

Slide 1: ABLE Course 4: Collection Maintenance

Original content created by the staff of the Idaho State Library. Content updated 2011 by Erin McCusker.

This course has been paid for in part with funds from the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), administered by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

Slide 2: WELCOME!

This course is designed for members of the library community who have no formal library training. You will learn about the fundamental principles of the library profession. Other courses in this series include collection development basics, collection development policy and building a collection.

This course is divided into eight sections, which include information, links to explore and a self-evaluation test. The course takes approximately 2 hours to complete. You can stop and re-enter the course at anytime.

During the course you will be prompted to explore links to external websites. If you click on one of these, a new window will open. When you are ready to return to the course, just close that window.

After you complete the final examination, you will be prompted to access a course survey which will allow you to print your own certificate of completion for the course.

Slide 3: Unit 4 – Collection Maintenance

In this unit, you will learn:

- The purpose of performing collection assessment
- Various methods for assessing your collection
- A process for performing a collection assessment
- How to use collection assessment information
- Criteria and a process for weeding the collection
- Evaluation of the collection development cycle, processes, etc.

Slide 4: Quote

"As a child, I loved to read books. The library was a window to the world, a pathway to worlds and people far from my neighborhood in Philadelphia. And even today, as I travel around the world, I often visit places I used to dream about because of the books I'd read. The library made a difference in my life."

Ed Bradley, Broadcaster

Slide 5: Overview

A model collection development cycle was introduced in Unit 1 – Collection Development Basics. Other units discussed the process of writing the collection development policy, selecting and building the collection, and promoting the collection to the public. This unit will discuss the assessment and

maintenance of the collection.

Maintaining the collection involves several elements. In the collection development cycle, these elements don't necessarily follow in a linear manner after other steps. Some library staff will weed first and then assess the collection to determine the replacement plan for the next year. Others may rewrite the policy, assess and then weed accordingly. Each library should determine the best process for their unique situation.

Slide 6: Course Sections

This course contains the following sections:

- The Purpose of Collection Assessment
- Collection Assessment Methods
- The Collection Assessment Process
- Weeding the Collection
- Weeding Methods
- The Weeding Process
- Common Weeding Problems
- Handling Weeded Materials

Use the links to navigate to the next section you need to complete. Once you have successfully completed all eight sections, then click on “Complete Final Survey and Print Certificate.”

Slide 7: Section 1. The Purpose of Collection Assessment

The process of continuously evaluating the library collection is called collection assessment.

The purpose of collection assessment is to assure that the library's collection meets the current needs of the community by providing reliable, up-to-date, and attractive materials and information resources. In subject areas that are controversial, assessment also assures that a variety of opinions are represented.

Slide 8: The Collection Assessment Process

The collection assessment process provides information that can be used in making decisions regarding purchases and weeding. It may help the library focus its resources on important subject areas that need more coverage. It may tell the library what parts of the collection need particular attention for weeding.

One important side benefit of performing a continuous collection assessment is that it helps library staff members know the collection better. By looking at the collection and evaluating it, staff members will learn more about the kinds of information that the library holds and where the gaps are in the collection. This aids staff in selecting new materials as well as providing reference assistance.

Slide 9: New Standards for Collection Assessment

In the past, libraries were judged on the numbers of items in their collection. It was generally assumed that the libraries with larger collections were the stronger libraries. Thus, some accrediting associations evaluated school libraries by looking at the number of books that they contained with little concern about whether those books were being used by the students.

This way of evaluating libraries is no longer valid. Increasingly, libraries are evaluated by their access to accurate and reliable information and their ability to meet customer needs rather than the number of books that they own. This change has come about primarily for two reasons:

First, we live in a rapidly changing society. Information contained in a book published five or ten years ago may no longer be accurate, particularly medical and technological content. There is a famous library story about this. It seems that a school student in the early 1990's wrote a report that stated "someday, humans may walk on the moon." The teacher was going to give the student a poor grade until it was discovered that the only books on space travel in the school library had been written in the early 1960's.

Second, information is now available from many different sources. People now expect to be able to find information about everything either online – accessible by their laptop, iPad or smartphone – or very easily in the library. The same student who was excused for her mistake about the moon landing in the 1990's might not be excused today, because she would be expected to check the Internet and other sources to get more up-to-date information.

Slide 10: New Standards for Collection Assessment

This does not mean, of course, that libraries must vouch for every piece of information in their collections. But it does mean that library users will expect library collections to be more up-to-date and comprehensive than in the past.

A school or public library that has books from the 1960's on topics such as space travel will not be regarded as a good library. (The only exception would be if these books were deliberately being kept for

historical purposes. However, this would not normally fall within the mission of a school or public library.)

In order to meet the changing needs of their clients, librarians must constantly evaluate their collections. When they find a weakness in a subject area of interest to their community, they must find a way to strengthen that part of their collection. If they have a number of out-of-date materials about a subject, they must remove them and replace them with sources that are current.

Slide 11: Collection Assessment and the Policy

The way that a collection assessment is conducted will depend on the guidelines in the collection development policy. An academic library, whose purpose is to provide material and information for research, for example, will assess its collection very differently from a public or school library whose purpose is to provide a very basic level of information.

