

Weeding

June 2014

2013 – 2014 CARLI Collection Management Committee:

Kim Fournier, Chair, William Rainey Harper College

Jeffry Archer, University of Chicago

Chad Buckley, Illinois State University

Pam Hackbart-Dean, Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Jane Hopkins, Greenville College

Nichole Novak, Illinois Institute of Technology

Susan Prokopeak, Joliet Junior College

John Small, North Central College

Todd Spires, Bradley University

Lynn Wiley, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Elizabeth Clarage, CARLI

Jen Masciadrelli, CARLI

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CARLI Collections Management Committee (CMC) white paper 2014 details best practices in de-accessioning or “weeding” library print materials. The paper, based on a series of webinars offered in the spring of 2014, provides a summary of the real situations and approaches used to complete successful weeding projects. The projects included long-term and large-scale collection projects and short-term weeding projects with special collections. Some of the webinar highlights include discussions of the philosophy of weeding, best practices and lessons learned. Relocation and storage of materials are discussed, as is the importance of developing formal weeding procedures. Communication throughout the process was regarded as singularly important by all of the webinar speakers.

While regular systematic weeding is performed to stimulate circulation, save space, enhance appeal, and respond to curricular needs, large-scale academic weeding projects often stem from initiatives such as transitioning to electronic collections and increasing student seating. Regardless of the weeding impetus, planning, pacing and open communication with all constituents, both in and outside of the library, are advised. Information-sharing both smooths the transitions that often accompany collection reconfiguration and aids in the completion of the weeding process by highlighting potential areas of concern and offering collaborative opportunities which create efficiencies of effort.

Certainly, there are issues that discourage weeding: a library’s emphasis on numbers, time constraints, sanctity of the collection, etc. Opinions on weeding have always been, and will remain, divided and disputed. Determining the right balance between access and ownership is a challenge for all academic libraries—size, mission and constituents aside. This annual report conveys information relayed in the CMC webinar series offered in the spring of 2014. Librarians with varied experiences weeding dissimilar collections were approached and asked to share from those undertakings. The webinars can be viewed here:

<http://www.carli.illinois.edu/products-services/collections-management/collections-webinars>.

The CARLI Collections Management Committee (CMC) white paper details best practices in de-accessioning or “weeding” library materials. Highlights include relocation and storage of materials and the importance of communication throughout the process. The white paper conveys information relayed in the CMC webinar series offered in the spring of 2014, with the committee’s feedback expressed throughout. The webinars can be viewed here: <http://www.carli.illinois.edu/products-services/collections-management/collections-webinars>.

Certainly, there are issues that discourage weeding: a library’s emphasis on numbers, time constraints, sanctity of the collection, etc. While regular systematic weeding is performed to stimulate circulation, save space, enhance appeal, and respond to curricular needs, large-scale academic weeding projects often stem from initiatives such as transitioning to electronic holdings and increasing student seating. Regardless of the weeding impetus, planning, pacing and open communication with all constituents, both in and outside of the library, are advised.

The first webinar, ***Weeding: An Overview***, laid the foundation for best practices and provided supporting arguments for regular weeding. The webinar described the philosophy of weeding, emphasizing how weeding fits into the collection development cycle. Subjects covered included workflow, weeding criteria and disposal.

Dr. Pamela Thomas of Illinois Central College (ICC) specifically discussed a six-year weeding project to remove over 53,000 titles. Before initiating a weeding project one must *know* a few things: 1) the collection, 2) the collection development policy, 3) how the collection supports the academic courses and programs, and 4) what you collect and what you do not collect—for example, textbooks, popular literature or graphic novels. Dr. Thomas emphasized creating a formal weeding procedure.

Using the CREW guidelines was suggested:

CREW in Ten Steps

1. Make weeding a part of policy
2. Gather usage statistics of your library's collection
3. Build weeding into the year's work calendar

4. Gather the following materials on a book truck at the shelves to be analyzed
5. Study the area you will be weeding as a whole
6. Inventory the library's holdings
7. Check the pulled books against any standard indexes and bibliographic resources in the library's reference collection or in databases available to patrons
8. Treat the books according to their slips: Bindery, Mending, Discard, Replacement, Recycling
9. Replacement checking and ordering
10. Set up displays for low circulating, high quality books that would benefit from exposure.

