"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. Collections that go unweeded tend to be cluttered, unattractive, and unreliable informational resources."

Will Manley, "The Manley Arts: If I Called This Column ‘Weeding’, You Wouldn’t Read It“, Booklist 92, p. 1108
What is it?

- Process of selecting items in a library collection for *withdrawal* (removing an item from a library’s collection and removing the bibliographic record from the library’s catalog.)

OR

- Relocation to *storage* (transfer of lesser-used materials ... to restricted access areas within a library building or to a remote facility.)

Johnson, “Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management”, Glossary
Weeding can also be called:

- Pruning
- Thinning
- Culling
- Deselection
- Deaccession
- Relegation
- Deacquisition
- Retirement
- Reverse selection
- Negative Selection
- Book Stock Control
Why do we weed?

- Relevance
- Currency
- Appeal
- Circulation
- Accessibility
- Turnover Rate
- Space
- Cost
- Value of a Book
- Awareness
- Balance
- Feedback
Reasons to do it:

- It is a disservice to patrons to keep books that contain inaccurate or dated information.
- Weeding is a basic part of the collection development process.
- No library is large enough to keep everything.
- It makes it easier for people to find what they want.
- The way library materials look is important.
- It makes good economic sense.
- Unweeded collections often contain unacceptable stereotypes.
Excuses to not do it:

- I’m tearing down a collection.
- It’s sacrilege to throw out a book.
- It reflects badly if I weed a book I selected.
- A patron may want it some day.
- Quantity equals quality.
- I don’t know how.
- I was never taught.
- I don’t have time.
How to get started:

BEGIN BY GATHERING INFORMATION

- Library’s Mission
- Library’s Collection Goals
- Collection Development Plan
- Profile of the Community
- Usage Statistics
- School Book Lists
- Looking at Shelves
- Neighboring Libraries
- Interlibrary Loan Titles
- Purchasing Procedures
Most important things to know:

- ... the Library’s Mission
- ... the Library’s Collection Goals
- ... the Collection Development Plan

The mission, goals, and selection policy help to determine the weeding policy.
“A library should have established criteria, documented in a written policy, guiding weeding decisions. The library then has a measure of protection in pointing to a systematic plan for not only building but also managing its collection.”

When should we weed?

Weeding every year maintains the quality of the library.

Weeding can also be done:

- Continuously (on a day-to-day basis)
- Intermittently (throughout the year)
- Periodically (at regular intervals)
Recommendation:

The American Library Association suggests that 5% of the collection be weeded annually.

However, each library should ultimately follow the guidelines provided in their own collection policies.
How to weed:

Different Materials = Different Criteria
Weeding Fiction materials:

According to Merle Jacob, CPL Collection Development Director:

- **Reasons to weed**
  - Relevance, circulation, appeal

- **Reasons not to weed**
  - "a patron might need it some day"
  - It’s sacrilegious to weed a book
  - Lack of time

Weeding Fiction materials:

Getting started

Collect Internal Data
- Library Mission
- Collection development policy
- Usage statistics
- Shelf scan

Collect External Data
- Community profile
- School booklists/
  Book reviews
- Neighboring library holdings
- ILL titles
Weeding Fiction materials:

Action Plan for Weeding consists of:

- Staff and Administration involvement
- Scheduling weeding tasks
- Setting weeding criteria
- Establishing weeding procedures
Weeding Fiction materials:

As observed by Merle Jacob, CPL Collection Development Director:

- Your collection is a changing organism, so don’t allow it to be over-run by unneeded materials.
- Users have the right to know what is in the collection, so market materials that you do not weed.
Weeding Reference materials:

Maintaining a good reference collection is one of the most vital library services to serving users.

