



WEEDING: ITS IMPORTANCE



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ABSTRACT

Weeding is the removal of old, obsolete and less used document from active collection of the library. It is an important part of collection development. weeding policy is an important component of collection development policy. Weeding policy means a policy statement on a) what materials are to be weeded? b) when to weed? c) who should weed? d) how to weed? e) what to do with weeded materials? It is a periodic or continual evaluation of resources intended to remove items that are no longer useful from the collection. An overview of the weeding process and method is presented. In spite of many usefulness of weeding, some of the barriers make librarians reluctant to accept this process in the library.

KEYWORDS : Weeding, collection development, weeding policy.

INTRODUCTION

Weeding or deselection is an important part of collection development. In fact, to get more space and to incorporate all new and necessary collection, application of weeding program is highly needed in any kind of library. Every library's print collection is limited by the space available to house it, and collections should change over time to reflect changes in the community and in the library's goal. Weeding documents means removing documents which are found not useful or not serviceable from a library. The documents so removed from the library may be completely discarded where they are not serviceable; are donated to some other library where they may be useful; or kept in a reserve place called a dormitory library. Weeding policy means a policy statement on a) what materials are to be weeded? b) when to weed? c) who should weed? d) how to weed? e) what to do with weeded materials?

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According to International Encyclopedia of Information and Library science "Weeding is the process of removing material from open access and reassessing its value. So, in brief it can be said that weeding is a kind of process which helps to remove damaged old and less- used library collection from the stack.

Why Weeding is necessary:

Libraries especially the university or research libraries are storehouse of knowledge. With the explosion of knowledge documents are now being published in millions. New areas of knowledge are coming up and some of the earlier ideas and thoughts are becoming outdated. For a modern library it is a question of money and space to get all new documents which are relevant and useful. Particularly space for keeping the documents has a major problem for university libraries.

Saving space is not the only reason for thinking about weeding of documents. Some of the documents may get worn out because of continuous usage. Similarly some of the documents may become brittle and unusable by passage of time. But most important of all is that some documents may become the information in the document has obsolete. In modern time document may be weeded out after transferring the information contained in them on to digital form.

From customer's point of view when library do not weed regularly or consistently, customers have trouble in finding relevant materials. Removing outdated or worn-out items makes the collection more visually attractive and more inviting to users. For the librarian, weeding has additional advantages it finds the gaps in your collection so that you can make new purchases with confidence and creates space for those materials.

What Materials Are To Be Weeded?

Prof Stole in his book "Weeding Library Collections" suggests some important parameters for weeding which are very much important to be followed during weeding out the library materials--

- Weeding is based upon appearance or condition.
- Weeding of superfluous or duplicate volumes.
- Weeding based upon poor content.
- Weeding criteria based upon use patterns.

G. Edward Evans, while discussing about weeding aspects, suggests some of the objectives to be followed for weeding out library materials--

- To save space.
- To improve access.
- To save money.
- To make room for new materials.

All these guidelines very much resemble the concept of Five Laws of Library Science. Some additional weeding criteria include--

Condition: If a book is in poor condition, it may be considered for removal depending on your ability and willingness to mend it. Problems to watch for include a broken spine, fragile or brittle paper or bindings, bent corners, torn or missing pages, defaced pages or covers, insect or mildew infestations and books that are just plain worn-out.

Age: Evaluating an item's usefulness based on its age is a tricky issue, especially for books. Library customers generally prefer new books regardless of content.

Frequency of Use: When was the time an item circulated? How often is it used in the library? If you want to keep the item, perhaps it could be removed to a more visible or attractive location.

Multiple Copies: When we have many more copies of an item. Perhaps some of them were donated copies, we have several different editions of the same work, or it was a very popular subject or best-seller that has fallen into decline.

Currency/Accuracy: When evaluating currency, the issue is relevance. History books may not be especially current, but if they are still relevant they should be kept. Materials on computers, law, science, technology, health and travel on the other hand, need to be current to be useful.

Appropriate Coverage: Since society is constantly changing, what was an accepted view of minorities or women years ago might be considered inappropriate today. Our goal should be to offer balanced coverage while preserving intellectual freedom.

When To Weed?