The academic library will be less concerned about the age of materials and their circulation statistics. It will be more concerned with providing in-depth materials and keeping "significant" materials regardless of their age or use. Collection analysis in academic libraries is often done by subject specialists who have advanced degrees in the subject areas for which they are responsible.

In a school library or a public library, materials are usually evaluated on their current usefulness and their level of circulation. The mission of such libraries is typically to provide up-to-date, popular materials. Except for a few classics, books that no longer reflect up-to-date facts or the current thinking about a subject do not fit into the mission of such a library. In most cases, books that have not circulated in three to five years also may not fit the mission.

Slide 12: Collection Assessment and the Policy

The collection development policy may also set collection assessment standards for particular parts of the collection. Particularly in larger libraries, some subject areas may receive special attention, and this may require that certain materials be added which are not collected in the library as a whole.

For example, a library may have a special collection for local and regional history. Materials in this section may not meet the standards set for other parts of the collection. This, of course, should be spelled out in the collection development policy and considered when the collection is being assessed.

Collection assessment evaluates the collection based on the standards set by the collection development policy. Without a collection development policy, meaningful collection assessment cannot be done. Thus, the first step in an assessment of any part of the collection should be a review of the sections of collection development policy that are relevant to that part of the collection. As discussed in earlier courses, creating and maintaining a useful collection development policy is relevant to the daily activities of the library staff.

Please complete the following quiz and then proceed to the next section.

Slide 13: Quiz: The Purpose of Collection Assessment

Slide 14: Section 2. Collection Assessment Methods

There are two different approaches that can be used in assessing your library's collection.

The first is to measure the collection itself using quantitative and qualitative measures.

What do we have?

How much?

How old?

How worthwhile?

The second is to measure the use of the collection with client-centered measures.

How is it used?

How often do items circulate?

Are some materials only used inside the library?

How often are the library website and online databases used?

Slide 15: Quantitative Measures

Quantitative measures look at the size of the collection. This can be in terms of sheer quantity, growth or potential use.

The simplest quantitative measure calculates the number of items in the collection or in a particular subject area within the collection. This is usually done by a system report from the library's automated system. This report will include a count of the number of items within a specific range of classification numbers.

Another kind of quantitative measure looks at the number of items added to the collection in a particular subject area during the previous year. Often this acquisition level is compared to other parts of the collection, or to the collection as a whole, by using an acquisition rate. The acquisition rate is figured by dividing the number of acquisitions for the previous year by the total number of items in that subject area at the beginning of that year.

For example, if your math collection (510's in the Dewey Classification System) contained 400 items at the beginning of the year, and you add 30 items this year, your acquisitions rate for that section of the library will be .075 or 7.5%. This number can then be compared to the rates for other areas of the collection. A subject area with a low acquisition rate may indicate a part of your collection that needs more attention.

Slide 16: Academic or School Libraries

In academic or school libraries, another measure that is sometimes used is a measure of the number of items per student in a particular program or the number of items that would support a particular course of study. Thus, if you are in a college that has a very large business program, then it would be expected that your business collection would be larger than for a college that specialized in liberal arts. The measure used here would be items per student, and it would be calculated by dividing the number of items in the section by the number of students within the program who would make the most use of these items.

If the items-per-student measure is going to be used, it should be combined with qualitative and client-centered measures. Unfortunately, some accreditation agencies have used items per student as the sole measure for evaluating a library's collection, and as a result, librarians have sometimes been pressured by administrators not to weed out-of-date or unattractive materials. If items are not useful to the library's clientele, the collection is poor, no matter what its size.

Slide 17: Qualitative Measures: Appearance Shelf-scanning

A second way of measuring the actual collection is qualitative. These measures look at the quality of the materials within the collection, as well as the raw numbers. The next few slides will discuss techniques that can be used to measure the quality of the collection.

Appearance shelf-scanning

This is a quick method of evaluation in which the library staff member simply looks at the appearance of the collection within a specific section. Check for items that have been damaged. Books that look old and dilapidated are not likely to be attractive to readers. If materials within the section are not attractive, a weeding program may be established before further assessment.

Slide 18: Date of Materials

Another method is to look at the publication dates of the materials within a section of the collection. In many subject areas, particularly in the natural sciences, technology and social sciences, information is very date-sensitive. Information on computers that is more than a couple of years old, for example, is usually obsolete. To measure the currency of information within a subject area, one method is simply to

look at the mean and median ages of the materials.

If you have an automated system, it may be possible for the system to give you this information. If your system cannot provide these figures, you can determine them by simply listing the publication dates of all materials (or a random sample of materials if you have a very large collection).

Slide 19: Mean Age

The mean age represents what is often thought of as the “average.”

To find the mean age, you simply add all of the publication dates together and divide by the total number of items. For an example, take a collection of ten books whose publication dates are as listed on slide. The total of these numbers is 20,015, which, when divided by 10, equals 2001.5. In 2012, this means that the average book in the collection is 10.5 years old.

Slide 20: Median Age

A look at the median age gives a little different story. The median is the midpoint in the range of dates. In this case the midpoint is 2003, since half the books have dates that are older than 2003 and half are newer than 2003. This means that half the books in the section have been purchased in the last 9 years.

