

Weeding: your library will thrive on it

When preparing for a garage sale, would you find it easier to part with anything rather than your books? Do you have more books, tapes, CDs, DVDs, or vinyl records than anyone you know? Eventually the day



comes for any library when no space allows for new books and materials and it becomes increasingly difficult to find anything. It is far better for the health of your library to develop a weeding policy

before the need for pruning arrives. It is easier to get rid of old growth if you know in advance that pruning will happen and what will happen to the cuttings!

Our church's library committee has determined that no more than three years will pass between each weeding, which we do in conjunction with a total inventory. Date records are kept of each inventory/weeding. Our library uses these criteria to determine if an item will be weeded or retained:

- What is the physical condition of the material? Tattered? Yellowed pages? Is it worth the time/effort/money to repair? Would YOU check out this book?
- How often or recently has it circulated?
- Does the material have historical significance to the congregation, community or denomination? Has it local value due to a person, place or event? Is it a "classic?"
- Is its information out of date (e.g., check its facts and figures or the studies quoted)? Are its photos or illustrations dated?
- Should it be replaced with an updated edition? Is there a newer title available that better addresses the same issue?

- Are there multiple copies where one would be enough?
- Might it have been an earlier mistake to purchase or accept as a donation?
- Should someone else evaluate the contents, e.g., the pastor or other church staff? We always have two to three members of our library group work together to recommend deletion or retention. If they can't agree or have questions, we check further.

When deciding to withdraw an item, here are the written rules we follow:

Deleting weeded items: a.k.a., The All Rule

- 1 Remove all ownership information from the material itself—card/pocket or electronic barcode information—and black out all ownership stamps. Write DISCARD or WITHDRAWN in heavy black ink very visibly on the material.
- 2 Delete all information from computer records and/or pull all catalog cards.
- 3 If your library uses an accession book, note there the date the item was withdrawn.
- 4 Be sure to delete all information about this material from any library bibliographies, such as special lists of holiday and festival books, special collections, or special subject area lists.
- 5 Get all weeded material out of the library and out of the building! If the item was donated, be sure to refer to your library's donation policy for further guidance.



Libraries Alive Library Basics Series

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Reprinted from *Libraries
Alive*, Fall 2005.



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