

TCCL Weeding Guidelines

Last updated: November 22, 2019

Why libraries weed

Weeding, or the de-selection and removal of materials from the library's collection, is an integral and necessary process for ensuring the ongoing relevance, currency, and accessibility of the library's physical collections—books and media—(see our [Subscription Review documentation](#) for more information about our process of reviewing and making changes to our print and digital subscriptions). Weeding is practiced by all libraries, just as adding new titles to the collection is standard practice; libraries cannot build and maintain a strong collection without both adding and removing items.

As thousands of new titles are added to the library's collection each year, space needs to be freed up for these new items (some libraries use a one in, one out approach. TCCL does not). In turn, as the collection grows older, some previously acquired content is no longer useful or relevant to our users, and in some cases is in poor condition. Weeding involves the regular and ongoing assessment of the collection based on a set of established and agreed upon criteria. Our commitment to long-term retention of print materials extends to those that continue to support the academic needs of our students and faculty, as well as materials identified by our [shared print agreements with regional and national library consortia](#).

In short, weeding allows libraries to:

- Maintain a current, accurate, and useful collection
- Make the best use of space by preventing overcrowding
- Improve the appearance, browsability, and accessibility of the collection
- Identify materials needing repair or replacement
- Determine the collection's strengths and any gaps that may exist

Responsibility for weeding

Subject librarians are expected to regularly weed collections in the subject areas for which they are responsible. Consultation is expected with Collections & Technical Services staff as they play a key role in removing withdrawn items from the catalog and the building. Subject librarians need to also be mindful that other subject areas may be impacted by weeding decisions and consult with colleagues as appropriate.

General Criteria for Weeding

Criteria exists for weeding just as they do for selecting materials to add to the collection. General criteria for withdrawal of items from the collection include:

- **Duplication** It is our standard practice to retain a second copy if the title has more than 10 circulations in the last 3 years; if a third copy exists both the second and third is retained if the title has circulated over 50 times in the same period of time; reprints are also considered duplicates, if they are not a new edition. Subject librarians have the discretion to retain copies that do not meet the threshold of use outlined in our standard practice.
- **Superseded editions** (if not considered classics or needed for historical purposes).
- **Poor condition/damaged items** (broken spines, defaced or faded pages or covers, missing, torn, or brittle pages, etc. If the materials receive reasonable use, they are considered for replacement or repair.)

- **Items that require equipment that is obsolete or no longer available** (if it is important to retain we can investigate replacement or reformatting)
- **Titles TCCL has purchased as part of a perpetual access digital collection or are available in the public domain** (e.g., EEBO, HathiTrust, JSTOR, Cambridge ebooks, Internet Archive)

In the interest of maintaining a diverse and balanced collection, care is also taken to ensure that weeding does not unintentionally create a deficiency of works by or about historically marginalized, underrepresented, and underserved populations.

Subject Specific Criteria for weeding

Decisions will vary depending upon the subject area in question. These are some of the more common criteria used across various subjects/disciplines. Keep in mind that each decision is unique and a variety of factors are considered:

- Low or no circulation/usage over a specified length of time (see below for more specificity)
 - If there is low use, is the title held widely by other regional/national libraries? (if so accessible via Resource Sharing, if needed)
- No longer meets a curricular need
- Contains misleading or inaccurate information
- Outdated (e.g., Software guides; professional practices that are no longer followed or accurate (medical, agricultural, business, etc.))
- Lacking historical importance/significance
- No longer relevant or of general academic interest or trivial/popular in nature (e.g., topics of brief popular or ephemeral interest at some point in the past which has now waned. Could also be titles that come out shortly after an event but do not stand the test of time)

The following guidelines for broad subject categories are used in conjunction with the general criteria for weeding above as well as any specific circumstances pertaining to individual subject areas or program(s) of study.

Keep in mind that guidelines are generalizations and that there will be exceptions. As each subject librarian develops discipline specific criteria links will be added below:

- **Humanities:**
 - Materials in this area generally do not become outdated, so factors such as use, duplication, and condition will take on added significance. Keeping in mind that TCCL lacks the space and resources to provide a comprehensive collection, the library's collection is focused on supporting the current curriculum, research, and scholarship being conducted at the colleges (See [Collection Scope](#)).
 - Available in a stable digital archive (e.g., EEBO, HathiTrust)
 - [ALA's Guidelines for Deselecting Literatures in English Collections in Academic Libraries](#) (2016)
 - [Detailed Music collection criteria, Holly Gardinier](#) (2019)
- **Social Sciences:**
 - Materials in the social sciences typically become outdated after ~10 years.
 - No longer relevant or are now trivial
- **Business & Economics:**

- Materials in these areas typically become outdated after 10 - 15 years and should be considered for weeding after this time.
- **Technology:** materials in these areas tend to become outdated within 3-5 years and should be considered for weeding after this time. If a book is to be withdrawn and has accompanying media these items need to be pulled and sent to cataloging to also be withdrawn
 - Technology materials that are more conceptual in nature and do not involve specific technology have longer lasting relevance or historical value and may still be of value to the Library collection beyond the 10 year mark.
 - No longer relevant or are now trivial
- **Health Care & Medicine:**
 - Materials in this area are usually outdated in as little as 3 - 5 years.
 - Misleading, outdated, or inaccurate information
- **Applied Sciences:**
 - Materials in these areas tend to become outdated within 10 years and should be considered for weeding after this time.
 - An exception is Computer Science materials, which should be reviewed every 3 - 5 years.
 - Misleading, outdated, or inaccurate information
- **Pure Sciences:**
 - Materials in this area are usually outdated within 10 years, but exceptions to this should be noted, such as in mathematics, geology, and astronomy, which does not become outdated as quickly.
 - Misleading, outdated, or inaccurate information

What materials should **NOT** be withdrawn

- Claremont print dissertations and theses are retained in perpetuity, despite duplication in Special Collections, and whether there is recent circulation or not
- Titles that we have agreed to retain as part of two Shared Print agreements ([SCELC](#) and HathiTrust)
- Classics or essential/core titles in a given discipline (even if there is little/no circulation)
- Use of the material for instructional purposes. Some materials may otherwise qualify for weeding should be kept because they are used by instructors for teaching purposes.
- Subject Librarians and Collections & Technical Services staff will review items for potential transfer to **Special Collections** in accordance with the Association for College & Research Libraries' "[Guidelines on the Selection and Transfer of Materials from General Collections to Special Collections](#)," before they are considered for withdrawal. Broad criteria include:
 - Market value (items over \$1,000)
 - Rarity/Scarcity (e.g., limited editions, fewer than 10 copies in the U.S.)
 - Date and place of publication (e.g., books printed in the hand press era, 1455-1855)
 - Physical and intrinsic characteristics (e.g., books with significant provenance or evidence of association--bookplates, inscriptions, and marginalia)
 - Bibliography and research value, in our case, any material that complements [Special Collections focus areas](#)