At any time throughout an year the librarian may come across documents which may have to be stopped from circulation as they are found to be worn out and unusable. H.S.Chopra says In college and university libraries, if time permits each time a is handled in the library is it should be examined from the angle of its physical condition and to its continued suitability. At least once a year the entire collection should be examined.

Who Should Weed?

Weeding out is an exercise which requires necessary judgment and expertise. The librarian has to personally involve in it. Sometimes members of library committee or the nominees of the library authority or members of a committee appointed for the purpose may take decisions and implement weeding out of materials from the library.

What to do with Weeded Materials:

Books and other materials completely worn out, mutilated and irreparable can be sold just like unpressured old news papers. But if the books are in good condition particularly if they are older editions of reference sources they may have to be donated to other libraries which are not a position to go for such costly books.

Another way is to store the weeded documents which are otherwise useful in what may be known as "Book Reservoirs". At least one copy of a weeded document should be preserved at a place within a region of the country. According to UGC Committee on University and College Libraries (1965) headed by Ranganathan "While weeding out, it is necessary in service libraries and generally modern university libraries are service libraries that it should not be done by the libraries of the country in an uncoordinated way for, it is necessary to preserve a few copies of every book somewhere in the country for the use of posterity and particularly for antiquarian and bibliographical research."

When documents are weeded out it should be done with the specific knowledge and sanctions of library committee or the library authority. The Accession Register, should carry the entry that the

document is written off; quoting the relevant orders or proceedings of the concerned authority. Shelf list, catalogue and other records should be rectified by deleting the entries relating to the weeded out documents.

Method used for Weeding:

Though variety of weeding processes can be used by the libraries according to the nature of the resource, users and mission of the library, some important methods can be noted for standardized collection weeding.

Prof. Stole has described weeding method as per in library use by the way of measuring shelf-time period of circulating books. According to him, a process should be prepared to find out the library usage, so that proper weeding of less-used materials can be maintained:

- Book Card method
- Spine marking method
- Historical reconstruction method
- Computer assisted method
- CREW method

Along them CREW method is very important that shows the idea- "less is more" which is keenly observed in order to save stack space, to make the collection more healthy and interesting, to save the time of the users and also to get evaluative value of the collection following the library's mission. CREW stands for continuous Review, Evaluation and Weeding. It shows the use of only needed documents.

- The steps followed by CREW method are as follows:
- To make weeding process a part of collection development policy
- To collect usage statistics
- To study the subject
- To check the whole collection

A specific criterion named as MUSTIE has been given by CREW method. MUSTIE stands for--

- Misleading and/or factually inaccurate
- Ugly worn out beyond mending or rebinding
- Superseded by a new edition or a better source
- Trivial of no discernable literary or scientific merit
- Irrelevant to the needs and interests of your community
- Elsewhere the material may be easily borrowed from another source.

Barriers to Weeding:

Inspite of various advantages, there are always hindrances for taking up of weeding process actively in libraries. Some of them are--

Love for Numbers-- The Most librarians realised that it is quality of service that is more important than the quantity of documents in library even then they hesitate to weed out documents which are no longer useful.

Sanctity of Collection-- Many feel that very book however old it may be has its value. Sometimes they think that antiquity enhances the value of the book even though it exact reprint in a better physical condition is available in the market.

Pressure of Work-- Library being a dynamic organisation, work pressure will always be on the library professionals. Most of the libraries are now lacking necessary manpower to think over weeding. Proper training and lots of time are needed to select and weed out books from the shelves.

Psychological reaction-- Psychological reaction of the librarian is to keep the total collection in spite of large number of unneeded and obsolete materials.

Fear of Audit and Clientele Comments-- At the time of audit one may face objection that documents for which amounts were paid are not found in the library. Similarly the Clientele may also comment upon the documents weeded out of the library saying that some very useful documents were also discarded.

Information overload is a problem for all types of libraries. We should think in a positive way and develop a weeding policy which will help to build a valuable collection and most successfully satisfy the user's need. The first consideration of weeding out the document is the obsolescence of such document. The main reason for weeding out the materials from the library collection is to save space and to optimise the use of shelving space available. There are certain conditions of material for weeding. The documents having backdated information and not demanded by the users may be weeded. The documents which are physically unfit for circulation and superseded editions of books may be weeded. But weeding requires judgment based on the factors applicable in a particular library situation following the weeding out policy of the library.

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