogue, send a shelf list card or a copy of your shelf list card marked with your library's name and stamped “discarded” to your cataloguing headquarters.

5. Stamp or cross out card to indicate discarded status.
6. Options for disposing of books
 - offer it to the Ontario Joint Fiction/Biography Reserve, a last copy collection of fiction and biography which is held at the Southern Ontario Library Service, Barrie office. Before sending the actual book, contact the Barrie office.
 - offer the book for sale or store for a book sale
 - throw it away

Most discards should not be considered suitable gifts for hospitals, seniors' homes or smaller libraries. If the book is inappropriate for this collection, it is inappropriate for another.

7. Keep a record of what needs to be reordered. The shelf list card should be used for this purpose.

When weeding and withdrawal become an integral part of collection development, both the quality and appearance of your collection will improve. Professionals from the Ontario Library Service staff are available to assist you.



The *Annual Survey of Public Libraries* requires that a count be done of the additions to the library collections and the holdings at the end of the year.

Before beginning to record any material acquired during the year or materials withdrawn from the collection, it is important to understand the distinction between “titles” and “volumes”, as explained in the instructions to the Annual Survey. The title is the unique name of the work. Volumes are physical items. For example, the 1988 edition of the *Canadian Encyclopedia* is one title and four volumes. If you had two copies of the book *Bolt* by Dick Francis, the statistics would show one title and two volumes. There will always be a greater or equal number of volumes than titles.

In the Annual Survey, you are asked for the number of catalogued print materials owned by the Library Board in English, French and other languages. The number of volumes and the number of titles acquired during the year and then the number of volumes and number of titles held at the end of the year. Other questions ask for the amount of catalogued titles which are reference material, the number of titles of magazines, newspapers and periodicals and the linear feet of uncatalogued material. (Sample 2 : Annual Survey of Public Libraries)

It is best to keep track of all acquisitions as they are processed. Record the number of titles and volumes acquired, total this at the end of the month, then do an annual summary. The totals which appear in the summary can be used for the Annual Survey.

In the same way, keep track of withdrawals as they are done. Withdrawals must be subtracted from the total holdings for the library. It is also necessary to keep these statistics, by number of titles, number of volumes and categorized by language. Examples of forms which could be used to record acquisitions and withdrawals in the library can be found in the samples. (Sample 3 : Forms to record acquisitions and withdrawals)

Segal, Joseph P. *Evaluating and weeding collections in small and medium-sized public libraries: The CREW method*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1980.

Slote, Stanley J. *Weeding library collections: Library weeding methods*, 3rd edition. Englewood, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 1989.

STATISTICS

REFERENCES



Appendix A

Ettlinger's 5 point WIDUS* deselection test

(*pronounced weed-us)

1. worn out
2. inappropriate
3. duplicated
4. uncirculated
5. superseded

One black mark : Question
Two black marks : Withdraw
Widus decision

Just apply successively the elements in the Widus scale. If the book is worn out, inappropriate, duplicated, uncirculated, this constitutes one strike against the book, and it is a possible reject. With two categories applicable, there are two strikes against it, and it becomes a probable reject.

Take one last look at it and decide. Three strikes and it's out.



Appendix B

The CREW guidelines for weeding your collection
(From *Evaluating and weeding collections in small and medium-sized public libraries*:

The Crew method. ALA, 1980.

The formulas given here for the various Dewey classes are rules of thumb based on professional opinions in the literature and practical experience. The formula in each case consists of three parts: 1) The first figure refers to the years since the book's latest copyright date (age of material in the book); 2) the second figure refers to the maximum permissible time without usage (in terms of years since its last recorded circulation); 3) the third refers to the presence of various negative factors, called MUSTY factors. For example, the formula "8/3/MUSTY" could be read: "Consider a book in this class for discard when its latest copyright is more than eight (8) years ago; and/or, when its last circulation was more than three (3) years ago; and/or, when it possesses one or more of the MUSTY factors." Most formulas include a "3" in the usage category and a MUSTY in the negative factors category. The figure in the age category varies considerably from subject to subject. If any one of the three factors is not applicable to a specific subject, the category is filled with an "X".

