




## WEEDING TIPS

# Feel the Need to Weed: Library Weeding Basics

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BOOKLIST ONLINE'S  
**CORNER SHELF**  
Where Readers' Advisory Meets Collection Development

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...which can dramatically improve a library's performance.  
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**Weeding Tips: Shelf by Shelf: 900s**  
by Rebecca Vnuk

**Notes from the Field**

**Marketing and Readers'-Advisory Advice from Susan Brown**  
by Rebecca Vnuk



At the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Seattle this year, I had the pleasure of meeting Susan Brown, marketing director for the Lawrence (KS) Public Library. She shares her viewpoints on marketing, readers' advisory, and social media with us in this interview.

**Rebecca:** Many libraries may not have a dedicated marketing person—can you give us a summary of what your job entails?

**Susan:** My job really encompasses communications, publicity, PR, and marketing: I coordinate our amazing social-media team; I manage all of our communications (calendar, newsletter, press releases, etc.); I manage our website, with help from our great web content team; I help with major library-wide programs such as summer reading and Read across Lawrence; I help launch new services and initiatives by developing PR campaigns; and I work with community organizations to develop partnerships.

Most of all, I work to position Lawrence Public Library as an essential destination that both serves and reflects our

If you're not too traumatized from [weeding your fiction collection](#), then it's time to move on to the 900s. The special call-out sections of the 900s are travel and biography. Other portions of the 900s should be weeded based on condition, currency, and usage.

Books on current affairs should be weeded after three to five years; some titles may be retained for historical perspective as space allows. Most of your general-history titles can be retained if they are in good shape and are circulating, but do watch for dated material—please tell me you don't have books that refer to the Soviet Union in the present tense. This is also especially true for your geography and map sources.

**Travel**

For travel guides, weed after two years. Replace annually if the budget allows. An outdated travel guide is fairly useless to a traveler. Sure, people can check online, but the reason they came to your library to get that book was so that they didn't have to print out everything from the web! I'll never forget the librarian who scoffed at me when I weeded *Podor's New York City, 2000*—in 2004. "It's still useful, not that much changes in a big city like New York, all the tourist stuff is the same every year." I simply said, "Twin Towers," as I discarded the book.

>> [read more](#)

## Why do we need to weed?

- Shelf space
- Easier to browse
- Makes collection look better
- Collection Development – what do you have, what do you need?
- Purge outdated materials
- We are libraries, not museums



## Why is it so hard to weed?

- That's taxpayer money!
- Personal relationship if you bought this book
- Books are valuable!
- Will it look bad to have empty shelves?
- This is *someone's* favorite book!



## *So, how do I get over all that?*

- It's more of a waste of taxpayer dollars to keep outdated or nasty books on the shelf
- Think of your personal responsibility to the collection as a whole
- But remember, this is the library's collection, not *your* collection
- Keep your community informed
- ILL can get someone their favorite book...



## When to Weed?

Ideally, it's an **ongoing process**:

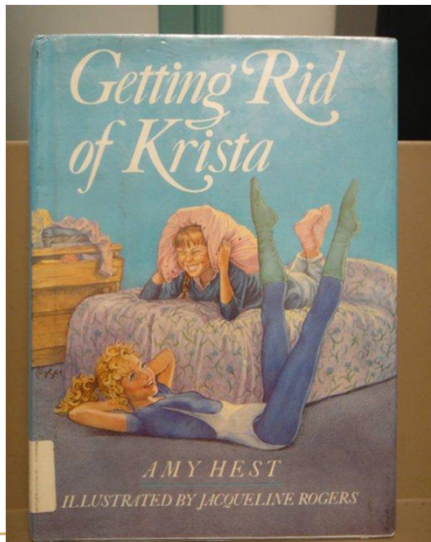
- Reduces number of materials withdrawn at one time
- Keeps community happy

Weeding **projects** needed when:

- Shelf space becomes impossible to navigate
- Patrons complain about condition of materials/lack of current information



Every teen wants to read this one!