- Print reference materials (encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries, journals, handbooks, indexes, directories, etc.)
- Non-print reference materials (online databases and linked websites)

Weeding Reference materials:

Many of the same rules apply

Lauren Lampasone, Librarian for the New York Public Library suggests:

- Having a plan/policy
- Making a list of your core reference collection
- Staying focused
- Noting usage, reference works are tools
- Staying current
- Going paperless
- Break weeding tasks into small segments
- Letting go

Consider the advantages of free reference tools like Credo, Census.gov, or Mediline Plus, or subscription databases.
Weeding Children’s materials:

The CREW manual gives explicit instructions for weeding Children’s materials:

- Non-fiction: Since children might be lacking in critical eye for false-information, the same rules apply as weeding adult non-fiction.
- Juvenile Fiction: The main purpose for this collection is leisure.
  - Weed uncirculating materials
  - Weed duplicate copies of materials that have lost popularity
  - Replace worn-out materials that are still circulating

Weeding Young Adult Fiction Resources:

According to the CREW Manual:

- Teen readers prefer current, paperback titles
- Titles older than 5 years should be weeding unless they are still circulating
- Classic teen reads should be replaced in new-edition hardcover.
Weeding e-Books:

Although e-Books don’t take up shelf space, they are subject to many of the same weeding guidelines as the print-collection:

- Should be part of the library’s collection plan
- Criteria should be developed for this format
- e-Book weeding should be a scheduled, assigned task.
Some criteria for Weeding e-Books:

Why weed e-Books?

- Non-fiction
- Currency
- Topic coverage
- Usage
- Functionality of the e-Book format

Some criteria for Weeding e-Books:

Why weed e-Books?

- Fiction
  - Format not preferred
  - The book has become unpopular
  - A cluttered e-Book fiction collection can be seen just as unattractive as a print one.

Weeding Considerations for A/V:

How does weeding apply to:

- DVDs,
- videocassettes,
- Blu-Ray,
- CDs,
- Audiocassettes,
- Playaways®,
- and Computer or Gaming Software?
Weeding Considerations for A/V:

The answer:

The same considerations apply for A/V as for print sources!

...with some more things to consider
Weeding Considerations for A/V

Keep in mind your collection goals...

Materials used for leisure

- Weeding decisions based mainly on use, effectiveness of the format, and condition.

Materials used for information

- Weeding decisions based on effectiveness of the format, currency, coverage, and quality of content.
Weeding Considerations for A/V

Books in e-Format and other A/V materials will receive less reviews in reliable review sources as will print materials.

Some libraries will not allow borrowing of certain A/V materials through ILL.
The ever-present acronyms:

MUSTIE

CREW

WORST
MUSTIE

M isleading

Ugly

Superseded

Trivial

Irrelevant

Available Elsewhere
CREW
Continuous Review Evaluation Weeding
CREW

(Cataloging and Processing) CP

(SA) (Selection and Acquisition)

(CP) CR

(Circulation and Reference)

CREW

(Continuous Review Evaluation and Weeding)
CREWing Media - WORST

Worn out

Out-of-date

Rarely used

Supplied elsewhere

Trivial or faddish
Don’t:

- ... make your weeded books a problem for someone else.

- ... pile them up in the library entryway and create both an eyesore and a safety hazard.
Don’t:

- keep hundreds of weeded books in the attic or library basement just in case someone objects!

- bring hundreds of weeded items to the local landfill all at once unless you want the whole town discussing the weeding project on Saturday morning.
Do:

- ... investigate the possibility of recycling books.
- ... make weeding an ongoing process instead of the massive job you will have if you never weed.
Remember:

- All mistakes can be corrected so don’t panic.

- Market your collection so that books can be used and find their readers.

- Your library is a growing organism so keep weeding so that the "weeds" don’t take over and obscure the good stuff.
Keep repeating to yourself:

"I can’t keep it all. I’m not the Library of Congress."
Are some materials sacred?

- Materials with local history
- Materials written by local authors
- Materials with regional settings
- Special collections
- Beautifully illustrated or “special books”
- Classic titles
Green Weeding:

- Reuse
- Recycle
- Trade
- Donate
- Sell
- Destroy (dumpster discreetly)
Web Links:

Better World Books
B-Logistics
Book Rescue
Bookins
Bookmoooch
Books Through Bars
Paper Retriever Recycling
Prison Book Program
Prison Book Program Blog
Alternatives to the Trash:

The Information Desk At TU Delft Architecture Bibliotheek, The Netherlands
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More resources and links:

Please visit

http://valkyrie22.com/wp_weeding/
Weeding is essential to collection maintenance and the benefits are well worth the effort.
Some questions to ponder:

1) Why is weeding seen in such a negative light?
2) How can we as librarians make the job of weeding more tolerable and perhaps even enjoyable?
3) How can we involve staff in the weeding process?
4) What can we do to keep the public informed about weeding projects and how those projects might affect the library?
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