



## **Collection Development - Guidelines for Weeding**

### **Why Weed?**

Weeding should be done regularly because it not only keeps our collections timely and relevant, but it actually boosts circulation. It seems counterintuitive, but it's true. Overcrowded shelves are a deterrent to finding what you're looking for if you're a browser or library user who isn't as familiar with the Dewey Decimal Classification system. Also, some NF categories like health and science change frequently, and it can be harmful to keep outdated information.

### **LET'S START AT THE BEGINNING: Why is it important that libraries weed?**

(from the [first chapter](#) of *The weeding handbook : a shelf-by-shelf guide* by Rebecca Vnuk, available from SELCO Professional Collection.)

### **To free up shelf space**

- In most libraries, the shelves should ideally be 75 to 85 percent full. This makes the items much easier to browse, makes it easier to shelve, and, in general, makes the collection look better. But it's not only looks that matter-it also saves the patron time and frustration. When outdated materials are removed, then newer, more frequently used materials become clearly visible on the shelves. Who wants to search through a dozen outdated or ragged books to find the one they are really looking for?

### **Collection development best practices**

- How better to get a good handle on what you already own and what areas you need to beef up than to weed on a regular basis? It can be invaluable to look at and touch every book in your collection. Weeding increases knowledge of the collection as a whole. The selector can see firsthand what materials are damaged, need updating, or need to be replaced, and also get a sense for what is used

(and more importantly when it comes to weeding, what isn't used) by the patrons.

### **To purge outdated materials**

- Particularly in nonfiction and in reference, there is a real need to have timely information on your shelves. Remember that your library is not a museum-there is simply not enough space (nor is it a library's mission) to be a warehouse of unused books. It's also very important to remember that reference material has an expiration date!

### **Policy:**

If you don't already have a collection development policy, you should consider putting that together first. Reach out to our Public Library Consultant, Steve Harsin ([sharsin@selco.info](mailto:sharsin@selco.info)), or for schools, our SELS Consultant, Ashley Dress ([andress@selco.info](mailto:andress@selco.info)).

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### **Start here:**

Quick and Dirty weeding by Dewey numbers: [Dewey Weeding](#)

### **Method:**

Libraries likely use the CREW method: **C**ontinuous **R**evue, **E**valuation, and **W**eeding (Access complete method: [Texas State Libraries and Archives Commission](#))

**CREW** gives guidelines for currency of subject matter and circulation. General rule for publics: 80% of what has not circulated in 3-5 years can be discarded.

Three part formula:

- Years since latest copyright date
- Maximum permissible time without usage
- MUSTIE (another acronym)

### **MUSTIE:**

- **Misleading:** Factually inaccurate (or outdated).
- **Ugly:** Worn beyond mending/rebinding. (If you wouldn't want to touch it, nobody else would either).

- **Superseded:** Buy a new edition or a much better book on the subject.
  - **Trivial:** No literary or scientific merit.
  - **Irrelevant:** Not useful to your community's interest.
  - **Elsewhere:** Material you can get through interlibrary loan (or through online databases).
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### **Options for disposing of weeded materials:**

One caveat, though, is to avoid sending outdated medical and health and science books, those should just be discarded.

- Friends of the Library local book sales
- Resources for online book sales: [from ALA](#)
- Resellers Better World Books  
<https://services.betterworldbooks.com/libraries/>
- Remove the covers and recycle the pages
- Offer teachers any discards
- Offer discards to local paper artists

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