The mean and median age of the materials is then compared to a standard that the library has set before doing the assessment. If the books in the above example are in a history section, the collection may be considered perfectly up-to-date, as the older materials may not have been significantly dated by newer research. For a section on medicine or computers, however, the age of these materials may be a

signal to look more closely at the currency of your collection.

Slide 21: Expert Opinion

In some cases the library may seek help in evaluating its collection from outside experts. For example, a public library may ask a garden club to evaluate its gardening section. In schools it can be appropriate to ask the various academic departments to evaluate the sections that support their curriculum.

When using outside experts, it is important to carefully explain the limitations of the library's collection development policy and budget. Experts should not be given the impression that whatever changes they recommend will automatically occur.

Slide 22: Client-Centered Measures

The second approach to measuring collection effectiveness is client-centered. These measures focus on the actual use of the collection. They include usage statistics by subject area and format, number of holds, interlibrary loan requests by subject, in-library use of materials and surveys of users or potential users.

Slide 23: Usage Statistics

Circulation statistics can be used to determine how often items in a specific section of the library are being used. To better compare these statistics with other sections, the turnover rate can be used. The turnover rate is determined by dividing the number of circulations by the number of items in that part of the collection.

For example, if you have a section of your collection that contains 1,000 items and these items have circulated a total of 1,200 times in the previous year, the annual turnover rate is 1.2. The items in this section circulated an average of 1.2 times within the last year.

If you have another section that contains 2,000 items and these items have circulated 1,500 times, the circulation rate is .75.

If a section has a relatively high turnover rate, it is one indication that more items may be needed to meet demand.

Slide 24: Usage of Various Formats

Use of various formats of materials should also be investigated. Online databases generally have usage reports that can indicate the number of total sessions, as well as more in-depth data such as number of searches conducted or articles accessed. Are databases being used more than the print reference materials and magazines? Are books-on-CD getting used more or less than digital downloadable materials? Are there more than 20 holds on the currently released DVDs?

Slide 25: Holds and ILL

Holds

Looking at the number of holds on various items, formats or topics can provide valuable information. If the library is considering purchasing multiple copies of popular materials or digital download capabilities, holds information is an important piece of knowing what users want.

Interlibrary loan requests

Another measure of the effectiveness of a library collection is the number of interlibrary loans that are being requested in specific subject areas. A large number of ILL requests from a number of different customers may be indicative of a community need that the library is not meeting. Additional materials in this subject area should be considered.

In-library measures

Libraries often use these measures because in-house use is an important part of their service. In-house use is measured by asking customers not to reshelve items but instead to leave them where they can be reshelved by the staff. The use can be logged into the library's automated system and reported out as a use. For non-circulating reference materials, this manual tracking is the only effective method of gauging usage of an item. Heavy in-house use may lead the library to consider adding materials in a particular subject area.

Surveys

A more intrusive form of measuring customer needs and desires is surveying. User surveys are relatively easy to conduct since they can be done quickly in the library. However, such surveys do not necessarily reflect community needs because those who have not found the library's collection to be useful are less likely to be library users. To be meaningful, surveys need to be carefully designed and administered. If this kind of measure of collection effectiveness is desired, libraries should consult with experts to assure that their methods will provide valid and useful results.

Please complete the following quiz and then proceed to the next section.

Slide 26: Quiz: Collection Assessment Methods

Slide 27: Section 3. The Collection Assessment Process

We have now discussed methods of assessing your collection. In this section, we will discuss how a collection assessment can be completed. There are many different ways of organizing the work of a collection assessment, and you may find other ways of performing this process that suit the needs of your library better. However, the basic procedures included in each of the steps outlined on the following slides should be performed at some point during the process at your library.

Slide 28: The Collection Assessment Process

Step 1 - Review your collection development policy

Make sure that the collection development policy is up-to-date and reflects the current guiding principles for building and maintaining your collection.

Step 2 - Plan the assessment

Determine how much time you and other staff members will be able to give to the project. Divide the collection up into reasonably sized sub-units. (This is often done by classification number.) Make sure that you include print and non-print items covering the same subject area in the same assessment section, so that you get a complete picture of how well the library meets the information needs within that subject area.

Based on the amount of time available and the size of your collection, estimate the total time that will be needed to finish the complete cycle of collection assessments. If you have never performed a collection assessment before, pick a sub-unit that is relatively small and easy to complete to begin the process. Create a plan that will allow you to build on success.

Step 3 - Understand the collection goal for the section

For the first section, perform an in-depth review of the collection development policy for this subject area or type of material. Make sure that you understand what you are trying to do in the section before assessing it.

Step 4 - Review pertinent use information

What is the turnover rate for this section compared to the library as a whole and for similar sections? For example, if you are looking at the physical sciences, how does their usage compare with the biological sciences?

Check on the interlibrary loan statistics for the section. If the turnover rate is low and the interlibrary loan rate is high, this may say that there is something wrong with the collection, and this should be investigated. If the turnover rate is high and the interlibrary loan rate is low, you probably have a collection that meets your community's needs.

Step 5 - Shelf-scan your first section for appearance

As you look at the items on the shelf, ask what they tell you about the section. Do the materials look up-to-date and inviting? Do materials appear to be in need of rebinding? Ask yourself: if I was interested in this subject, would I think that this collection had something to offer me based on appearance alone? If

the appearance of the section is unattractive, consider weeding the section before continuing your assessment.

