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Today's Changing Library: Pressures and Realities for Weeding the Collection

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Today's Changing Library: Pressures and Realities for Weeding the Collection

Why weeding is needed:

- Unused books take up space
 - Less room for variety of materials to support patron needs
 - Too many books make collection difficult to use
- Collection becomes overwhelming
 - Users don't find what they need**
 - Useful books are less accessible
- Crowded Shelves/space problems
 - Difficult to maintain orderly collection
 - Re-shelving takes longer
 - Books get lost more easily
 - Extra time to constantly shift books
- Outdated books
 - Information not up-to-date
 - Information erroneous
 - Unattractive collection discourages use
 - Unappealing books don't circulate**
 - Books in disrepair difficult to use

Why weeding isn't done:

- Reported statistics emphasize number of volumes library holds
- Staff time limited
 - Collection decisions need professional evaluation
 - Staff time needed to process deleted materials
- "Sacredness" of books
 - Public image
 - People revere books and expect libraries to "have everything"**
 - Discarding books gets bad press for the library
- Librarians are by nature collectors and preservers, not discarders
- Practical Problems
 - Weeding requires knowledge of clientele
 - Weeding requires knowledge of the subject area and collection
 - Weeding is time-consuming
 - Weeding is not fun
 - Weeding is easy to ignore
 - Weeding is crystal ball gazing
 - Weeding is subjective

To keep or not to keep: Aids to judgment

- Clear collection policy
- Agreement on library's role and purpose**
- Standards for subject area
 - Age of information acceptable
 - Authority of author/publisher
 - Depth of resources needed
- Lending to the Wider Community
- Collection agreements among libraries/Interlibrary lending
 - How many other libraries hold the item

Common weeding criteria

Condition/ Appearance

Preservation decision

How much use?

Does book still have valuable information?

Is book unique in some way?

Is book held widely

The most tattered books are usually the most used and need repaired, not weeded.

Duplicate copies

Easiest criteria to use with some exceptions

Some works of fiction/literature, philosophy, classics

Heavily used works

Need to consider periodicals/books replaced with electronic access

Keep hardcopy in storage

Depend on state repositories and large research libraries for print

Older editions

Can be easy decisions:

Textbooks in nursing, business, or engineering updated every 2-3 years

Ready-reference sources—directories, career books, etc.

Can be tricky decisions:

First edition written by "an expert in the field"/a "classic" but subsequent editions revised by others

What looks like an older edition may be

A run of serials, annual reviews, conference proceedings, etc.

A different book, written or compiled by someone else

An edited literary work by a different editor

A work with different illustrations

Art book containing different pieces of art

Collected essays containing different essays in each edition

Outdated or erroneous information

Judging a book's erroneous information may take time and research

In some areas obvious-- outdated methods of analysis, equipment that is no longer used, outdated medical procedures and treatments, etc.

In some fields may not have "**outdated**" information—old theories remain with new ones

Date of Publication

Method driven by accreditation standards and faculty

Wholesale weeding by date of publication is a tempting time-saver, but a poor indicator of quality

lasting value of the information

Needs of the discipline and use by related fields of study

Use/circulation statistics

Seems to be easy criteria --"**If it's not used, pitch it**"

Caveats--

Agreements/obligation as part of the larger library community

Specialized collection areas/strengths to be maintained

Donations accepted with "strings"