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# Wilde About Weeding: An Earnest Effort in Collection Development

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## Abstract

In an effort to create more student space, provide ease of access to resources, and strengthen their collection, a medium sized academic library at a recently consolidated university undertook a major weeding project in 2014. A weeding plan was developed for both the monographs and the serials. Since it was important to get immediate results in removing items from the collection, the print serials section was the first area selected for weeding. Through a step-by-step process that involved all members of the library staff, items were evaluated on electronic availability, availability at the other university libraries, the content, the condition, and the length of run.

In January 2013, the University System of Georgia (USG) approved the consolidation of eight system universities into four. One of these consolidations was between two institutions in Augusta, Georgia, i.e., Augusta State University and Georgia Health Sciences University, home of the Medical College of Georgia. The resulting institution, Georgia Regents University, is “one of only four public comprehensive research universities in the state” (USG, n.d., Overview section, para. 1). In addition to the two campuses in Augusta, now designated the Health Sciences Campus and the Summerville Campus, “the Medical College of Georgia includes a partnership campus in Athens, Ga., and satellite campuses in the Georgia cities of Albany, Rome and Savannah” (USG, n.d., Overview section, para. 1).

The two campuses in Augusta are distinctly different. The Health Sciences campus is the medical campus for the university and attended predominantly by professional graduate students. It is home to the Medical College of Georgia, College of Allied Health Sciences, College of Dental Medicine, the Graduate School, and the College of Nursing. This campus is serviced by the Robert B. Greenblatt, MD Library. The Summerville campus is predominantly an undergraduate campus serving a liberal arts mission with a limited number of graduate programs. It is home to the College of Education, Pamplin College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, the Hull College of Business, and the College of Science and Mathematics. This campus is serviced by the Reese Library. The total student FTE for the university during fall 2013 was 8,995, with the majority (5,645) of these being

undergraduates. Each of the University Libraries maintains unique collections that support the curriculum on their respective campuses. The Director of Libraries oversees the overall administration of both Reese and Greenblatt Libraries, and a Head Librarian manages the operations for Reese Library.

In some of the other University System of Georgia consolidations, there were overlapping programs, such as two English Departments, two Math Departments, and the like. However, one of the unique features of the Georgia Regents University consolidation was the difference between the two legacy institutions. The only overlap was a nursing program on the Summerville campus that consolidated with the College of Nursing on the Health Sciences campus. The program and its faculty were transferred to the Health Sciences campus. As a result, the nursing resources in the Reese Library were evaluated; with some transferred to the Greenblatt Library while others were weeded from the collection entirely. Reese Library maintained 312 monographic nursing titles that were later removed from the Library. There were also 95 nursing journal titles removed.

Upon the transfer of the program, a comparison of serial titles was made between the holdings of the Greenblatt Library and the holdings of the Reese Library. This comparison looked at runs of journals, journals held at Reese and not at Greenblatt, duplicates, holes in collections, and online availability. There were 33 titles (178 volumes) transferred from Reese Library to Greenblatt Library. There were 62 duplicate titles

(1,251 volumes) between the two libraries. The duplicates were weeded from the Reese Library.

The consolidation of nursing resources was the consolidated libraries' first foray into weeding. A bigger weeding project where the collections of both libraries could be evaluated was planned for 2014 and a weeding plan developed for both libraries. The purpose of this weeding plan is to ensure a relevant collection that supports the university's mission. It will make active items more visible, attractive, and accessible, ensuring the most efficient use of existing, limited space. In addition, shelf space for new additions to collection will be created (Reese, 2014). Space in both libraries is limited and weeding the collections will also allow for the creation of more student areas.

The weeding plan establishes some criteria for both monographs and serials for use in determining whether or not items can be weeded from the collection. For monographs, the criteria for weeding includes those items that are badly worn or mutilated. If an item is important to the collection, however, it will be mended instead of weeded. Duplicate copies of seldom used items are also on the list for weeding.

It is important to note how the collection was originally developed. In an effort to obtain materials to quickly build the collection in early years of Reese Library, many books were acquired in lots. Some of the acquired materials were tangential to the curriculum, but filled the shelves and added volumes to the statistics. For example, being a primarily liberal arts campus, there are many monographs in classic literature that are very old and have never been checked out.

Items determined to be inappropriate to the mission of the University or not relevant to current or planned curriculum needs are also listed in the criteria for weeding. A check-out report was run in Voyager to determine the check-out frequency of items. Those items that have not been used recently, within the past ten years, have also been marked for weeding. Items determined to be obsolete, which is especially important for science and medicine, have been selected for weeding, and monographs that have

not been catalogued, unless determined to be vital to the collection, are also marked for deselection. Superseded editions and unsolicited donations that do not support collection needs are also on the list for weeding. At the start of the weeding plan, the Reese Library's holdings included approximately 352,000 titles.

