

# WHY WEED?

## Weeding Justification & Motivation

No library weeds as much as it should. Weeding the collection is equally important as other Collection Development tasks in maintaining an effective library. Constant attention to the condition of the collection as well as the information contained in the material is an essential part of the weeding process. Library users need to be exposed to books and other material that are in good to excellent condition and to information that is accurate and up to date.

- Space is saved on the shelf
- Space is saved in the database and searching becomes easier because outdated, unreliable material is eliminated
- Circulation increases because remaining items are visible and physically appealing
- Collection quality improves as outdated, unreliable information is eliminated, new material is purchased, missing items are replaced and weak subject areas are strengthened
- Librarians doing the weeding will gain a better understanding and knowledge of the area that is being weeded. New ideas and ways can be gleaned to promote and use the material via displays, book talks, etc.
- Better reference service results as staff discover new or forgotten resources
- More space is available for study areas and tables and chairs, resulting in a more attractive physical layout
- The reputation and usability of the collection is enhanced
- False or dangerous information is eliminated

### **Some Additional Considerations**

- Your library's budget
- Electronic resources (Internet, CD-Rom, Subscription databases)
- Interlibrary Loan or Statewide Resource Sharing
- The size of your collection (Main library, small branch, Special collections)
- Special circumstances (new building, renovation, space redesign or reconfiguration)

## **FACTORS THAT WORK AGAINST WEEDING**

- No time
- Fear of criticism. Fear of making mistakes when weeding
- Weeding can be a HUGE job
- No budget to replace weeded material
- Books are sacred
- Possessiveness
- Status of a large collection
- Fear that a weeded item may someday prove useful
- Reflects on the inadequacy of the selector
- Fear of negative public response
- Fear that a weeded book may someday become valuable



## **WEEDING GUIDELINES BY DEWEY CLASS**

**NOTE:** ( ) refers to the maximum useful shelf life -- number of years since the copyright date. Use ONLY as a very general guideline.

Generally speaking, when weeding, condition and accuracy are significant factors and special attention should be paid to currency. Consider online resources to obtain the most current information.

## General Reference Material

Almanacs, yearbooks, statistical publications (1-2) -- Replace when new volume is published, generally each year. Rarely useful after 2 years.

Atlases & maps (2-5) -- Replace as new editions are published.

Dictionaries -- Replace as new editions are published.

Directories -- Date VERY quickly. Replace as new editions are published.  
Rarely useful after new edition supersedes.  
Exception: City directories should be kept if possible as they are useful for genealogical research, but keep separate from current editions.

Encyclopedias (General) (3) -- Ideal to have a new set annually.

Encyclopedias (Special) -- Replace as content becomes dated.

Indexes -- Keep as long as library houses material to support. May keep some longer for ILL citations if there is room.

Newspapers -- Local decision. Consider online versions or microform.

Periodicals -- Keep no longer than the oldest index. Consider online versions.

Vertical & Pamphlet File -- Keep only current information not found in other available sources. Should be minimal (e.g. local information, road maps).

## 000's -- Generalities

004 - 006's (Computer books) (3) -- Usually a 3 year limit. Computer dictionaries, Internet and Web directories date within 1-2 years. Programming collections should reflect standards and practices most widely in use. Books on operating systems should be up-to-date, covering the latest versions and revisions. Materials on Internet security should be kept current.

\*Books should include the latest versions of software. Some older, general books on computers may be kept longer if there is strong community demand for superseded programs or previous releases of popular programs and systems.

010's (Bibliographies) (10) -- Seldom useful after 10 years. Follow retention guidelines for specific subject covered. Must have supporting material easily accessible. Customers prefer sources of information rather than sources of sources.

020's (Library & Information Science) -- Discard all that do not conform to current practice and technology. Retain histories according to usage.

Other 000's -- Retain according to usage and currency. Keep only current editions of materials containing directory information.

## **100's -- Philosophy & Psychology**

130's (Parapsychology) (10-15) -- Keep until worn or until interest wanes.

150's (Psychology) (5-8) -- Similar standards as medical material. Discard self-help and pop psychology after popularity has waned. Review for dated theories, pictures and concepts.

160 - 180's (Philosophy) (10-15) -- Retain according to usage. Must maintain a core collection. Ethics are often tied to scientific developments and should be weeded accordingly.

