Feel the Need to Weed: Library Weeding Basics

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http://www.booklistonline.com/corner-shelf
Why do we need to weed?

• Shelf space
• Easier to browse
• Makes collection look better
• Collection Development – what do you have, what do you need?
• Purge outdated materials
• We are libraries, not museums

Why is it so hard to weed?

• That’s taxpayer money!
• Personal relationship if you bought this book
• Books are valuable!
• Will it look bad to have empty shelves?
• This is someone’s favorite book!
So, how do I get over all that?

- It’s more of a waste of taxpayer dollars to keep outdated or nasty books on the shelf
- Think of your personal responsibility to the collection as a whole
- But remember, this is the library’s collection, not your collection
- Keep your community informed
- ILL can get someone their favorite book…

When to Weed?

Ideally, it’s an ongoing process:
- Reduces number of materials withdrawn at one time
- Keeps community happy

Weeding projects needed when:
- Shelf space becomes impossible to navigate
- Patrons complain about condition of materials/lack of current information
Every teen wants to read this one!

Or these. Pretty sure I checked these out when I was in 4th grade.
Sure, not much has changed about the way we play tennis, but…

How to Weed?

• Have a solid collection development policy in place

• Use lists like the C.R.E.W. method:

  MUSTIE
  M= Misleading -factually inaccurate
  U= Ugly -beyond mending or rebinding
  S= Superseded -by a new edition or by a much better book on the subject
  T= Trivial -of no discernible literary or scientific merit
  I= Irrelevant to the needs and interests of the library's community
  E= Elsewhere -the material is easily obtainable from another library
The phone on the cover is the latest and greatest technology, according to the book. Touch Tone is the wave of the future!

How to Weed? cont.

- Reports are your best friend! Your choice:
  - Last checkout date (pick a length of time)
  - Age of item
  - Number of checkouts
- Looks alone
  - Rips, smells, dog-eared, stained, etc. Who wants to check out a nasty book?
- Multiple copies?
  - Do you really have room?
  - Has the interest waned yet?
Finally weeded in 2012. Purchased in 1991, had never been checked out. (Not to mention completely sexist…)

How to Weed? cont.

• Take a good hard look at the quantity and quality of what you have in that area

• Community interest/timeliness
  • A fad that has passed?
  • A school assignment that’s no longer valid?
  • An author that has seen their heyday come and gone?
To Weed or Not To Weed? Checklist of Weeding Factors

Date/Author
Condition
Any more copies?
Circulation stats
Expense to replace
Relevance to curriculum
Similar resources?
Reading level
Illustrations
Current interest?
Visual appeal

Content Considerations

Outdated and obsolete (computers, law, science, space, health, technology, travel, countries (juvenile), endangered animals)

Trivial subject matter (outdated popular culture)

Inaccurate or false information

Unused sets of books (keep used volumes if they meet local needs)

Repetitious series

Superseded editions

Materials that contain bias, racist, sexist terminology or views

Unneeded duplicates
Questionable items

- Would I be embarrassed if the library didn’t own it?
- If I put this on display, would it go out?
- Does the book fit the needs of my community?
- Does it have local interest?
- Is the author still living and writing?

Quick Tips for Painless Weeding

Do it daily. Scan your shelves. Alert your shelvers.

Save your ten worst weeds so you can show them if someone challenges your weeding.

Need a place to start? Try the computer books. Or Biographies.
Tips for Youth/YA Collections

• Know your collection and how it is used
• Sight weed fiction collections at least every other year
• Become familiar with the top non-fiction authors
• Embrace the Murphy’s Law of weeding

Special Considerations in Youth/YA

• Quality of photos/illustrations
• Award winners
• Perennial homework assignments
• Does this book fulfill Common Core needs?
• Is this a series whose time has come and gone?
• Be ruthless with YA fiction – currency is KEY
Bad books happen to good authors

A note on Public Perception

- ALWAYS keep the whole staff informed so they can alleviate any patron anxieties
- Reassure them you are *replacing* materials as well
- Let them know where the materials went
Questions?