

Weeding Rare & Special Collections

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Assumptions & Reality

Assumptions

- Everything in special collections is rare and special
- Special Collections never gets rid of materials

Reality

- Just like any other library collection
- Regular maintenance is required
- Weeding is important, especially within mature collections

Foundational Items

- Collection development policy
- Donation agreements or deeds of gift
- Administrative attitudes, policies, procedures

Initial & Routine Efforts

- Start with backlogs (if you have them—most of us do)
- Integrate into other workflows, such as cataloging, shifting, clean-ups
- Start with small, discreet collection or material type
- Try to make it a routine part of the work you do annually

Routine Weeding: Possible Outcomes

- Decide to retain in special collections
- General gifts unit for consideration elsewhere in library collection
- Disposal (options such as Better World Books or outright recycling)
- Other institutions

Strategic De-accessioning

- Periodic, strategic
- More intensive process
- Must think about administrative attitude, legal issues, and donor implications

Strategic De-accessioning: Possible Outcomes

- Dealer purchase or consignment
- Traditional or online auction
- Transfer to another institution
- Each of these are very involved procedures with complexity and “political” implications, in many cases.
- End benefits should justify labor and possible fall-out