## 200's -- Religion

Keep diversity in collection. Major religions and community religious groups should be represented. Keep as current as possible and weed based on condition. (10)

200 - 210's (Overview of Religion & Philosophy of Religion) -- Keep most current edition of various overviews and philosophies.

220's (Bibles and Bible Commentaries) -- Strive for most current editions, versions and translations. Retain older versions according to usage.

230's (Christianity & Christian Theory) -- Retain major writers; include important contemporary writers from major religions and denominations.

240's (Christian Ethics & Personal Spirituality) -- Keep current, contemporary. Weed as popularity wanes.

250's (Preaching, Sermons, & Pastoral Work) -- Retain according to usage.

260's (Social Theology) -- Historical and current information needed. Retain according to usage.

270's (History of Christianity) -- Retain according to usage.

280's (Christian Denominations) (5-10) -- Information on denominations should be updated as new policies and doctrines are implemented.

290's (Other Religions) (10) -- Strive to have a good representation of other religions (including Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, etc., mythology & cults). Retain according to community interest.

## 300's -- Social Sciences

The 300's cover a wide range of topics so guidelines vary widely also.

300 - 319's (Sociology) (5-10) -- Retain according to usage and currency. Discard materials not of historical value. Keep balanced collection, especially on controversial topics.

310's (Statistics) (2) -- Should be kept current. Replace as new editions are published.

320's (Political Science) (5) -- Current events and government books should be up-to-date. Retain according to usage.

330's (Economics) (5) -- Be aware of radical changes in tax laws, statutes, or regulations.

\*Investment books (1-2) -- Must be kept current. Weed as interest wanes in a particular type of investment. "Classic" works (those of historical or theoretical value) may be retained according to usage.

\*Income tax guides (2) -- Keep current year plus one. Larger libraries may elect to keep older copies for seven years to meet IRS audit requirements.

\*Consumer books (5)

\*Home buying (5) -- Watch for changes in real estate law, financing, taxes.

340's (Law) (3) -- Imperative that this area be kept current. If a newer edition of a book comes out, older editions **MUST** be destroyed. If an item is listed as "out-of-print" then it is considered automatically obsolete and should be cancelled.

\*General guides with generic information (not State specific) (5) -- Check the specific laws of the State.

\*Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Pension material (3) -- Watch for government changes in laws; cost-of-living charts become outdated.

\*Retain historical overviews of the U. S. Constitution & Supreme Court. (10)

350's (Public Administration/Weaponry) (10) -- Replace as State and Federal administrations change or constitutional reforms occur. Material on weaponry may be retained according to usage.

360's (Social Services) (5) -- Keep current. Be aware of trends, changes in law. Look for outdated information and photos.

370's (Education) (10) -- Keep historical material, biographical information on past educators, etc. only if used. Discard material that has lost its relevancy or has unpopular or outdated theories. Books with teaching material, homeschooling ideas, and instructional texts should be weeded as new editions or updated material appears.

\*Current community teaching practices and methodologies should be represented and maintained. Methods of current reading practices (e.g. phonics, whole language) should be represented.

\*College catalogs, Annual school evaluations, Scholarship directories, etc. (1-2) -- Weed as new editions appear. Consider online resources.

380's (Commerce) (10) -- Look for up-to-date works on natural, environmental and economic resources.

390's (Customs, Folklore & Etiquette) (10) -- Retain standard works. Maintain a suitable level of diversity in cultures represented. Holiday books should be appealing to the eye, reflect current interest and community demand.

\*Etiquette (5) -- Keep only basic, up-to-date material.

## **400's -- Language**

Keep standard dictionaries and grammars in latest editions. Condition and usage determine retention (5-10).

Major foreign language dictionaries and grammars and any other languages being studied or spoken in the community should be represented.

Community demand for English As a Second Language (ESL), Adult New Reader (ANR) and literacy materials should be considered.

## 500's -- Sciences

Generally, an area of rapid and radical change. Carefully evaluate anything over 5 years old. Keep landmark, classic works, such as Einstein, Darwin, Newton, Audubon, etc. Replace worn copies of classics with new editions as needed. Replace old editions with the newest one. Cancel old editions if a new one is available, even if the new one is not purchased.

500's (Pure Sciences) (5-10) – Weed out-of-date and unsafe science fair material. Check for out of date illustrations.