MUSTY is an easily remembered acronym for five negative factors which frequently ruin a book's usefulness and mark it for weeding.

- 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).
- Y = Your collection has no use for this book (irrelevant to the needs and interests of your community)

On the following pages are the CREW Guidelines by Dewey Class.

CREW Guidelines by Dewey Class

000 (General)

020 (Library Science)	10/3/MUSTY	
030 (Encyclopedias)	5/X/MUSTY	<i>Stagger replacement sets (e.g., replace <u>Britannica</u> in 1976, <u>World Book</u> in 1980, then a new <u>Britannica</u> in 1982); one new encyclopedia at least every ten years.</i>
other 000's	5/X/MUSTY	

100 (Philosophy and Psychology)

150 (Psychology)	10/3/MUSTY	<i>Try to keep abreast of popular topics.</i>
other 100's (Philosophy)	10/ <u>3</u> /MUSTY	<i>Value determined mainly by use.</i>

200 (Religion and Mythology)

<i>Try to have something up-to-date on each religion represented by a church, synagogue, or other assembly in your community.</i>	10/3/MUSTY	<i>Use 10/3/MUSTY except for areas of rapid change such as Roman Catholic and Episcopal liturgy and doctrine which are 5/3/MUSTY.</i>
	OR	

300 (Social Sciences)

See that controversial issues are represented from all views and that information is current, accurate, and fair.

310 (Almanacs, Year-books)	2/X/MUSTY	<i>Seldom of much use after two years; add one, discard one every year, to keep only last three years in the collection. All public libraries in Texas should have at least one general almanac and the <u>Texas Almanac</u>; need only last decennial census.</i>
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320 (Political Science) 5/3/MUSTY *For topical books; historical materials are judged more on the basis of use: 10/3/MUSTY.*

340 (Law) 10/X/MUSTY

350 (Government) 10/X/MUSTY *Or repeal or constitutional reform, whichever comes first.*

370 (Education) 10/3/MUSTY *Keep historical materials only if used. Discard all outdated theories; check with a teacher or principal if in doubt.*

390 (Etiquette, Customs)

Etiquette 5/3/MUSTY *Keep only basic, up-to-date titles.*

Folklore, customs 10/3/MUSTY

400 (Linguistics and Languages)

10/3/MUSTY *Discard old-fashioned and unappealing textbooks and school grammars. Need only stock dictionaries for languages being studied or spoken in your community.*

500 (Pure Sciences)

510 (Mathematics) 10/3/MUSTY

570 (General Biology and Natural History) 10/3/MUSTY

580 (Botany) 10/3/MUSTY

other 500's 5/3/MUSTY *But keep basic works of significant historical or literary value, such as Darwin's Origin of the Species, or Farraday's Chemical History of a Candle.*

600 (Applied Science)

610 (Medicine)	5/3/MUSTY	<i>Except Anatomy and Physiology which change very little: X/3/MUSTY.</i>
630 (Agriculture)	5/3/MUSTY	<i>Keep up-to-date; be sure to collect information on newest techniques and hybrids, if you serve farmers or ranchers. Keep <u>Yearbook of Agriculture</u> for last ten years, earlier if in demand.</i>
640 (Home Economics)	5/3/MUSTY	<i>Be strict with old sewing and grooming books in which styles change rapidly; however, keep cookbooks unless very little used.</i>
680 (Manufacture)	10/3/MUSTY	<i>Keep books on old clocks, guns, and toys since these items are often collected.</i>
other 600's	5/3/MUSTY	<i>Technology is making such rapid advances that any material over five years old is to be viewed with suspicion. One major exception: repair manuals for older cars and appliances should be kept as long as such items are generally kept in your community.</i>

700 (Arts and Recreation)

745 (Crafts)	X/3/MUSTY	<i>Retain basic technique books if well illustrated.</i>
770 (Photography)	<u>5</u> /3/MUSTY	<i>Check closely for outdated techniques and especially outdated equipment; if in doubt, check with local photography club or buffs.</i>
other 700's	X/X/MUSTY	<i>Keep all basic materials especially histories of art and music, until worn and unattractive.</i>

800 (Literature)

X/X/MUSTY

Keep basic materials, especially criticism of classic writers. Discard minor writers no longer read in the local schools, unless there is an established demand among non-students.