In an effort to expedite the weeding process, serials were selected as the starting point of the project. Serials weeding presented a different set of challenges. Criteria established for the deselection of serials included the same requirements as monographs, but other factors had to be evaluated, as well. Any serials that are still received in print were removed from the possible weeding list. Since there were two libraries who had print subscriptions to journals, the serials were evaluated for duplication (Thomas & Shouse, 2012). When the catalogs for both libraries were consolidated, print serials available in both Libraries show up in the holdings record as "multiple locations." When the holdings are reviewed, the record indicates that there are volumes available in the Reese Library Serials Area, along with the volumes held in the Greenblatt Library bound journals area. By reviewing the holdings for each library, the librarians determined which library has the most complete collection. Serials from the other library can be used to fill any holes in the run. The final location for the print serial is determined by which campus's program would be best supported by maintaining the serial.

Journals with short runs were also considered for serials weeding. Those serials with fewer than 10 volumes were examined closely to see if they were essential to the collection. Thomas and Shouse recommend removing journals where a low number of volumes are maintained (2012). Sometimes these short runs make finding articles more difficult for patrons as the EBSCO Discovery tool recognizes the journal title in the catalog and sends the patron on a search to find the journal.

One of the key determining factors in weeding the serials is online availability. In fact, this was one of the first criteria used in deciding whether a serial could be weeded. Thomas and Shouse state that "online access reduces a library's

need to keep the print copies in browseable stacks” (2012, p. 93). In order to identify the print serials that were available online, a Voyager report was run. It listed all the print serials available at Reese Library. There were 3030 print serial titles. Included in this report were the title and holdings. Since the serials at Reese Library had not previously been available for checkout, the checkout history was not applicable to print serials.

The report run in Voyager included the title and holdings. It was transferred into an Excel file with an added column for online availability and a column for a weeding inquiry. The report was divided into 20 sections and distributed to 20 different library staff members. Each employee checked the Journals A-Z list to see if there was online availability. When the serial was available electronically, the staff member listed the database where the serial could be found, the dates of availability, as well as any embargoes that were put in place. The staff member would then ensure that the links were working to the database, clicking on the link and checking three different volumes and issues to confirm that the serial could be accessed online and text was complete. A benefit for checking the online availability of each title was correcting proxy server issues that remained as a result of the consolidation.

When each employee completed their section of the report, they returned it to the Electronic Resources and Serials Librarian. She reviewed the holdings information in the catalog and compared it with the electronic accessibility to ensure that the print holdings were covered by the online. Print serials that were image-intensive were retained. Also, valuable historical collections that supported the current academic curriculum were kept. The Library boasts possessing volume 1, issue 1 of *Library Journal* from 1876, as well as 100 years of print that the Library does not have online access to. When checking for online availability, depending upon the database where the online version was found, the licensing agreement was reviewed for post-cancellation rights.

The Electronic Resources and Serials Librarian also identified duplicate holdings. In conjunction with the Chair of Content Management at the other Library, items that were available at both libraries were looked at individually to determine which library and which campus should maintain the physical print. Despite there not being overlapping programs, due to the subject matter of the journals, some of the resources in the fields of biology, medicine, chemistry, kinesiology, and psychology were duplicated on both campuses. When there were duplicate holdings, they were reviewed to ensure that any holes in the existing collection were filled before weeding the rest of the journal run.

Once the Electronic Resources and Serials Librarian determined if a title could be weeded, another spreadsheet was created with that information. The title and dates of coverage were listed. If it was a title crucial to the curriculum, the electronic access was added to the catalog. OCLC was checked to ensure that the title and volume weeded was not the “Last Copy in Georgia.” Then the print catalog record was withdrawn from the catalog, the record suppressed, and the holdings also removed from OCLC.

The serials were boxed up and labeled with the journal title, volumes, and dates included, and this information was included in a separate spreadsheet that was sent to the University’s Asset Management department. Since GRU is a state school, any materials that are weeded must go through the Asset Management Department so that they can be sent out for surplus. This department checks with other universities in the system to see if they want to add the weeded materials to their libraries.

Several issues that the Library did not take into account when the weeding project began were staffing issues and expenses. Due to staffing shortfalls, the weeding process took longer than anticipated. Occasionally, a student worker was available from other departments to help with the weeding process. When additional workers were available the number of journals removed from the collection increased. It was necessary to set up a staging area in the technical services department of the Library to prepare for both

journals and monographs that were to be weeded. Shelves were cleaned off to make room for the items selected for removal. The Library has two catalogers who were responsible for removing items from the collection. They began investigating ways to make the removal process go smoother. They implemented location changer software which drastically increased the speed with which they could remove items, using the bar code to select items for removal. Since the majority of the serials in the Reese Library were not able to be checked out prior to consolidation, they did not have bar codes.

Another issue to consider is the cost of boxes. The weeding project began at the end of last fiscal year when there were no funds available to purchase boxes. The Library made connections with some of the local vendors who were willing

to give their boxes to the Library after they received a shipment. Once the new fiscal year began, funds were allocated to the purchase of boxes for weeding.

Thus far the Library has removed 503 serial titles. This includes 8947 volumes in 9259 pieces, with 858 boxes sent off to surplus. Through the end of October 2014, 16 of the initial serials spreadsheets distributed to the Library staff have been fully evaluated. The letters P through Z are still awaiting evaluation. Throughout the process, the availability of resources and the ease of access for patrons were forefront in the decision making. As this project continues, an earnest effort is being to ensure the creation of more student space and the remaining resources will be more relevant to the curriculum.

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