Illinois academic libraries should keep in mind the CARLI last copy project. When deleting from OCLC, if there are no other holdings by CARLI member libraries, said library should set the book aside and fill out the CARLI last copy form. Some libraries chose to send discards to Better World Books or Discover Books. Academic libraries at state institutions do have the option of selling their weeded materials; see Illinois Public Act 096-0498. "Revenues generated from the sale of withdrawn items shall be retained by the agency in a separate account to be used solely for the purchase of library materials."

Connie Lee, Technical Services Manager at Illinois College, reported on a weeding project that was driven by overcrowded shelving. Illinois College's Schewe Library did not have a formal weeding process or policy. Damaged books, when brought to the attention of the Circulation staff, were weeded. Also, lost items were marked as such and subsequently withdrawn. What grew out of this was a weeding philosophy that looked at condition, space needs, user needs, and usage, as well as educational objectives, support for the curriculum, permanence, timeliness, accuracy, readability, etc.

Like many libraries, Illinois College started weeding by removing print and microfilm holdings that were duplicated online (PDF) in collections such as JSTOR, EbscoHost and the HathiTrust. Discarded materials were placed on faculty review shelves that hold up to 500 books. The library emails faculty, allowing a 4-week review period, prior to withdrawal. Initially a 2-year window on circulation usage and a 5-year window from the publication date were set. Later, this criterion was changed to 6-years since the item's acquisition, publication date or circulation date.

There are many CARLI created queries, (with location, call number, historical checkouts, browses, etc.) to help identify books that could be pulled from the collection. She shared ILC's workflow withdrawal process, noting that last-copy OCLC holdings should be double checked against I-Share holdings—as there may be copies in I-Share not displaying in OCLC.

Bryan Deziel, Project Assistant at the Rebecca Crown Library at Dominican University reported on a non-traditional weeding project. The weeding review process began by asking some questions: What are these items? What project did they come from? Why were they pulled from the shelves? Are they duplicates? Are they in the catalog? Why were they pulled in the first place? What criteria should I to use to retain these items? There was an absence of statistics regarding the usage of these items. Half of the items were not in the catalog. Others were sitting on a shelf that was not accessible to patrons.

The 600-700 items in question were divided into six units based on these categories: 1) duplicates, 2) theses, 3) children's, 4) cataloging, 5) school media, and 6) miscellany. He created an Excel spreadsheet and determined the number of holdings in I-Share and OCLC. He reached out to Library Science faculty and worked with them to determine the historical importance and research significance of the items. During the final review of items, the best duplicate copy was kept, items that fit within personal research specialty were offered to faculty, and items were offered to libraries outside of IL. Depending on the content and condition items were offered to Better World Books, the library's giveaway table, or recycled.

There may be other factors to consider that require cross-departmental communication. With the Dominican University project, many government documents were among the pre-weeded items. Dominican is a selected depository in the federal depository library program. Their government documents are subject to a separate retention schedule and de-accession process. Additionally, a government documents weeding project was underway, which required awareness and communication with that department. Among the items initially slated for de-accession were critical items of local historical and financial importance of the Dominican order or Dominican sisters. Furthermore Dominican has had a library school for over 80 years. It was

important to retain any books that were published by former library science faculty members. The items were looked over by the archivist; anything that pertained to Dominican or Rosary College was retained. Items that were at risk for theft or vandalism were moved to special collections.

The second webinar, ***Weeding: Communication and Outreach***, was held March 26 with presenters Dr. Pamela Thomas, Technical Services Librarian, Illinois Central College and Chad Buckley, Head of Collection Development, Milner Library, Illinois State University. Emphasis was on the importance of communication with constituents both in and outside the library, planning, and training. Lessons learned, from both successful and less than successful projects were discussed.