Step 6 - Perform an item count on the section
Run a report from your automated system.

Step 7 - Determine the acquisition rate for the section for the previous year
Compare this rate with the rate of the library as a whole and with other similar sections.

Step 8 - Determine the mean and median age for the materials in the section
If your automated system cannot provide this information, do an item-by-item assessment or a random sample if the section is quite large.

Step 9 - Consult an expert
If you believe that the collection is inadequate at this point, you may seek out an expert to suggest materials that would make it more sufficient. This would be especially important if there were unique local conditions that would affect the needs of the collection.

Step 10 - Write a brief report
Outline your assessment of the section in a brief report, which includes recommendations for improvement. This report should be used when you are considering materials to be added to the library or a weeding program.

After writing the report, begin the process in another section of the collection.

Slide 29: Using Collection Assessment Information

There is no use in taking the time to assess your collection unless you plan on using the information. At the end of the assessment of each subject section in your collection, you should have a brief written report that details the current state of that part of your collection and steps for necessary improvements.

These reports can be utilized in several different ways. They can be used to:

- Acquire materials strengthening an area that has gaps in information.
- Create a weeding plan with priority given to areas that have large numbers of obsolete materials.
- Justify funding needs in collection sections that are inadequate or out-of-date, either with the governing body or to support grant or funding requests.
- Determine a joint plan for cooperative collection development efforts.

Thus, while collection assessment can be a time-consuming process, the benefits can be considerable. At the least, collection assessments will help the library staff and governing authority understand the strengths and weaknesses of the collection. At best, they provide objective evidence that can help resolve collection issues.

Please complete the following quiz and then proceed to the next section.

Slide 30: Quiz: The Collection Assessment Process

Slide 31: Section 4. Weeding the Collection

"The weeder is supremely needed if the Garden of the Muses is to persist as a garden."

Ezra Pound , The ABC of Reading

Slide 32: Weeding

Weeding, which is sometimes called "deselection" in academic libraries, is one of the most controversial and difficult processes of collection development. Because librarians and library users all enjoy books and other library materials, no one likes to think of throwing them away.

Weeding can be difficult because of the following considerations:

- The idea that every book will always have some value.
- The destruction of books brings up images of censorship and book burning.
- For school libraries, weeding may take the collection below accreditation standard numbers.
- Weeding is seen as the destruction of public property.

Slide 33: Why Weed?

Removing books and other materials from the collection is a necessary function if we wish to keep our library collections meaningful and attractive.

Keeping old materials in the collection may give the public the impression that all we have is old and

outdated materials. It may mean that we won't have room for newer and more useful items. It may even be dangerous if we keep information that no longer is accurate. For example, a medical book written twenty-five years ago may recommend all kinds of treatment that are no longer used and might even have been proven counterproductive.

Moreover, the process of weeding can be helpful during collection assessment and in helping library staff learn more about the collection. Weeding requires that staff actually look at the collection. In weeding, you will see the holes and weaknesses in your collection as well as the strengths. If you weed your collection on a continuous basis, you will know your collection better.

Slide 34: Reasons for Weeding the Collection

To summarize, there are a number of reasons for weeding your collection:

- It makes your collection more attractive since it removes older, dilapidated materials.
- It makes your collection more useful since it removes materials that are out-of-date, and therefore no longer accurate.
- It makes your collection easier to use because useful materials are no longer "hidden" among materials that are not useful.
- It makes room for newer and more useful materials.
- It helps the staff know their collection better.
- It can serve as a collection assessment technique since it requires the staff to really look at the collection, which can lead them to better know the collection's strengths and weaknesses.

Please complete the following quiz and then proceed to the next section.

Slide 35: Quiz: Weeding the Collection

Slide 36: Section 5. Weeding Methods

Like all collection development processes, weeding should be covered by the library's collection development policy. Indeed, because weeding has the potential for controversy, it is especially important for this process to be covered in the policy. The policy should clearly explain the purpose of weeding and explain in some detail why it is necessary. It should also explain the criteria that are used in choosing materials to be weeded, the process for weeding, who is responsible for carrying out the process and how weeded materials are disposed.

Slide 37: The CREW Method

In this section, we will discuss criteria for choosing materials to be weeded. Most of these criteria come from *CREW: A Weeding Manual for Modern Libraries*, updated by Jeanette Larson (Austin, Texas: The Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 2008). This book is available online at the link provided.

CREW stands for Continuous Review, Evaluation and Weeding. This method has been time-tested and is considered so valuable that many libraries simply refer to the CREW method as their criteria for weeding in their collection development policies. Please notice, however, that these criteria are for public libraries that normally do not have a heavy research emphasis. Academic libraries and specialized libraries would use very different criteria than those mentioned here.

Slide 38: Criteria for Weeding

The CREW method gives six general criteria for considering weeding an item from the library's collection. These have been summed up with the acronym MUSTIE:

M for Misleading -- factually inaccurate

U for Ugly -- worn beyond mending or rebinding

S for Superseded -- by a new edition or by a much better book on the subject

T for Trivial -- of no discernible literary or scientific merit

I for Irrelevant -- to the needs and interests of the library's community

E for Elsewhere -- the material is easily obtainable from another library

Slide 39: Age and Usage Criteria

There are two factors that contribute to a MUSTIE evaluation, although these factors vary according to the type of material and subject matter. They are the age of the material and usage statistics.