510's (Mathematics) (10) – Mathematics does change, especially in teaching styles and course emphasis. Histories should be up to date. Discard fad materials and old technology such as “new math,” slide rules, finger math, etc.

520's (Astronomy) (3-5) – Planet, solar system and universe information is revised constantly through space technology and exploration. Currency is important. Stargazing changes less rapidly, but equipment is updated.

530 - 540's (Physics & Chemistry) (5) – Chemistry and Physics are areas that change rapidly. Check for the correct number of elements in the Periodic Table. Texts are frequently updated in these areas as chemistry and physics are being integrated into the study of other fields.

550's (5-10) – Check for updated theories and terms (e.g. plate tectonics rather than continental drift). Meteorology is now much more dependent on satellites and computers. Theories of climate change and evolve. Field guides should have color illustrations.

560's (5-10) – Watch for new developments and new theories (e.g. new dinosaur discoveries, new fossils, new classifications) Look for color illustrations and pictures.

570's (5-10) – Watch for new discoveries and theories, which are frequent in human biology and especially genetics.

580's (10) – Botany changes less rapidly. Check for dated appearance. Illustrations and photography should be in color, especially in field guides.

590's (5-10) – Watch for changes in classification, endangered status and animal ranges. Field guides should have color illustrations.

## 600's -- Technology, Applied Science

Generally, Technology is constantly evolving. Replace old editions with the newest ones.

Cancel old editions if a new one is available, even if the new one is not replaced. Check for dated illustrations and presentations.

600's (Technology/Applied Science) (5) – Keep histories of invention current. Update timelines. Check invention and patent rules for current legal content. (Much of this is now in the 340's). Technical drawing/drafting is largely computerized.

610's (Medicine) (5) -- Must be kept current and older material DESTROYED. Apply similar standards as Law. (Old medical information should not be given to the book sales.)

\*Diet and nutrition information and trends change rapidly and must be kept current. Discard fad diets after popularity has waned.

\*Material in fast-changing fields and areas of research (e. g. AIDS, genetics, cancer) (2)

\*Drug directories (1) -- Keep no more than current year + one. Consider various levels of information according to intended audience and community served (e.g. professional, consumer).

\*Histories of medicine and "classic" authors – retain for balance and according to usage.

\*Popular authors (e.g. Deepak Chopra, Andrew Weil, Bob Arnot, etc.) -- Keep until interest wanes.

620's (Engineering & Allied Operations) -- Keep repair manuals for older cars and appliances as long as there is demand and condition allows.

\*Electronics (2-3) – Currency is important. Electrical code is updated every 3 years. Know your community's standards and building code. PC upgrades must be current.

\*Engineering and Aerospace (5-10) -- Books should reflect current practice. Histories should be updated. Memoirs may be retained according to usage.

630's (Agriculture) (5-10) -- Keep current with gardening methods and products. Check for safety issues regarding use of pesticides and chemicals. Retain according to usage and condition. Look for color illustrations.

\*Veterinary medicine (5) -- Parallels human medicine and must be kept current. Animal training should be kept as use and popularity indicate. Be aware that breed standards change.

640's (Domestic Arts) (5) -- Cookbooks can be kept as long as use and condition warrant. Check for most up to date nutritional advice and food safety.

\*Sewing, make-up, hairstyling, and home remodeling books date quickly. Pay close attention to illustrations (e.g. currency, color).

\*Campground and lodging (3) -- material dates quickly.

\*Retirement planning guides (3-5) -- Check for outdated financial planning and legal information and places-rated guides.

\*Books on child-rearing must be kept current; have latest editions of classic titles.

650's (Business) (5) -- Business, career, and consumer information change constantly and must be kept up to date (2-5). Weed material with sexual or racial stereotypes.

\*Directories (1-2) -- Should be purchased yearly if possible.

\*Company and business histories (10) -- retain according to usage.

\*Business, management and marketing (5) -- Keep classic works, but watch trends and keep current. Resume books usually "self-weed" by excessive use.

\*Computing books on business applications (3).

660 - 690's (Manufacturing/Building) (5-10) -- Check for outmoded project books with dated photographs, old techniques, old products and materials, especially in areas like plumbing, heating, and construction where codes and laws change. Look for use of computers in manufacturing. Keep appliance repair material as usage demands. Keep collectibles as needed but update price guides.