900 (History and Geography)

910 (Travel and
Geography)

5/3/MUSTY

For guidebooks such as the Fodor series and for descriptive or scientific geography.

10/3/MUSTY

For personal narratives of travel, unless of high literary or historical value.

other 900's

15/3/MUSTY

Main factors: demand, accuracy of facts, and fairness of interpretation. Discard personal narratives and war memoirs of World War II, the Korean War, and Indochina War, in favour of broader histories of these conflicts, unless the author is a local person, or the book is cited in a bibliography as outstanding in style or insight. Discard dated viewpoints, e.g., the McCarthy Era "World Communist Conspiracy" theory of modern history. Retain all Revolutionary War materials until the Bicentennial ends in 1983, since many papers will be required on the subject.

B (Biography)

X/3/MUSTY

Unless the person treated is of permanent interest or importance, such as a U.S. President, discard a biography as soon as demand lessens. This rule especially applies to ghost-written biographies of faddish celebrities. Poor quality biographies of major figures should be replaced with better ones, if funds permit. Biographies of outstanding literary value, such as Boswell's Life of Johnson, are to be kept until worn, without regard for the biographee's reputation.

F (Fiction)

X/2/MUSTY

Discard works no longer popular, especially second and third copies or old bestsellers. If a book deposit or branch are planned, you might store these for such a purpose. Retain works of durable demand and/or high literary merit; a good, non-topical, well-written novel appealing to universal concerns will continue to circulate at moderate rate for many years.

YA, J, and E Fiction

X/3/MUSTY

Discard children's and young adult fiction if the format and reading level are not appropriate to the current interest level of the book. Discard topical fiction on dated subjects; discard abridged or simplified classics in favour of the original; discard as many series books, particularly second and third copies, as possible.

J and E Non-Fiction

Use adult criteria, but look especially for inaccuracy and triviality which are common faults of over-simplified children's non-fiction.

Periodicals

(Including newspapers)	3/X/X	<i>Bind only those periodicals in constant use for research and listed in <u>Reader's Guide</u> and other indexes in your library. If financially feasible, buy microfilms of heavy-demand magazines. For the local newspaper, see section, "Local History." Clip other periodicals and newspapers sparingly for the vertical file before discarding.</i>
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Vertical File and Government Documents

Vertical File	1/2/MUSTY	<i>Weed the vertical file rigorously at least once a year. Keep only materials on topics of current interest on which no books yet exist. Often a book will be published on a subject within six months after the material is placed in the vertical file. <u>Date</u> all materials when added to the file.</i>
College Catalogs	<u>2/X/MUSTY</u>	<i>Keep current; keep only those catalogs from colleges of interest to students in your area and one or two universities of national importance.</i>
<u>Audiovisual materials</u>	WORST	<i><u>Worn out</u>, <u>Out of date</u>, <u>Rarely used</u>, <u>System headquarters can supply</u>, or <u>Trivial and faddish</u>. Since many media are costly, weeding of such materials, once acquired, must be done as carefully and cautiously as the initial selection and acquisition.</i>

Local History

X/X/X

Your library is also the logical archives of the community, and in many cases, of the county. Retail all books on the history and geography of the city and county; all local newspapers (on microfilm if possible); all memoirs of local figures; and all local city directories. Keep most books by local authors (if of any literary value); and some genealogies of important local families. Collect local photographs, playbills, and other ephemera of possible interest to future writers in your area. If possible, start an oral history program; the tapes thus produced, being unique, are not subject the WORST criteria. If local history materials, particularly unique or rare items, begin to wear or become soiled, make them non-circulating.