Dr. Pamela Thomas, Technical Services Librarian, Illinois Central College, reiterated that ICC has a 5-year weeding process. At ICC they rely heavily on the sharing of spreadsheets over email with faculty to make decisions on what to de-accession; this is their greatest form of communication and outreach. Communication might start with an email or phone call, or grow organically from relationships built via library instruction and/or embedded classes. Some faculty members decide to participate in a physical review of collections, while others prefer to mark up spreadsheets. Regardless, some faculty will never respond, or will take several notifications to respond. After a final organization of the spreadsheets, student workers pull the books. Dr. Thomas emphasized the importance of replacing outdated materials with new materials, and not simply withdrawing. Clear communication is vital. Make sure you are only withdrawing what really should go.

Chad Buckley, Head of Collections at Illinois State University's Milner Library, discussed a one-time weeding project, noting that good communication is essential. ISU's Milner Library is a medium-sized academic library and the central library for the entire institution—which is mostly undergraduate, with some graduate programs. In the summer of 2011, the former dean decided to create a cultural area in the library and increase student seating. This would require the removal of approximately 1/3 to 1/2 of the collection on the targeted 3rd floor

which houses the Library of Congress call number ranges A through F. The proposal was to move items to storage, rather than discard, unless items were superseded or outdated directories. Bound periodicals with stable online versions were removed in order to spare monographs as much as possible. Monographs with zero circulations were targeted first; eventually monographs with five or fewer circulation were examined. Publication date was examined as a secondary factor to usage. The goal was set at moving 38,000 volumes to storage. Some general issues encountered during this project included:

- There was little internal discussion about the need for a cultural area and/or on which floor the cultural area should reside.
- There was a lack of communication with the affected teaching faculty, and the timing of the weeding hindered communication, since many faculty were not available during summer months. Some items with zero circulations had only just recently been added to the collection and hadn't had the chance to circulate.
- Some monographic sets were split since weeding was based primarily on circulation figures.
- Active serial runs were inadvertently moved to storage.

Things to keep in mind when weeding are to:

- Plan extensively and be sure to allow time for discussions both within and outside the library. Make sure the proposed weeding fits into the library's identified priorities.
- Knowing the collection's history is also important. If the library has recently weeded, one may not need to weed again too soon. One needs to examine how past weeding projects fit with the latest project. It is very beneficial to recognize past weeding projects and allow librarians, staff and faculty time to recover between weeding projects to avoid burnout.
- It is also critical to communicate early in the weeding process. Give faculty input into the criteria used for weeding and don't wait until weeding is already underway. Delaying communication can result in having to do extensive damage control.
- Being open and transparent is important. One doesn't want faculty to think the library is being secretive and trying to avoid scrutiny. Consult faculty early and often, as far in advance as possible. Listen to their concerns and adjust. Trust faculty. Treat them as partners. (If they like your process, they may not want to be involved so closely.) Be honest and don't sugarcoat things. Don't say things just to justify what you are doing or try to minimize the impact on your users. Tell faculty what's really going on and work with them.

- Staying flexible is a key strategy. While it's good to begin with specific criteria for weeding (like publication dates or circulation figures), it's important to be flexible in allowing departures from those criteria based on the judgment of selectors or faculty participating in the review process. Disciplinary differences also need to be recognized when selecting those criteria. If problems arise with the criteria, be willing to tweak those or go back to the drawing board and try a different approach. Finally, if possible, it's beneficial to be willing to return materials to the stacks if requests are made by faculty or on the basis of a set number of subsequent circulations.
- Not rushing is important as well. Allowing external factors like movers' schedules to drive the process can result in mistakes, poor decision making, and inadequate communication among all parties. External factors should be secondary and scheduled based on when they fit into your overall weeding plan. Make sure your timeline allows for adequate communication with all constituencies as well as review of materials slated to be weeded. Be ready to adjust workflows. For example, in technical services one might need time to recruit additional staff.

Addressing these concerns and issues well in advance of a major weeding project can prevent loss of trust within and outside the library. Weeding can proceed much more smoothly given adequate planning, communication, openness, and flexibility.

The third webinar, ***Weeding: Special Collections and Library Reference Collections***, was held April 25 with presenters Matt Gorzalski, University Archivist, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, David W. Bottorff, Head of Collection Management, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, and William A. McHugh, Principal Bibliographer, Coordinator for General and Interdisciplinary Services, and Reference Collection Management Librarian, and Geoffrey Morse, Coordinator for Humanities and Social Sciences, both from Northwestern University Library. The presenters shared that along with traditional weeding projects the additional considerations that should be considered when working with special collections and identifiable collections, such as a reference collection.