## **700's -- Fine Arts**

Keep basic art and music material (especially histories) as long as use and condition warrant.

Watch for quality color illustrations. Replace with new editions as they become available (10).

Be aware of computer programs and their popularity and versions, especially in the areas of architecture, graphic arts, photography, music, and media.

720's (Architecture) (5-10) -- Collection should reflect current trends.

740's (Decorative Arts) (5-10) -- Craft and decorating books should be checked for outdated styles, equipment and unsafe practices. Weed for crafts that are no longer popular (e.g. macrame, leatherwork, IBM punchcard wreath).

\*Collectibles price guides (3) -- Should be current unless they can also be used as dictionaries, identification guides, or histories.

\*Stamp and coin catalogs (1-2) -- Should be replaced as new editions are published.

750's (Painting/Painters) (5-10) – Check for newer editions and more current information for painting, painters and painting instruction titles. Good quality color illustrations are recommended.

760's (Graphic Arts) (5-10) – Watch for out-dated techniques in printmaking and replace with current editions.

770's (Photography) (5-10) -- Check for outdated techniques and equipment.

780's (Music) (10) -- Retain according to usage. Collections of songs should be checked for completeness of material and condition. Volumes with pages missing should be mended, replaced or cancelled.

790's (Media/Film) (5-10) – Retain according to usage. Replace with newer editions and titles according to demand.

790's (Sports & Recreation) (10) -- Retain according to usage. Replace as rules change, training methods and equipment are updated, and/or interest wanes.

## **800's -- Literature**

Generally use and condition govern this area (10).

Keep basic surveys (10).

Criticism, theory or history (10) -- Replace if more authoritative works appear or new editions or perspectives are available.

Style manuals (3) -- Style manuals and books on writing and publishing should be the most recent editions. Know local demands. Make sure online citing is included.

Public speaking and speeches (5-10) -- Although principles may remain constant, style and technique change. Watch for dated examples.

Anthologies (10) -- Should support major indexes (e.g. Granger's, Ottemiller's) and be the most recent edition.

Classics (10) -- Italian, Greek, and Roman works may be more useful in newer translations.

Consider the usefulness and appeal of the various editions of such authors as Shakespeare and Chaucer.

## 900's -- History

Personal narratives and pictorials should be governed by interest and usage (10).

910's (Geography & Travel) (2-5) -- guide books, maps, atlases should be current. Watch for dated photographs.

Histories (10-15) -- Demand, accuracy, use and condition govern this area. Discard dated viewpoints or superseded histories. Replace as new editions are published. Be especially aware of primary sources for retention as they may not become available again. Use demand to weed.

\*City, county and local histories reflective of your community should be kept indefinitely.

Genealogy (10-15) -- Keep basic sources and texts and replace with newer editions as published. Maintain titles that reflect the ethnic and religious audiences served by the library.

\*Genealogical Address Books should be kept until replaced with newer edition.

\*Family histories: local decision. Consider donation to local genealogical or historical societies.

# Biographies

Interest, usage, and condition are primary determinants. Weed celebrity biographies as popularity wanes. Consider the reputation and popularity of the biographer. (10).

# Test Guides & Career Material

## CAREERS:

Collection should include major current career areas (e.g. healthcare, technology, business) with attention to community demand.

Currency is critical. Replace with new editions as they are published (3-5).

Weed material with sexual or racial stereotypes.

## TEST GUIDES:

Currency is critical. Weed outdated test materials.

Information compiled from:

CCPL COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT MANUAL and recommendations from CCPL Subject Specialists.

*THE CREW METHOD*, 1995, Texas State Library.

*GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY WEEDING GUIDELINES*, 1998.

# WHAT TO DO WITH A WEEDED BOOK

There are legal ramifications for material purchased with public funds.

- Destroy it
- Sell it
- Recycle it
- Store it OR Send it to a remote storage facility
- Give it to a classroom collection or another library
- Replace it
- Mend/Rebind it

# COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT - FICTION

## Questions to Ask Yourself

- What size collection should I have?
- What are the demographics/interests of my community?
- What is my library's mission statement?
- What is a good guideline for the number of multiple copies I should have of new, popular or classic titles?
- How much space will I allocate to "literature," genre fiction, new authors, or minority authors?
- What is a "classic"? What source(s) will I use to determine this?
- Should I have books by all the major authors?
- Should I have all the books by major authors?

