

Wadleigh Memorial Library WEEDING POLICY & PROCEDURES

Policy Overview

Weeding the collections is as vital a procedure as adding to the collections. The goal of consistent and routine weeding is to ensure that the collection remains useful and relevant to the community. Each item, through its quality, reliability, current usefulness and appearance must contribute to the reliability, reputation, and attractiveness of the Library. Weeding should be done without bias by individuals whose personal preferences or interests will not dominate their work. Librarians are expected to include in the collection, when available, materials that reflect all sides of controversial issues. Withdrawn materials in good condition will be disposed of in a responsible manner by library book sales to the community or through appropriate redistribution centers.

Responsibility for the Collection

Librarians are responsible for judging the needs of their collection and community. Final authority for collection development and weeding policies rests with the Library Board of Trustees. They have delegated the responsibility of implementing this policy to the Library Director who may in turn delegate specific areas to various staff members.

Weeding Criteria

General Considerations

Every title requires individual judgment. Each book is considered from the standpoint of its value to the community as well as in relation to other books on the shelf. Materials are candidates for weeding if they are factually inaccurate or so out of date they don't include current information, worn or damaged beyond mending or rebinding, superseded by a new edition or a better book on the subject, of no discernible literary or scientific merit, irrelevant to the needs of the community and/or unused by our patrons. Duplicate titles no longer in demand should be withdrawn. The availability of materials through interlibrary loan allows books of limited appeal to be weeded and space given to more useful material. Generally speaking, items which have not circulated in 3-5 years should be weeded—exceptions being works of historical or literary value and unique or singular titles. See below for more specific criteria.

000s: General

Almanacs (may also be in 300s) and books on computers are seldom useful after 3 years. Replace at least one set of encyclopedias every 5 years. Circulate older sets for no more than 8 years.

100s: Philosophy & Psychology

Popular psychology and self-help books (may also be in the 600s) quickly become outdated. More scholarly works on psychology should be replaced after 5-8 years.

200s: Religion & Mythology

The collection should reflect the interests of the community. Try to have something current on each of the major religions. Shelf life is generally 10 years except for areas of rapid change. Books on mythology may be kept indefinitely unless in poor condition.

300s: Social Sciences

Circulate older volumes of almanacs no more than 3-5 years. Law, government, and education materials are often used for school reports and debates so they may have some historical value; otherwise they should be replaced after 10 years. It is very important, however, to remove outdated statute information. Books on finance, college guides, job guides, and educational testing books become outdated quickly; replace every 3-5 years. Be sure the collection is balanced and current—especially for controversial topics.

400s: Languages

Foreign language and ESOL materials can wear out quickly and may need frequent replacement. It is only necessary to keep dictionaries and grammar instruction for languages spoken or studied in our geographic area.

500s: Pure Sciences

Basic, historical works on science (ex. Darwin's *Origin of Species*) should be retained indefinitely unless in poor condition. Mathematics, general biology, natural history, and botany books have a shelf life of 10 years but other sciences may be dated much sooner as new research supersedes earlier data. Continuously update new scientific materials and withdraw outdated volumes.

600s: Applied Sciences & Technology

Outdated medical materials can be misleading and even dangerous. With the exception of anatomy and physiology, books on medical topics more than 7 years old should be strongly considered for withdrawal. Try to keep up to date on what's "hot" and withdraw the rest. Materials on collector's items may be kept beyond 10 years unless in poor condition. Repair manuals for older cars and appliances should be retained as long as such items are generally used in our geographic area. Cookbooks, unless they do not circulate or are associated with a long past fad, should be retained unless in poor condition.

700s: Arts & Recreation

Histories of art and music should be kept until worn out. Books on crafts may be retained if they contain basic technique and are well illustrated. Photography books should be checked for outdated technique and equipment. Books on sports should be weeded if they deal with personalities no longer of interest. Other areas should be evaluated for their currency.

800s: Literature

Regarding classic works of literature, keep the most recent edition that's in the best condition as well as relevant literary criticism. Be sure to check school reading lists to avoid withdrawing multiple copies of a work commonly studied in school.

900s: History, Travel and Geography

History books should be evaluated for demand, factual accuracy and interpretation. A balance of perspectives is ideal. Personal narratives and war memoirs from any of the wars may be weeded in favor of broader histories. Regarding travel and geographical materials, don't keep anything older than 2-3 years unless it has a significant amount of background or history information that you can't get anywhere else. Travel narratives may be kept longer—especially if they are of high literary or historical value. All local material and accounts in which local people have participated should be retained unless in poor condition or unused.

Biography

Unless the person is of permanent interest or importance, biographies should be weeded as demand stops. Keep biographies with literary value unless in poor condition or unused.

Fiction

Discard works which are no longer popular; second and third copies of a work; and dated best-sellers. Retain works of durable demand or high literary merit.

Audiovisual

Worn out, damaged, rarely used, and trivial items may be weeded.

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With input offered by staff members Kim Gabert, Katie Spofford,
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