

Collection Development & Management at the Fairfax County Public Library

September 24, 2013

The goal of the Fairfax County Public Library is to provide and encourage the use of library resources and services where the Fairfax County Public Library can best meet the evolving educational, recreational, and informational needs of all the residents of Fairfax County, and Fairfax City, thus enhancing individual and community life.

To support this goal, library materials are selected, organized and made accessible in order to anticipate and meet the diverse needs of the Fairfax County and City citizens.

Goals of Selection

The Fairfax County Public Library selects, makes available, and promotes the use of library materials, whatever the format, which:

1. Enrich and support the educational, recreational, and informational needs of the users, taking into consideration their varied interests, abilities, and learning styles.
2. Represent differing viewpoints on a subject.
3. Reflect the problems, aspirations, attitudes, and ideals of a pluralistic society.
4. Support business, cultural, recreational, and civic activities in the community.
5. Stimulate self-understanding and growth.
6. Enhance job-related knowledge and skills.
7. Increase knowledge of and participation in the affairs of the community, the country, and the world.
8. Are appropriate to the level of the user.

Criteria for Selection

The evaluation of materials is characterized by flexibility, open-mindedness, and responsiveness to the changing needs of the citizens of Fairfax County and City. These changing needs require that materials be evaluated initially and on a continuing basis. As a result, material not recommended for purchase originally, may in fact, be purchased at a later date. The converse, that is materials may still be considered unsuitable or unnecessary for the collection, is also possible.

Materials are evaluated as a whole and not on the basis of a particular section. A work will not be excluded from the Library's collection, because it presents an aspect of life honestly or because of frankness of expression.

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While a single standard cannot be applied to each potential item for selection, materials are judged by appropriate criteria. In some instances, these criteria include artistic merit, scholarship, or the value of the material to the informational needs of the community. In other instances, the criterion may be substantial demand.

To build a diversified collection, which supports the Library's mission, the following objective criteria are used. These criteria apply to purchased and donated materials.

General Criteria

1. Availability and suitability of format.
2. Suitability of subject, style, and level for the intended audience.
3. Critics' and staff's reviews.
4. Reputation of the publisher or producer; authority and significance of the author, composer, film maker, etc.
5. Timeliness or permanence of the material.
6. Quality of writing, design, illustrations, or production.
7. Relevance to community needs.
8. Potential and/or known demand for the material.
9. Relative importance in comparison with existing materials in the collection on the same subject.
10. Availability and accessibility of the same material in the Metropolitan area.
11. Price.

Withdrawal and Discarding of Library Materials

The continuous review of library materials is necessary to ensure an accurate, relevant, up-to date and attractive collection. Materials are regularly withdrawn from the Library's collection. They are withdrawn and discarded because:

1. They are out-of-date, that is, no longer timely or accurate.
2. They are so badly worn or damaged that they cannot be bound or mended.
3. It is cheaper to replace them.
4. They are once-popular materials no longer used.
5. Space considerations. (In this case, materials may be transferred from one Branch Library to another Branch Library.)

Materials deemed lost or missing, are officially withdrawn from the record of Library holdings.

Why Weed

We weed the collection to ensure an accurate, relevant, up-to date, and attractive collection. Our goal when weeding is to weed what is in bad condition, what is not used, and what is inaccurate.

FCPL's goal is to have a well-used, well-rounded collection that reflects the interests of the many communities we serve. To help meet that goal, we track collection use, encourage staff collection input (the collection priority database), and customer input (online suggest a title form). To maximize collection use and the cost-effectiveness of our collections, we measure and respond to collection use. We weed or transfer what is not used, and keep what is most used. Space allocation is based on the current size and actual and potential use of a collection; not the original library floor plan and space.

Who Weeds

Weeding is done by the Branch Staff at each library and by the Collection Services Department (CSD). It is a collaborative effort with Branch Staff using their professional judgment to deselect material at the branch and the CSD providing guidelines and resources. CSD also does centralized weeding when new materials are selected to replace superseded materials.

Branches send their withdrawn materials to Technical Operations. Technical Operations reviews and withdraws the materials from the library's holdings. A centralized discard practice has been in place since October 2012, as recommended by the County's Internal Audit findings.