In terms of age, for example, the CREW manual suggests that any book in medicine (the Dewey 610's) that is more than five years old should be considered for weeding. In history, (the Dewey 930's-990's) the age of materials does not become an issue until they are 15 years old.

Earlier, we discussed looking at circulation statistics for subject areas as a whole. But what about specific items that have not circulated recently at all? In most areas of non-fiction, materials that have not checked out in three years can be considered for weeding. In fiction, if a book has not gone out in two years, it can become a candidate for weeding. The CREW manual gives these criteria in detail for all

the Dewey classes and also covers audiovisual materials. It also supplies very useful comments that can help you make professional judgments about weeding.

Slide 40: CREW Example

Here is an example for a specific Dewey Classification, applying the methods from the CREW manual:

160 (Logic) & 170 (Ethics and Morality) 10/3/MUSTIE

Replace worn classics with attractive trade paperback editions. Discard if no longer of interest. Be especially aware of outdated philosophies on ethics and moral values and 'hot button' topics, such as euthanasia, genetic engineering, and sexuality.

In the 10/3/MUSTIE, the ten refers to the age of materials. Therefore, materials more than ten years old can be considered for weeding. The three refers to the last circulation. Any item that has not been checked out in the last three years can be considered as a possible candidate for weeding. The MUSTIE refers to the MUSTIE criteria. The commentary gives a more detailed look at the category and gives some ideas about how to make professional judgments when weeding this subject area.

In some of the subject areas, one or both of the numbers may be replaced by an "X." This means that either age or circulation dates should not be considered an issue. For example in adult fiction, the formula reads X/2MUSTIE. This means that the age of an item is not an issue. The item might still be considered for weeding if it has not circulated in the last two years or if it is MUSTIE.

Slide 41: Reasons for Different Guidelines

It should be noted that while the criteria listed in the CREW Manual represent general guidelines for the field, there may be reasons to have different guidelines for your library.

For example:

- A library that has a very small budget may want to extend the age of materials requirement by a few years.
- If a library has not been well-used, the criteria on circulation may also be extended.
- If a library is overcrowded and heavily used, it may want to shorten the age and use criteria because of the shortage of space.

Any change in the criteria should be carefully thought through and justified. If the governing authority has stated that the CREW Manual will be the basis for the weeding policy, then changes should also be approved by that authority as a matter of policy. Notes of changes should be clearly written in the CREW Manual for each section where changes have been made.

Slide 42: Criteria for Keeping Materials

There are also criteria for keeping materials that would otherwise be weeded. Like the criteria for possible removal of materials, the criteria for keeping materials should also be listed in the collection development policy.

Some typical criteria for keeping materials include:

Special collections – If a library has a special collection in a specific subject area, materials that are part of this collection may be kept, even if they meet the normal criteria for weeding. Most small libraries do not have such special collections, or they only have special collections on local history.

Strong local interest – Many libraries keep materials that have local interest. For example, libraries may keep books that are written by authors from their state or are about the local area, even if they do not keep these as part of a special collection.

Outstanding literary, historical or scientific value – Some books or other materials may be kept because they are simply very important. Some of these books may have achieved classic status.

When it is decided that a book should be "kept," it doesn't necessarily mean that the same copy that has been considered for weeding is kept. The book may be rebound or replaced with a newer copy. If neither of these actions is possible, the status of the book may be changed. For example, it may be removed from the circulating collection and placed in the reference collection.

Please complete the following quiz and then proceed to the next section.

Slide 43: Quiz: Weeding Methods

Slide 44: Section 6. The Weeding Process

As with any collection development process, there are a number of ways in which a library can be weeded. As you become more adept at weeding, you will undoubtedly find a method that works best for you.

Any method should include the following steps:

Review your general weeding policy. Make sure that you understand and can explain the rationale for weeding. Bring the weeding process before the governing authority for the library, so that they understand what you will be doing.

Create a plan for weeding the library. Ideally, the entire library should be weeded every year, but time and personnel constraints may make this difficult to achieve. Break the library down into individual classification sections and decide the order in which the sections will be weeded. You may want to start with relatively small sections, so that you will have some feeling of accomplishment early in the process. Remember as you make your schedule that special events may affect the order. You will not want to weed the section on the Civil War, for example, during that time in the school year when all of the history classes are doing Civil War projects.

Also, decide who will be involved in the weeding process. Not all of the weeding process requires the same level of expertise. A well-trained page, for example, may be able to pull books, based on the CREW criteria. Final decisions about weeding materials, however, should always be left to senior staff members.

Slide 45: The Weeding Process

Review the CREW criteria for the section to be weeded. Go over the criteria by which materials will be pulled for weeding consideration. If you are using other staff to pull books based on the CREW criteria,

spend some time training them in how to use the criteria.

