

OPAL Weeding Guidelines

Prepared by the OPAL Reference Committee

Approved by the Directors Council, 26 September 2003

OPAL Mission Statement

OPAL (Ohio Private Academic Libraries) is a consortium of libraries in independent institutions of higher education in the State of Ohio. Its mission is to enable cooperation among, enrich the collections in, and enhance the support of its member libraries. This mission is achieved through maintenance of an integrated library system of its members, sharing resources among those libraries, links to additional resources within and beyond those libraries, and other related activities (OPAL By-Laws).

Goal for Weeding Guidelines

In accordance with the mission of the OPAL consortium, the Reference Committee proposes these guidelines for weeding in order to facilitate cooperation in building an excellent consortial collection based on the strengths of each of our individual collections. In addition to strengthening the OPAL collection, our goal is to continue to be a contributing member in the resource sharing process within OhioLINK.

The ACRL Standards for College Libraries state “Collection currency and vitality should be maintained through judicious weeding” (ACRL 2000).

The OPAL weeding guidelines address the need for member libraries to consider the integrity and uniqueness of the OPAL collection as a whole when making decisions about deselection. Although our consortium lacks the remote storage available to the large research libraries, we realize that our collections provide unique items to all of the schools. The *OhioLINK Snapshot 2002* states that 57% of the items in the OhioLINK central catalog were held at only one library. In addition, 72% of the bibliographic records in the OPAL catalog were unique as of May 2003. While a particular item may no longer fit the collection needs of a particular library, it may be important to the entire OhioLINK collection.

Libraries should, of course, continue to use local collection policies for general weeding procedures which must balance the need for timely and current information within limited spaces to meet the needs of each school’s own curriculum and researchers. We suggest these OPAL Weeding Guidelines be seriously considered when developing and revising local policies and procedures. These guidelines are designed to provide minimal requirements for retention. Some libraries may choose to be more liberal with their policies if space is available.

General Collection: Books, videos, scores etc. (Not including Reference)

The process of discarding or weeding is an integral part of ongoing collection management. In addition to considering factors such as condition of the materials, the currency of the information, the authority of the author and publisher, the scope and format, these OPAL Weeding Guidelines should allow our collections to be richer and easier to use. Before items are discarded, each library should check the availability of the item/s in the OPAL & the OhioLINK catalogs.

- Libraries may want to identify special collections, such as medical, legal or historical collections for which these guidelines do not apply.
- Depository Libraries will weed according to the Federal Depository Library Program Guidelines.
- Older editions, even last copies, of frequently revised, identifiable textbooks and directories may be discarded according to local collection policies. Librarians do need to be aware of their historical value for scholars, rather than considering only local demands for current textbooks by students. Librarians might also consider retaining annual directories at 2 to 5 year intervals as an alternative to discarding all past issues.

If the copy under consideration is the **last copy in OPAL**:

- Every attempt should be made to keep the title in the OPAL collection. There may be cases where physical condition of the item is so bad that it must be withdrawn. (Also see Obsolete Formats section below.)
- If the last copy of an item in all of the OhioLINK libraries belongs to an OPAL library, then it should be kept. Another guideline to consider is the OhioLINK proposal to retain five copies in the OhioLINK Central Catalog.
- Before automatically withdrawing any title, consideration should be given to keeping it if it is useful for historical research.

Obsolete Formats

Most OPAL libraries may not be able to support obsolete formats, such as filmstrips, or outdated software. Before discarding, librarians should first list these items with the OPAL Exchange and the OhioLINK Discards mailing lists. If the items go unclaimed, efforts should be made to identify and contact an archives, special collection, or museum interested in such items.

Individual libraries might consider reformatting the item, taking into account “relevant copyright laws” (Lambert 12).

Reference Collection: Serial Records, Directories, Bibliographies, etc.

Following are some suggestions for a last copy situation:

- The major factors which will influence reference weeding include timeliness, space and usage issues.
- If the reference copy under consideration for withdrawal is the last copy in OPAL, librarians should strongly consider transferring the last reference copy to the circulating collection. This would provide access to the items by non-local patrons. The items would then fall under the weeding guidelines for the circulating collection.
- Older editions of directories could be withdrawn, while items such as subject bibliographies statistical compilations of historical value should be retained.
- OPAL reference staff members are also encouraged to coordinate and communicate with other libraries to insure that someone is keeping back volumes of reference works.

Disposing of Withdrawn Items

These guidelines propose that consortium considerations become a part of each of the OPAL libraries' policies.

All last copies that are withdrawn from an OPAL library's collection should be offered first to the Opal Exchange mailing list; if it is a last copy within OhioLINK, it needs to be offered to the OhioLINK Discard mailing list. Any librarian who participates in weeding is strongly urged to subscribe to these lists. The OPALRef mailing list is suggested as a source for consultation and advice when individuals are considering the usefulness of older resources.

Works Cited

ACRL Association of College & Research Libraries. "Standards for College Libraries 2000 Edition."
<http://www.ala.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ACRL/Standards_and_Guidelines/Standards_for_College_Libraries_2000_Edition.htm> 26 June 2003.

FDLP Federal Depository Library Manual Supplement Collection Development Guidelines for Selective Federal Depository Libraries, September 1994.
http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/pubs/fdlm/coldev.html > 26 June 2003.

Lambert, Dennis K. *Guide to Review of Library Collections: Preservation, Storage, and Withdrawal*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2002.

"OPAL By-Laws." 5 Dec. 2001 OHIONET. 3 July 2003.
<<http://opal.ohionet.org/directors/docs/bylaws/OPALBylaws.pdf>>

Further Reading

Pierce, Sydney J., ed. *Weeding and Maintenance of Reference Collections*. New York: Haworth Press, 1990.

Slote, Stanley J. *Weeding Library Collections: Library Weeding Methods*. Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1997.

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