

Libraries and Weeding

What is weeding?

Weeding is the systematic process of evaluating and removing materials from a library collection based on criteria.

Why do libraries weed?

Weeding is as important to a library as adding new materials. Weeding is necessary to:

- Make space for new materials
- Provide an appealing, up-to-date collection
- Make the library easier for everyone to use
- Ensure that the library's collection provides accurate information
- Help staff identify gaps in the collection

How do library staff determine what is removed?

Librarians use guidelines developed by professional library organizations as well as circulation statistics to make weeding decisions. The CREW manual offers parameters for evaluating materials. Our ILS provides circulation reports to show which items have not circulated in 3 to 5 years. The MUSTIE acronym is also used for material evaluation (Misleading, Ugly, Superseded, Trivial, Irrelevant, or available Elsewhere)

M = Misleading—factually inaccurate

U = Ugly – worn beyond mending or rebinding

S = Superseded – by a new edition of/or by a much better book on the subject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

Just because an item has not circulated recently does not automatically mean it will be weeded.

What is the impact of weeding?

When outdated, unused, and grubby items are removed from a collection, it becomes easier to find items on the shelves. Many libraries note an increase in circulation as shelves look more inviting when they are not full.

Does Huntsville Public Library weed?

Yes, weeding is already a policy. The CREW method is specifically referenced in our policy manual. Our last library-wide weed was completed in approximately 2016. We weeded a few smaller sections during the pandemic closures.