Gather the necessary equipment and supplies for weeding on a book cart. The CREW Manual lists the needed equipment and supplies as:

- A computer printout of the section being reviewed
- A blank note pad and sticky notes
- A pen and/or colored pencils
- A shelf marker
- The CREW Manual (or a copy of the Overview Chart of CREW Formulas)
- An empty book cart
- Supply of disposal slips (see the Attachments tab for an example of a disposal slip)

Slide 46: The Weeding Process

Read the shelves. The next step in the process is to examine the shelves of the section to be weeded. Put the materials in order and check off materials that are either checked-out or missing on the shelf list. Items in circulation should be tagged to be checked when they come back in. A search should be made for other items.

Look at the section as a whole and then item by item. At this point, evaluate the appearance of the collection as a whole. Does the collection look relatively new or is it dull and dingy in appearance? Make a note about the general appearance of the collection as part of your collection assessment process. Then examine each item one at a time. As you do this, you are simply looking to see if the item should be considered for weeding according to the age of the item, the last time it circulated and the condition

of the item.

To check the last date circulated, look at the check-out slip in the book or, if your circulation system does not use this method, a print-out of the dates of circulation. Items within the classification section that are in circulation at the time of weeding should be placed on a special book cart when they are returned so they can be examined like all other materials.

Try to do relatively small sections at a time, stopping at logical breaks within the classification system. When you stop, mark the place on the shelf and on the report document.

Slide 47: The Weeding Process

Check for availability elsewhere. Once you have collected a number of items that may be weeded, check these items against any centralized databases to see if the items are easily available from other libraries in your area or state. Here is where professional judgments begin. If an item meets the criteria for weeding, but is not available anywhere else, the library may decide to keep it if it is believed that the item has long-term value.

Dispose of items according to the professional judgments made. Some methods for disposing of materials include: sending them to the bindery or mending, sending them to another library, offering them in a library book sale, and recycling or discarding them.

Slide 48: The Weeding Process

Once it has been decided to remove items from the collection, all records of the items need to be removed from the catalog and from any shared databases that are used.

Perform follow-up procedures. In some cases, books will need to be replaced. If books need to be replaced with new titles, use the techniques discussed in Unit 3 – Building a Collection. In other cases, the library may decide to do a display of high quality, low circulating materials to help increase circulation of these items.

Slide 49: Weeding, Inventory and Collection Assessment

Because weeding involves looking very closely at the collection item-by-item, it can be done in conjunction with two other collections processes: inventorying and collection assessment. Inventorying is the process of checking the library's actual holdings against the catalog to make sure that the catalog is accurate. It allows the library to eliminate catalog records for items that have been lost, stolen or misplaced.

At one time, it was traditional for libraries to be inventoried once a year. It is less common now in public and academic libraries to inventory the whole library at a time, as it is extremely time-consuming and many librarians do not feel that its benefits are worth such an effort. Many school libraries, which normally have smaller collections, continue to inventory their collections at the end of each school year.

Many librarians choose to inventory single sections of their libraries as part of the weeding process. If you inventory in conjunction with weeding, you simply mark each book as inventoried by placing a small

mark in the book and also next to the title and copy on the shelf-list printout. Books that are not physically on hand are inventoried as they return from circulation.

Circulation personnel either inventory the books from the classification section as they are returned, or they set them aside on special carts for inspection by the person who is working on the section. Books that cannot be accounted for within six months of the inventory are considered lost, and are either replaced with the same title or with a newer title in the same subject area.

Slide 50: Weeding and Assessment

Collection assessments may also be made as the collection is weeded. We discussed Collection Assessments earlier in this unit.

In either the case of inventorying or collection assessment, weeding should be done first. In the case of inventorying, this gives you fewer books to handle. In the case of collection assessment, the assessment should be done on the collection with the non-useful books removed, in order to give you a more accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the collection as it really is.

Please complete the following quiz and then proceed to the next section.

Slide 51: Quiz: Weeding Process

Slide 52: Section 7. Common Weeding Problems

As was discussed earlier, weeding can be one of the more difficult collection development processes. It is always a judgment call, whether or not a book should finally be weeded. Yet the experience of most librarians is that attractive, smaller collections will generally circulate better than larger, dilapidated and old collections.

Thus, libraries and their governing authorities sometimes are pulled between the desire to keep materials, "just in case someone needs them," and the desire to have an attractive and useful collection. This dichotomy leads to some of the problems that people have when weeding.

Slide 53: Governing Authority Objection to Weeding

Sometimes objections to weeding come from the library board or school board. When this occurs, it is important to find out exactly what the objection is. In some cases, it may come from an "exalted view of the book," which assumes that books never lose their value. For school boards, the objection may come because of standards that emphasize the number of volumes as a criteria for the school library, rather than the quality of the collection.

Slide 54: "Exalted View of the Book"

One way to deal with the problem of an "exalted view of the book" is to demonstrate the kind of books that will be weeded. Share some of the worst examples of older books that would be weeded, perhaps books that have blatantly false information or even dangerously outdated information. You may also want to show them what a shelf of newer books would look like compared to your current collection, so that

they could see the improved perception created by weeding.

Slide 55: Governing Authority Objection to Weeding

Dealing with standards can be somewhat more difficult, although the standards themselves may help. Get a copy of the standards that apply to your school. For example, the requirements set by the Northwest Association of Colleges and Universities do use the numerical standards for collections.

