Unmaking a Collection

Sarah Voels
Overview

- Introduction the Cedar Rapids Public Library
  - Inheriting a collection
- Three waves of weeding
  - Weeding on condition
  - Weeding on (lack of) circulation
  - Weeding and repurchasing on (abundant) circulation
- Post-weeding circulation
- On-going steps
  - Regularly scheduled weeding
  - Criteria for weeding
Brief (Recent) History of CRPL

- The main branch of CRPL was destroyed in the 2008 floods that effected much of the Midwest.

- The west side branch library was expanded and eventually moved to its present home serving the community on the west side of the Cedar River.
  - The collection comprised of materials that had survived the 2008 flood or had been purchased prior to the new main branch opening in 2013.
With focus on an exciting new main branch and trying to create programs for a rejuvenated library community, the collection became neglected. Personnel was shifted in 2015 to create distinct departments:

- Children’s and Young Adult materials and programming were split to allow programming librarians to focus on outreach and a materials librarian to focus on collection development.
Inheriting a Collection

- The west side library collection not only included older materials but also several cataloging styles, some with out of date cutter numbers
- The collection was also far too large for the space and circulation was dwindling
- Patrons were struggling to find materials on the overcrowded shelves
Weeding

- Weeding was necessary for the health of the collection but needed to be done so responsibly without alarming staff or patrons and so that the Friends of the Library, who would be receiving the newly discarded materials, wouldn’t be overwhelmed.

- Weeding was done so through each part of the children's collection and in phases based on immediacy.
Phase 1 Weeding: Condition
- Items that were visibly damaged

Phase 2 Weeding: Cutter numbers
- Items that did not fit the current cataloging style were assessed and recataloged, repurchased, or discarded

Phase 3 Weeding: No/low circulation
- Items with no-to-low circulation were discarded and not repurchased
# 2017 Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Easy</strong></td>
<td>9737</td>
<td>9824</td>
<td>9699</td>
<td>9460</td>
<td>8796</td>
<td>8132</td>
<td>7213</td>
<td>6878</td>
<td>7066</td>
<td>6978</td>
<td>6914</td>
<td>6492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NF</strong></td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>2047</td>
<td>2067</td>
<td>2087</td>
<td>2378</td>
<td>2604</td>
<td>2930</td>
<td>3083</td>
<td>3375</td>
<td>3550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Graph showing monthly collection for Easy and NF categories from January to December 2017.](chart.png)
# 2017 Circulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>2262</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2522</td>
<td>2259</td>
<td>2239</td>
<td>3633</td>
<td>2922</td>
<td>2685</td>
<td>2255</td>
<td>2607</td>
<td>2420</td>
<td>1559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NF</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Chart showing monthly circulation for Easy and NF categories.](chart.png)
2017 Collection (Overall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18782</td>
<td>18884</td>
<td>18693</td>
<td>18624</td>
<td>18026</td>
<td>17428</td>
<td>16762</td>
<td>16826</td>
<td>17366</td>
<td>17370</td>
<td>17683</td>
<td>17420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total

Jan  
Feb  
Mar  
Apr  
May  
Jun  
Jul  
Aug  
Sep  
Oct  
Nov  
Dec  
### 2017 Circulation (Overall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4379</td>
<td>3961</td>
<td>5270</td>
<td>4440</td>
<td>4768</td>
<td>8517</td>
<td>8398</td>
<td>6190</td>
<td>5971</td>
<td>6444</td>
<td>5253</td>
<td>4293</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Bar chart showing monthly circulation totals for 2017]
2017 Collection/Circulation Combined
## 2016/2017 Circulation Compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2016</strong></td>
<td>5333</td>
<td>4650</td>
<td>5157</td>
<td>3843</td>
<td>5011</td>
<td>7660</td>
<td>7365</td>
<td>5853</td>
<td>5535</td>
<td>5693</td>
<td>5274</td>
<td>3896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2017</strong></td>
<td>4379</td>
<td>3961</td>
<td>5270</td>
<td>4440</td>
<td>4768</td>
<td>8517</td>
<td>8398</td>
<td>6190</td>
<td>5971</td>
<td>6444</td>
<td>5253</td>
<td>4293</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Bar chart comparing circulation between 2016 and 2017]
Ongoing Steps

- To maintain a healthy, regularly circulating collection, a weeding schedule was developed
  - For example, every October CH-EASY (Picture Books) are weeded for low circulation
  - I generally weed items if they have not circulated in two years; some teachers in our community have a two year rotation for specific projects
  - I weed and repurchase children’s materials after 50 circulations
- Our shelver team also regularly helps to pull items that are in poor condition
Exceptions

- I try to stick to a strict “two years without circulation” policy for discarding but there will always be exceptions
  - The major exception is if the item is out of print and I wouldn’t be able to replace it
- Our emotional connection to an item shouldn’t be a factor in weeding; while we are yes, readers, we are generally not the target audience
Taking This Back to Your Library

- Review or develop (collaboratively with your board) a collection development policy to guide or support your efforts to be an asset to your community.

- Honestly look at your collection both physically and its circulation:
  - Are items in visibly poor condition? Are they still circulating?
  - Are there items that are not circulating?

- Determine what your collection needs are and what resources are available to achieve that:
  - Do you have materials your community needs?
  - Are you able to purchase/repurchase if necessary?

- Define your weeding criteria and know why it matters.

- Don’t be afraid!
Questions?

Sarah Voels
voelss@crlibrary.org