Weeding Special Collections and the Need for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning

In Special Collections, weeding is considered part of the accessioning and processing stage of managing collections. We weed our collections because it saves space and resources, improves access to materials and reduces legal liabilities for the institution. Suggestions for weeding collections include:

- Any materials that are not deemed of permanent value should be discarded.
- Be aware of potentially sensitive materials including personal financial materials, social security numbers, FERPA, HIPAA and things of very personal in nature
- Retain no more than 2 to 3 copies of any item in the collection
- Establish guidelines of categories to consider weeding

In addition to weeding within individual collections, Special Collections advocate for the reappraisal and possible deaccessioning of all special collections. *Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning* is a standard established by the Society of American Archivists in 2012. These *Guidelines* establish a step-by-step approach to reappraisal and deaccessioning in archival repositories and outlines general steps, problems, and solutions yielding responsible and ethical reappraisal and deaccessioning decisions. They are available at:

<http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/GuidelinesForReappraisalAndDeaccessioning-May2012.pdf>

Weeding Library Reference Collections

The goal for weeding reference collections is to make these materials discoverable and accessible at all times. Overall suggestions for weeding library reference collections include the following:

- Establish principles to guide project and address what is meant by reference collection and types of materials
- Sample collections and learn if there is:
 - an electronic equivalent of item
 - or is available in *Guide to Reference* (<http://www.guidetoreference.org/HomePage.aspx>)
- Conduct an assessment of students and faculty on useful resources
 - Prioritize collections
 - Level 1: Essential to stay in reference collection
 - Level 2: Desirable to stay in reference collection
 - Level 3: Should leave in reference collection
 - Level 4: Priority to leave; probably should have been sent away earlier
- Weeding should be collaborative decisions between subject specialists, reference librarians, students, faculty and administration if possible
 - Identify candidates to be weeded from collection

- Create list and distribute to appropriate individuals
- Move dated or less used reference materials to the general collections.
 - Work with Cataloging to update information
 - Work with stacks management to include these materials in general stacks

Lessons learned:

- Have a workflow in place on how to undertake a weeding project and document/track all decisions made during the processing
- Build in flexibility for making these decisions
- Leverage technology—such as using scanners in the process
- Plan for change (decisions may need to be reconsidered) and document these alternations
- Prepare for mistakes (they happen to everyone)
- Build in quality control and plan for clean-up once project completed (there will probably be inconsistencies)

APPENDIX: Weeding / Deaccessioning Policies– a sample from CARLI Members

Augustana College

<http://www.augustana.edu/Documents/Library/CollectionManagementPolicy.pdf>

Section 5, “Circulating Book Collection,” identifies the policies for adding and removing titles from the collection.

Bradley University

<http://www.bradley.edu/academic/lib/aboutus/policies/colldev.dot>

Section X, “Collection Maintenance & Evaluation,” discusses removing items from the collection.

College of DuPage

<http://codlrc.org/policies/collection>

“Deselection (Weeding),” identifies the considerations for weeding.

Illinois Institute of Technology

http://library.iit.edu/policies/CDP_20110811a.pdf

Section V, “Deselection Policy,” identifies criteria for weeding both circulating and reference collections.

Millikin University

https://www.millikin.edu/staley/services/collectiondevelopment/Documents/Collection_Development_Policy2013.doc

Section “De-selection (weeding),” identifies reasons for the removal of materials from the collection.

Northern Illinois University

<http://www.ulib.niu.edu/Policies/collectiondevpolicy.cfm>

<http://www.ulib.niu.edu/Policies/weedpolicy.cfm>

Mentions “Weeding and Storage,” in their Collection Development Policy and identifies specific materials within their Withdrawal Policy.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

<http://www.lib.siu.edu/withdrawal-policy>

Although the library does not have a routine process for de-selection, their withdrawal policy identifies their guidelines for removing items from their collection.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

<http://www.library.illinois.edu/administration/collections/policies/WithdrawalPolicyandProcedure.html>

The Library Withdrawal Policy and Procedure document identifies the principles, procedures, and disposition of removing library materials from the collection.