However, they also require that there be an annual renewal rate of 5% a year, which means that most of the collection should theoretically be less than 20 years old and that half the collection should be less than 10 years old. If you have an automated system, you may be able to provide statistics to support weeding if the library's collection is considerably older than that.

Also, the standards state that the school media program provides "a collection that reflects students' individual reading levels and interests." Materials that are clearly out-of-date do not meet this standard. Again, a demonstration of the materials that would be weeded may help the school board to understand the problem and possibly even increase the school library's budget to meet the numerical standard.

Slide 56: Staff Objections to Weeding

Another problem that sometimes occurs is that part of the staff does not understand the weeding process and fears that the library "won't have the materials" that users want or need. This problem should be handled with an educational process that clearly explains why weeding is necessary. As much as possible, staff members should also be involved in designing the process. For example, the staff may be asked what section should be weeded first, so that they can see the effect of weeding on a section

that is least likely to cause the problems they fear.

Part of the educational process for staff should be to explain the alternatives for clients who ask for materials that have been weeded. One alternative option, for example, is interlibrary loan.

Perhaps the following story will illustrate the point. One librarian overheard a circulation staff member tell a client that, since the library's only book on boilers had been weeded, the library could not help him with a problem that he had. The librarian stepped in and asked the client if the boiler he was working with had been made before the 1940's. The client responded that the boiler was less than 20 years old. The librarian then told the client that the weeded book had been written in 1935. The librarian worked with the client to order a more up-to-date book on boilers through interlibrary loan, and even found a book about the specific kind of boiler on which the client was working.

Slide 57: Rare Books

Another fear that librarians have is that they might weed a book that has considerable value because it is rare. The first thing to remember when considering this problem is that rare books have value because they are rare. The chances of finding such a book in a small library are therefore remote. In general, the following criteria must be met before an older book gains value as a rare book.

The book must have literary or scientific value. In other words, it must be an important book. An old but uninteresting book by an unknown author and unknown publisher is not likely to have much value as a rare book.

The book usually must be a first edition.

The book must be in good condition. If the book has your library stamp or impression on it, its value will

be considerably decreased.

Slide 58: Rare Books

The Wyoming State Library, in its Weeding Manual: A Self-Help Guide for Small and Medium-Sized Libraries, suggests the following criteria that might also be useful:

- All books printed before 1700; American books from before 1850. Western Americana can be later than this date and still be considered old or rare.
- Signed editions or first editions of very limited runs.
- Books containing fine plates, especially those which have been laid in or glued in or that are hand-colored.
- Books or materials of local archival interest.
- Books of an exceedingly high purchase price (over \$120).

Slide 59: Rare Books

If you have a book that you think meets these criteria, you can check the title in a number of reference sources, including American Book Prices Current. A very useful website is the site for the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America. The site lists member bookstores and also has a search feature that might help you determine whether the book you have is considered valuable.

Eventually, if you feel that you have a rare book, you will need to determine what to do with it. Most small libraries do not have the expertise or the resources to maintain a rare books collection. It is therefore best to either sell such books or to give them to a university library that has the capability to maintain the security and atmospheric conditions to preserve such a collection. Thus, even if you find a rare book in your collection, it will normally be more responsible not to keep it, but to sell it or pass it on to a library

that can maintain it properly.

Slide 60: Finding Time

Perhaps the most difficult problem with weeding is finding the time to do it. Most librarians have more than enough to do without taking on a major project like weeding. Looking at weeding an entire library can be a daunting task.

Remember, however, that you do not have to weed all of the library at the same time. Divide the library into logical sections. Even if you cannot weed all of the library, the library will be better off with part of the collection weeded.

Remember too that the librarian does not have to perform all of the weeding processes alone. A well-trained assistant or even a page can carry out many of the weeding procedures.

For example, the assistant can make the first pass at weeding, removing materials and placing them on a book truck for later inspection by senior staff. The assistant can also search to see if any of the items are available in other libraries in your area. Based on this information, the senior staff members can decide how each item will be handled.

For items that will be removed from the collection, the assistant can pull catalog records from the catalog. All of these steps, of course, must be coordinated so that large numbers of books are not off the shelf waiting for final evaluation, but by using your personnel wisely you should be able to get weeding done even as you work on other projects.

A final category of problem is how to dispose of weeded materials, but we will wait until the next section

to cover those issues.

Please complete the following quiz and then proceed to the next section.

Slide 61: Quiz: Common Weeding Problems

Slide 62: Section 8. Handling Weeded Materials

Once materials have been weeded, there are a number of ways in which they can be handled, such as:
Repair
New ownership, or
Disposal.

Slide 63: Repaired Materials

Some materials are weeded simply because they are in poor condition. In some cases such materials are no longer available for purchase. If such materials do not have to be rebound, they may be removed temporarily from the collection to be repaired and then returned to the shelves. Repaired books will never look as good as new, so you need to be careful not to allow too many damaged books to be repaired and returned to the shelves. Often it is better to find a suitable replacement for a book that would otherwise be repaired.

In other cases, materials that still have value to the community are taken from the shelf because of damage to their covers or binding. In these cases, if the material is no longer available for sale, the materials may be sent to a commercial bindery for repair. Upon their return from the bindery, they are

returned to the shelves.