Three Types of Weeding & FCPL General Guidelines

1. Weeding for condition

Types of damage

- water stains
- coffee stains
- food stains
- fluid stains
- breaks in spine
- pages pulling away from the spine
- loose pages
- missing and torn pages
- creased or torn covers
- pet damage

2. Weeding for low use

Many of the titles FCPL purchases, particularly adult best sellers, and trendy and time-sensitive nonfiction like diet books, have a relatively short life span. A branch may have originally gotten 4 copies of last year's bestselling diet book. A year or two later, one copy is usually enough.

The last active report provided by CSD identifies these copies in each branch.

Reviewing low-demand titles on the last active list:

- Identify low-demand titles in excellent condition that may have a chance for higher use at another branch and offer them for transfer
- Identify titles in bad condition that are still in high demand and request replacements in the collection priority report (or request subject coverage from new titles if what we own is out of date).
- It is legitimate (especially at larger libraries with more shelf space and a more in-depth collection) to keep some titles from the last active list. However, staff must consider that those titles will still be accurate in 18 months, and determine that there is still some demand and/or need for the subject coverage or titles in a series.

3. Weeding for Accuracy in Non-Fiction & Reference

When weeding for accuracy, it's important to differentiate between incomplete and inaccurate.

Titles that are incomplete, but which are still accurate for the information that is contained in the title, may be retained. Titles that have inaccurate information should be weeded. For example: If a title is older and you are keeping it for "historical" purposes, is it clear that the title contains information for a certain time period? This is especially important for children's material. Children may not be as discriminating as adults when choosing material to use.

There are some areas where we need to be very stringent, including medical and legal areas. Within law and medicine, there are some titles that will still be valid long after others are weeded.

Examples would include: personal experiences dealing with illness (The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat), titles on the history of medicine or law, many titles dealing with homeopathy/natural medicine, etc.

A special note about law and medicine: because inaccurate material in these areas has the potential to harm people if they act on it, outdated material should be discarded, not put in the circulating collection or in book sales.

Other areas, such as history, arts and crafts, and language, will not be uniformly in need of weeding at a certain time.

Tools to use when weeding for accuracy include:

- FCPL Weeding Guidelines
- CREW ("Continuous Review, Evaluation, and Weeding") Method document
<https://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ld/pubs/crew/index.html>
- First Search – Check other libraries in the area who still retain a title (Montgomery County, Arlington County, Loudoun County)
- Amazon – You can often search inside a book (check table of contents and index for currency of information; to see how recent customer reviews are and what they are saying; to check to see if title is still for sale/in print, or to see if it is only available as used/new from other sellers through Amazon).

Check to see if a new or revised edition is owned by FCPL. If so, the older title should be a good candidate to weed. If you find a newer edition that FCPL doesn't own, please enter that title into the Collection Priority database as a recommendation to purchase.

Weeding for Accuracy in Reference

Weeding for accuracy in Reference is much like weeding other non-fiction. Be aware of subject areas that are continuously changing, such as:

- science and medicine
- endangered species
- computers and technology
- law
- geography and travel

Pay special attention to the accuracy of information in these types of materials– they date quickly.

- Directories
- Calendar-type information
- Subject dictionaries and encyclopedias
- Atlases
- Local publications

Withdrawn Materials

The library must follow rules that are in place regarding the disposal of county property. The library is granted an exception in order to donate to Library Friends Groups. Under the Code of Virginia, Section 42.1-40, the Library Director has authority, to donate used, discarded items to Friends of the Library organizations. However, items that are deemed "surplus", for example those books that even Friends groups can't use, are governed by County Procedural Memorandum 12-03 administered under the Department of Purchasing and Supply Management. Through their purview, items can be sold at auction or donated only to organizations that have been approved to receive county assets by the Board of Supervisors.

In Development

1. All withdrawn library materials (with the exception of media and subscription services with contractual agreements) are given to the library's Friends groups. Items not claimed by the Friends Groups will be sent to the Department of Purchasing and Supply Management to be repurposed.
2. A Collection Evaluation Focus Group will be formed and members will include front line branch staff and Collection Services staff. This group will review current procedures and practices that assist all staff in collection management best practices and provide guidance and training for consistent weeding and collection development.
3. Library Administration will provide a list to all Friends Groups of county approved organizations that may receive donated materials. This will ensure a wider distribution of withdrawn materials.