rails

Photo courtesy of  
Veronica DeFazio

Or these. Pretty sure I checked these out when I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

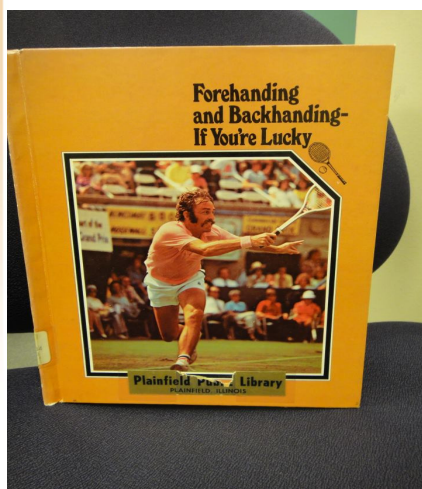


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Sure, not much has changed about the way we play tennis, but...



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Veronica DeFazio

## How to Weed?

- Have a solid collection development policy in place
- Use lists like the C.R.E.W. method:

### **MUSTIE**

**M= Misleading** -factually inaccurate

**U= Ugly** -beyond mending or rebinding

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

**T= Trivial** -of no discernible literary or scientific merit

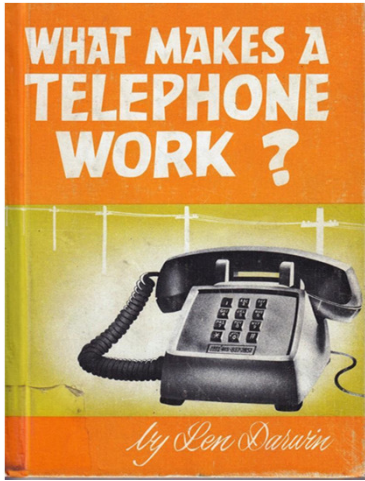

**I= Irrelevant** to the needs and interests of the library's community

**E= Elsewhere** -the material is easily obtainable from another library



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The phone on the cover is the latest and greatest technology, according to the book. Touch Tone is the wave of the future!





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PUBLICATIONS

Courtesy of AwfulLibraryBooks.net

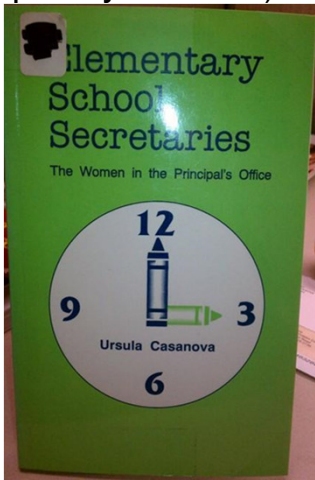

## How to Weed? cont.

- Reports are your best friend! Your choice:
  - Last checkout date (pick a length of time)
  - Age of item
  - Number of checkouts
- Looks alone
  - Rips, smells, dog-eared, stained, etc. Who wants to check out a nasty book?
- Multiple copies?
  - Do you really have room?
  - Has the interest waned yet?



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PUBLICATIONS

Finally weeded in 2012. Purchased in 1991, had never been checked out. (Not to mention completely sexist...)





**rails** Booklist PUBLICATIONS

Courtesy of AwfulLibraryBooks.net

## How to Weed? cont.

- Take a good hard look at the quantity and quality of what you have in that area
- Community interest/timeliness
  - A fad that has passed?
  - A school assignment that's no longer valid?
  - An author that has seen their heyday come and gone?



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## To Weed or Not To Weed? Checklist of Weeding Factors

Date/Author  
 Condition  
 Any more copies?  
 Circulation stats  
 Expense to replace  
 Relevance to curriculum  
 Similar resources?  
 Reading level  
 Illustrations  
 Current interest?  
 Visual appeal



## Content Considerations

Outdated and obsolete (computers, law, science, space, health, technology, travel, countries (juvenile), endangered animals)

Trivial subject matter (outdated popular culture)

Inaccurate or false information

Unused sets of books (keep used volumes if they meet local needs)

Repetitious series

Superseded editions

Materials that contain bias, racist, sexist terminology or views

Unneeded duplicates





## Questionable items

- Would I be embarrassed if the library didn't own it?
- If I put this on display, would it go out?
- Does the book fit the needs of my community?
- Does it have local interest?
- Is the author still living and writing?