Slide 64: New Ownership for Materials

Some materials that are weeded are no longer appropriate for smaller libraries, but they may be very useful in larger collections. For example, materials on a "hot topic" of several years ago may still be useful to a library serving a larger population, but may no longer be appropriate for a small collection. The advantage of this option for disposing of materials is that the materials remain available to the community through interlibrary loan, but valuable shelf space is not taken up by materials that are unlikely to be used often.

Many libraries dispose of materials through book sales. Book sales may be occasional events, such as annual book sales, or they may be on-going. Many libraries have a policy that any material that has been weeded (except for materials in unusable condition) will be offered for sale to the public before it is discarded.

When materials are placed in the book sale, it is important that they be thoroughly marked as discarded by the library. If possible remove the call numbers, slips and cross out any property stamps, as well as stamping the materials as discarded. If you do not do this, many of these materials may return to you at a later date.

Slide 65: Options for Disposing of Materials

One method is simply to throw discarded books in the dumpster. If you are going to use this method, it is best to put the materials in plastic bags or boxes. If the materials are left out in plain sight, people assume that the books were thrown out by a thief or by mistake and will bring them back to the library. Even if the materials are boxed, there is always a chance that a "dumpster diver" will find them and bring

them back to you. So it is important to mark the books as discarded. You may even wish to go further and cut the covers off the books and otherwise destroy them as books before sending them to the dump.

Another method that is available in some communities is recycling. Check with your local recycling plant to see if they will take your old books for their paper recycling program. The advantage of this method is that the materials are delivered to an agency that can be informed that the materials are no longer needed, and so the chance of the materials being returned is reduced. This method may also be somewhat more acceptable in a political sense, since the books will be used again and the library might even make a little money this way.

Slide 66: Public Relations Issues

One of the most difficult problems in weeding a collection is to actually dispose of the weeded materials. When some well-meaning members of the public find out that the library is "throwing books away," it may create a public relations problem for the library.

Some libraries have also found that it is actually very difficult to throw books away. They find that books that have been discarded keep returning to the library, even if they have been tossed into the local landfill. Or even if books have been sold in the library book sale, the buyers somehow feel that they should be returned to the library once they have been read.

Slide 67: Public Relations Issues

There is probably no sure way of avoiding these situations, but there are a number of techniques to minimize the chances of these events occurring. Here are some steps to take to avoid public relations

problems:

Make sure that weeding is fully explained in your policy – A clear explanation of the necessity of weeding should be in your weeding policy, and this policy should be approved before you start any weeding program. The policy shows that the staff and governing authority were fully aware of what they were doing and had good reasons for weeding the library.

Understand and follow any laws or local ordinances about the disposal of public property – There may be state laws or local ordinances that give procedures for the disposal of public property. Make sure that you follow them. The failure to follow the legal procedures can make a situation that otherwise can be resolved into a public relations nightmare. State laws for both city and district libraries in Idaho give library boards the authority to dispose of property. Both types of libraries may want to include something in their weeding policies about the standard methods of disposing of weeded materials. City libraries and school libraries may have other requirements that they must meet because of city ordinances or school policies regarding the selling of property. If you are not sure whether such ordinances or policies exist, it would be a good idea to check with the city clerk or your school principal or superintendent.

Give the public a chance to acquire materials before discarding them – Usually this is done through some form of book sale, which is stocked with weeded materials.

Work with the media – If you believe that there is a high likelihood that someone may object to the disposal of materials, you may want to act preemptively by explaining what you are doing to the local newspaper reporter or editor. Before doing this, of course, judge whether the reporter or editor is likely to be friendly to your position. You are not necessarily asking for a story at this point. You are simply informing an important person in the community of the weeding process and why it is necessary. Having

a board member explain the policy and procedures may be especially effective. Again this should only be done if you are expecting trouble over weeding.

Please complete the following quiz and then proceed to the conclusion of the course.

Slide 68: Quiz: Handling Weeded Materials

Slide 69: Conclusion: Evaluation of the Collection Development Process

Remember, the Collection Development Policy should be reviewed and updated every year, if appropriate. This determines the collection goals and therefore the collection design priorities for the year.

Collection assessment should be done regularly to determine if the collection goals are meeting the community needs.

Regularly weed to keep the collection fresh, neat and attractive to users.

Use process reality checks with library staff members, the governing board and stakeholders to make sure everyone understands the process and there is no miscommunication that could lead to public relations issues.

Work as a team to determine if the methods used in the collection development process are developing a collection that meets the needs of the community.

Slide 70: Quote

"A library's function is to give the public, in the quickest and cheapest way, information, inspiration, and recreation. If a better way than the book can be found, we should use it."

Melvil Dewey (1851-1931), American Librarian and Educator

Slide 71: Additional Resources

For additional online resources related to Collection Maintenance, download the files provided under the Attachments tab in the upper right corner of the course window.

The next slide will be the Final Exam for this course.

Slide 72: Final Exam

Slide 73: Certificate of Completion

Click on the link to access the course survey. Completing this survey will allow you to print a personalized Certificate of Completion for your continuing education files.

Be sure to check the attachment "States Recognizing ABLE" to see if your state is on the list of recognizing ABLE as a continuing education credit for your state's required library certification.

Thank you for taking the Alternative Basic Library Education Collection Maintenance course.