

Weed, Store, or Keep?

Usage Statistics and Decision-Making in the Stacks

Sarah E. McCleskey
Head of Access Services
Hofstra University

Why We Don't Weed

- ◆ Hard work
- ◆ Time consuming
- ◆ Emphasis on numbers
- ◆ Sacredness of collection
- ◆ Public backlash

Do you need to weed?

- ◆ What is the nature of your collection?
- ◆ Research
- ◆ Support of curriculum and teaching
- ◆ Are numbers important to you?

“A high level of disuse is the price of scholarly potential”

Keeping your collection active

- ◆ Weeding increases the availability of stack space for current and future growth
- ◆ Tidy shelves are more convenient for users
- ◆ A higher proportion of materials on the shelves are of interest to patrons
- ◆ Your collection is not stagnant, but instead is lively and more exciting to users

Slote's Recommended Standards

- ◆ Weed to maintain a core collection of books to satisfy 95% of user demand
- ◆ All weeded books should be considered for storage
- ◆ One complete weeding should take place each year
- ◆ Volumes that have not circulated in X years should be weeded
- ◆ **Weeding criteria should be based solely upon the likelihood of future use**

The Past and the Future

- ◆ Many studies have found that past use (circulation or in-house) is the best predictor for future use
- ◆ Circulation should be a consideration in making decisions to weed, keep, or send an item to storage
- ◆ You must create a plan for what you want your collection to be prior to any weeding project
- ◆ Warning: Some research has shown that **shelf level** has a strong impact on circulation

Collection Development

- ◆ Prior to any weeding project, draft a collection development policy, ideally based on your library's vision and mission statements
- ◆ There are many resources available to assist you in crafting a sound collection development policy
- ◆ Ask yourself how you can select the most pertinent books that your patrons want, and
- ◆ What should your long-term strategies be in order to remain an essential, viable part of the academic community?

Weeding based on Circulation

- ◆ You **can** conduct a deselection project based only on circulation, but ...
- ◆ You will better serve your patrons by using circulation as only one factor in your decision making process

Sample Weeding Criteria

- ◆ Circulation statistics
- ◆ Duplicate copies
- ◆ Have later/reprint edition
- ◆ Have better/more recent sources
- ◆ Textbook
- ◆ Outdated/Contains incorrect information
- ◆ Inappropriate for your patrons

The footsteps of the librarian

- ◆ “There is no better fertilizer than the footsteps of the farmer.”
- ◆ Care of your collection will take you into the stacks. It can be dirty, dusty, and exhausting.
- ◆ Put on your overalls and grab your gloves!