## Quick Tips for Painless Weeding

Do it daily. Scan your shelves. Alert your shelvees.

Save your ten worst weeds so you can show them if someone challenges your weeding.

Need a place to start? Try the computer books. Or Biographies.



## Tips for Youth/YA Collections

- Know your collection and how it is used
- Sight weed fiction collections at least every other year
- Become familiar with the top non-fiction authors
- Embrace the Murphy's Law of weeding



## Special Considerations in Youth/YA

- Quality of photos/illustrations
- Award winners
- Perennial homework assignments
- Does this book fulfill Common Core needs?
- Is this a series whose time has come and gone?
- Be ruthless with YA fiction – currency is KEY



## Bad books happen to good authors



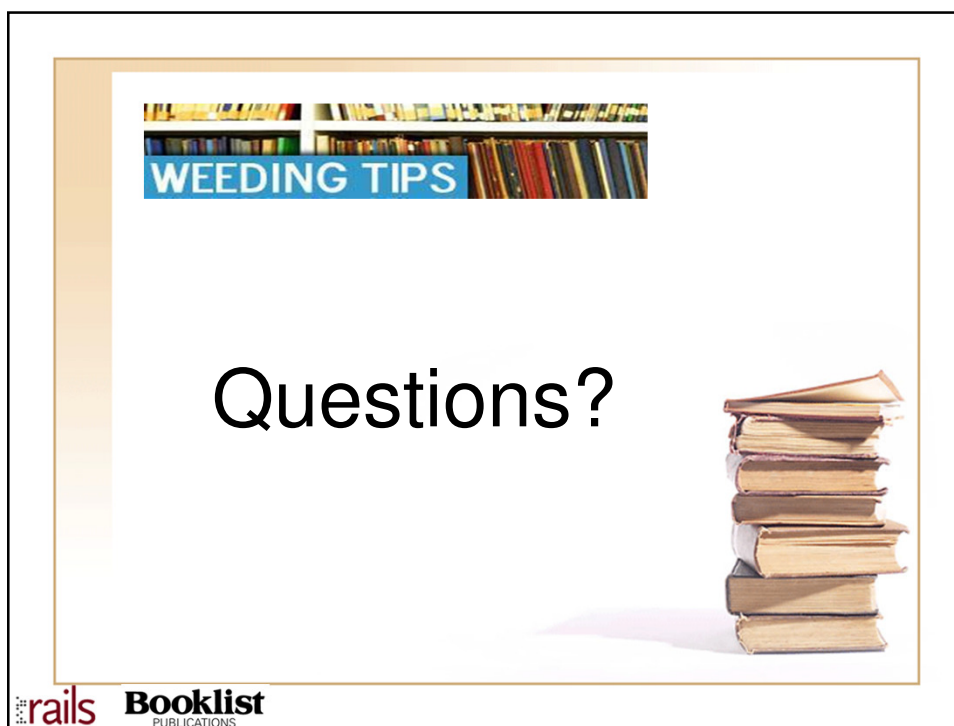
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## A note on Public Perception

- ALWAYS keep the whole staff informed so they can alleviate any patron anxieties
- Reassure them you are *replacing* materials as well
- Let them know where the materials went




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WEEDING TIPS

# Questions?



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This is a presentation slide for 'Weeding Tips' from Booklist Publications. The slide features a header with a bookshelf image and the text 'WEEDING TIPS'. The main content area contains the word 'Questions?' in a large, black, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stack of five old, worn books. The slide is framed by a thin black border and a light beige gradient bar on the left side. The Booklist Publications logo is located in the bottom left corner.