Reed Library Weeding Process and Policy

"Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval." -from the American Library Associations' Bill of Rights.

In order to enhance the value and usefulness of Reed Library to the entire college community, care must be taken to insure that its holdings are as comprehensive as possible and are properly maintained. The vitality of a library collection depends on vigorous collection development as well as careful collection management. One aspect of this management is the judicious weeding of materials that no longer support the instructional mission of the college.

Like all collection development, the weeding of materials must be a consultative endeavor involving librarians, faculty members, and other parties as appropriate. The weeding process should rely on a well-defined plan through which the faculty and the librarians, in collaboration, identify materials that may be weeded. This process will help identify both strengths and weaknesses in Reed's holdings. Recognition of weak areas will subsequently be addressed, and whenever possible, appropriate new titles will be acquired after continued consultation with faculty and recommended bibliographies.

STAGE ONE: Librarians Determine Subject Areas to be Reviewed and Check Standard Bibliographies

Weeding is an ongoing process which starts by librarians identifying areas of the collection (according to Library of Congress classifications) that are in need of review.

Once an area of the collection is identified for review, titles in areas identified for the weeding process will be compared against the most recent edition of Resources for College Libraries (RCL)[1] (either in print or electronically). If Reed Library owns a book listed in RCL, librarians will make a note of it in the library's catalog record.

If recommended by the academic department or program, the collection will also be compared to available standard bibliographies published by appropriate (i.e., discipline-specific) professional faculty associations for the subject matter being reviewed. A note will also be added to item's catalog record, indicating the bibliography which cited the item as a "classic" title in the field.

STAGE TWO: Librarians Review the Collection in the Stacks

During the second stage of each weeding cycle, librarians will examine the titles within a designated area and generate a list of items that will be considered for removal. The criteria below list factors which, when used in combination, will help librarians make informed decisions about materials to be kept and materials which may be removed from the collection.

Items that meet any of these conditions will automatically be kept:

- Item appears in Resources for College Libraries
- Item appears in the recommended, discipline-specific, professional bibliography
- Item has circulated in a reasonable time period based on the subject and scope of the work, as determined by criteria developed by the Library Advisory Committee. (Note: An exception may occur if the item's physical condition is poor, particularly if it is not a suitable candidate for in-house mending or rebinding.)

Criteria for identifying those items that will be considered for removal by a process of faculty review (Stage 3):

- Items which have become outdated based on the subject and scope of the work, as determined by criteria developed by the Library Advisory Committee.
- Item has very little or no apparent relevance to current or anticipated college programs.

If librarians are undecided as to whether an item should be added to the list of materials being considered for removal, it will not be marked for withdrawal.

STAGE THREE: Faculty Review of Items Being Considered for Removal

When appropriate, a faculty member who teaches the subject area as part of an interdisciplinary course should also be appointed to the committee by the departmental chair. The faculty committee will be provided with a list containing the call number, author, title, and the imprint information (date, publisher) for the items being considered for removal. This list will be made available electronically via an OnCourse community group. The faculty committee members will have an opportunity to review the list of items for 45 calendar days, and the library liaison will be available to act as a line of communication with the library, offer assistance, answer questions, and troubleshoot any problems that arise. Once the committee has reviewed the items to ensure that the appropriate determination has been made for each title, they will provide their library liaison with a finalized list of items that have been selected for withdrawal from the collection.

STAGE FOUR: Library End Processing

After all stages above are completed, the library staff will finish the weeding process. Materials will be retained by Reed Library, processed out of the library, or sent to the University at Buffalo for retention.

Resources for College Libraries (2006 edition) is used as a standard tool for collection development of academic libraries. RCL is published by the Association for College and Research Libraries division of the American Library Association and Bowker. It lists an established core collection of 65,000 titles in 58 curriculum-specific subjects, selected by 300 subject experts. The relentless growth in books published and the simultaneous decline in acquisition budgets make careful title selection essential for academic libraries. Using RCL as a collection development tool insures that standard titles will remain part of the collection regardless of local use, while other titles of generally accepted significance can be considered for possible purchase.