# WEEDING - FICTION

## *Questions to Ask Yourself*

- Is this a genre I am unfamiliar with? Do I need to look up core authors?
- Is this type of novel still being asked for (serial killer, vampire etc.)?
- Is it up to date in style, setting, etc.?
- Is the author still writing?
- Is the book part of a series?
- Will this book circulate if I put it on display?
- If I am canceling a title based on condition, do I need to replace this book with a cleaner, more attractive copy?

## WEEDING FICTION

Fiction is one of the most difficult areas to weed since most fiction does not become outdated. Unlike other areas of the collection, such as medicine or law, a fiction book written twenty years ago can be just as important to a collection as one written in the current year.

For guidance in weeding fiction, keep in mind your library's mission statement and your community's demographics and interests. If your library has a collection development policy it should also provide guidance on the depth and size of your collection. When weeding a genre or section of the collection that may be unfamiliar to you, consult a source such as Genreflecting or Fiction Catalog to help determine what authors are considered popular or important. Frequently as an author becomes more popular, his or her older works will be more in demand (and more difficult to find).

Generally if a fiction book has not circulated in the last two years, it should be considered a candidate for weeding. For many libraries that time period could certainly be less depending the size of the branch and the collection. Replace a worn title with a new more attractive copy. Be careful, however, not to fall into the trap of weeding based solely on the condition of the book. This can be a quick way to "eyeball" the collection and get rid of unattractive books **but** the worn titles are the books that people are reading. If only worn titles are canceled, a collection may contain pristine copies of books no one wants to read. Go through the pristine titles also; they may have been sitting on the shelf a year (or more) without circulating. It is better to replace those popular worn out items and get rid of the titles that are in good shape but not read.

While fiction seldom goes out of date, certain types of stories lose popularity. A good example of this is spy fiction. Cold War spy stories are dated and, unless by a classic author (e.g. Graham Green, Alistair MacLean), titles are candidates for weeding.

Books in series require special consideration. Some series are sequential and are best when read in order (Janet Evanovich) and others are "stand alone"

series that feature repeat characters (Star Trek). The “stand alone” series can be weeded based on the same criteria used for general fiction. The sequential series presents a different set of issues. When a series is popular, try to retain the complete run, if possible. If only the first title in a series circulates, this indicates patrons are not interested in continuing to read the series. In this case the entire series should be considered for withdrawal. Also consider canceling the series if several titles are not circulating.

Consider keeping several copies of high demand titles, weeding them as popularity wanes.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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*Good Reading: A Guide for Serious Readers, 23rd ed.* Waldhorn, Arthur, ed. New York: R.R. Bowker, 1990.

*Outstanding Books for the College Bound.*  
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*The Reading List. Contemporary Fiction: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works of 110 Authors.* Edited by David Rubel. New York, New York: Henry Holt, 1998.

*Serving Readers.* Ted Balcolm, ed. Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin: Highsmith Press, 1997.

### Fiction-L listserv [www.webrary.org](http://www.webrary.org)

Hosted by Morton Grove Public Library. Located under the heading: Reader's Services. "Fiction-L is an electronic mailing list devoted to reader's advisory topics such as book discussions, reading clubs, booktalks, collection development issues, booklists and bibliographies, genre studies, and print and electronic reader's advisory resources. Fiction-L was developed for and by librarians dealing with fiction collections and requests. The discussion is not limited to fiction, but rather covers all aspects of reader's advisory for children, young adults and adults, including non-fiction materials."

Classics websites:

<http://www.ipl.org/div/farq/classicsFARQ.html>

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*Cuyahoga County Public Library Appendix L  
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**WEEDING SLIP**

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ INITIALS: \_\_\_\_\_

**REASON FOR ACTION:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Duplicate copy
- \_\_\_\_\_ Newer edition on shelf
- \_\_\_\_\_ Out-of-date C: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ugly, Musty
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not on core list

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Mend/New Cover
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discard
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consider replacing or new edition

**STAFF COMMENTS: (use initials)**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep, used in \_\_\_\_\_ class
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep, local author/interest
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep, in \_\_\_\_\_ index/PLC
- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, replace subject area
- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, replace title
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discard/weed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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- \_\_\_\_\_