

# **Libraries & Weeding**

## **The Facts**

### What is weeding?

Weeding is the process of evaluating individual library materials based on established weeding criteria, deciding whether to retain or discard each item, and implementing that decision.

### Why do libraries weed?

Weeding is as important to a library's functioning as adding new materials. The weeding process is necessary to:

- Make space for new materials
- Provide a more appealing, up-to-date collection
- Make the library easier for patrons and staff to use
- Maintain the library's reputation for providing reliable information
- Eliminate false or dangerous information
- Provide feedback on strengths and weaknesses of a collection

### Who does weeding?

It is the function of the staff to select and discard materials, and to advise customers on their use.

### How does the staff decide what to remove and what to keep?

Librarians use guidelines developed by professional organizations and statistics on the collection and its use in making weeding decisions. The CREW Manual, a respected source for weeding guidelines, offers parameters for evaluating fiction and nonfiction by specific categories.

In addition, Upper Hudson Library System creates individualized reports that show various statistics useful in weeding, such as publication date and number of checkouts.

Primarily, materials are withdrawn from library collections because of misleading or obsolete information, insufficient use, physical damage or wear, altered collection emphases, or space availability.

### Yikes! Our shelves are half empty!

When outdated, unused, and shabby items are removed from a collection that has not been thoroughly weeded in some time, the shelves may look bare. Rather than being a deterrent to library use, this can result in increased circulation. Shelves with fewer, newer items are more inviting than shelves jam-packed with tattered titles. Empty shelf space permits face out display of items, inviting patrons to investigate them. Many libraries find that their circulation actually goes up following a thorough weeding.

### What happens to our items after they are weeded?

Following a discard process (disabling the barcode, removing labels, etc.), the item's electronic record is removed from the catalog. Now that the item is no longer part of the library collection, it may be given away, sold, or recycled. Some libraries have Friends group that sell discarded materials. Some libraries sell books on the Internet, or use companies that do the selling for them. Some libraries use companies that recycle the books. Some local community organizations welcome donations.

It's important to be aware that handling and finding homes for discarded materials can take a lot of time. Staff time spent on finding weeded books a new home takes away time from the current library programs and services that are more helpful and visible to the community.

### Do we need a weeding policy?

Upper Hudson Library System advises every library to have a collection management policy that includes a section on weeding. This section should contain the basic information in this fact sheet to communicate to the public what weeding is and why it's done. In addition, it is wise to link a policy on gifts and donations to a weeding policy so that givers understand that donated materials are subject to the same guidelines as any other item in the collection.