



Deselection Policy

In the interests of maintaining a timely and informative collection, the Mattoon Public Library recognizes that it is necessary to continually evaluate its collection and remove items that are no longer current or useful. Deselection of materials (or “weeding”) removes obsolete or outdated materials and will allow for the collection of newer, more accurate items.

It should be noted that items will not be removed solely due to unpopular beliefs, nor will books be removed without consulting the weeding guidelines, with the exception of an item being damaged beyond repair.

Librarians and library staff will be responsible for the deselection of materials, with consultation from the Library Board.

General Weeding Criteria:

- The number of years since the item’s publication date – is it still accurate and timely?
- The number of years since the item last circulated – is it no longer meeting the needs of our public?
- Misleading and/or factually inaccurate items should be removed.
- Items that are torn, damaged, moldy, or in otherwise poor condition will be removed.
- Items that are superseded by a newer edition will be removed, once the new edition is purchased.
- Items that have no discernible literary or scientific merit will be removed.
- If multiple copies of a book exist, the multiples will be removed once the popularity of the book no longer demands it.

Exceptions to Weeding:

- Works of Local Authors shall be retained but may be removed and put in Local History if the author is no longer living or writing.
- Works related to Local History shall be retained.

Other Circumstances

- The Mattoon Public Library is not currently set up to house rare and fragile materials. Certain items on rare occasion may be given to the local Historical Society to preserve the high maintenance required by fragile and antique documents.

The following sections, roughly divided by Dewey Classification range, will show a special coding in the form of a ratio. These are formula intended as broad guidelines only, and the Mattoon Public Library recognizes that there will be many exceptions to these “rules”. The first number refers to the age of the material, or the number of years since the item’s latest copyright date. The second number refers to the maximum

number of years without usage. An "X" in the place of a number indicates that no clear default number of years is applicable.

000 (General): Encyclopedias (5/X). The shelf-life for materials in this range is generally good for about 5 years, unless they are specialized. Items such as almanacs and computer guides are very timely, however, and must be constantly updated. Almanacs and computer guides are generally useful for about 2 years after copyright date.

100 (Philosophy and Psychology): (10/5). The collection should keep abreast of popular topics in psychology. Philosophy is less likely to become outdated and should be retained or weeded according to use of collection.

200 (Religion and Mythology): (10/5). The collection should have something up-to-date on each area of religion represented by a church, synagogue, or other assembly for worship in the Mattoon area, provided such materials are available. The collection should also have a smaller area reserved for world religions, even if they are not currently represented by a congregation in the area, in order to have an informed populace. Generally, the shelf life for items in this range is ten years, except for areas of rapid change.

300 (Social Sciences): (5/3): Books on government and economics should be replaced by new editions as available. Unless they have an historical approach they are of little use after five years. Books on finance, opportunities for wage earners, college guides, and educational testing are outdated sooner. Books on customs and etiquette may have a longer shelf life depending on whether the subject matter is consistent with current ideas. Books on folklore do not become outdated and may be kept well beyond the 10 years, depending on condition of item.

400 (Linguistics and Languages): (10/5). Need only stock dictionaries and grammar instruction for languages being (or likely to be) studied or spoken in Mattoon.

500 (Pure Sciences): (10/3). Mathematics, general biology, natural history, and botany have a shelf life of ten years, but other sciences may be dated much sooner as new research supersedes earlier data. This is an area of constant change. Basic works of significant historical or literary value, such as Darwin's Origin of the Species should be kept indefinitely.

600 (Applied Sciences and Technology): (5/2). Technology is making such rapid advances that material over five years old is likely to be outdated and obsolete. There are some exceptions: repair manuals for older cars and appliances should be retained as long as such items are generally used in the Mattoon area. Books on clocks, guns, and toys may be kept beyond 10 years since such items are often collectible. Books on medicine (except works on Anatomy and physiology) become outdated more quickly as advances in the field are made; books on home economics also become outdated more quickly as techniques and fashions change.

700 (Arts and Recreation): This range generally enjoys a long shelf-life, and most items may be kept, especially histories of art and music, until worn and unattractive. Books on crafts (X/3) may be retained if they contain basic technique and are well-illustrated. Books on photographic technique should be checked for outdated technique and equipment. Books on sports (7/2) should be weeded if they deal with personalities no longer of interest.

800 (Literature): (X/X) Keep basic materials, especially criticism of classic writers. Discard works of writers no longer read or discussed in literary histories (such as poetry, drama, essays or letters). Discard minor writers no longer read in area schools, unless there is an established demand. Keep literary histories unless they are superseded by better titles.

900 (History and Geography): (15/3) Books on history generally enjoy a longer shelf life than much of the collection. The main factors include demand, accuracy of facts, and fairness of interpretation. Personal narratives and war memoirs of World War II, the Korean War, and the Indochina Wars may be weeded in favor of broader histories of these conflicts, unless the author is a local person, or the book is cited in a bibliography as outstanding in style or content. Dated viewpoints should be discarded. Books on travel (4/2) become dated much more rapidly, with the exception of personal narratives of travel which (10/3) enjoy a somewhat longer shelf life, especially if they are of high literary or historical value. All local material and accounts in which local people have participated should be kept.

Biography: (X/2). These books are shelved separately in the Children's, Young Adult, and Adult collections. Unless the person treated is of permanent interest and importance, biographies may be weeded as demand stops. This applies especially to biographies of faddish celebrities. Poor quality biographies of major celebrities should be replaced with better ones if funds permit. Biographies of outstanding literary value are to be kept until worn, without regard to biographee's reputation.

Adult Fiction: (X/2): Discard works no longer popular, especially second and third copies or old bestsellers. Retain works of durable demand or high literary merit.

Children's Fiction: (X/2) Discard books where the format and reading level are no longer appropriate to the current interest level of the book; topical fiction on dated subjects; second and third copies of series books no longer popular.

Children's Non-fiction: Use the same criteria as for adult works but looking especially for inaccuracy and triviality.

Young Adult Fiction : Use the same criteria as Children's.

Young Adult Non-Fiction: Use the same criteria as Adult.

Periodicals: (2/X) Because of space restrictions, backfiles of magazines are generally no more than two years (current year and last). Newspapers, except for the Mattoon Journal Gazette, are kept generally three months. Exceptions to this practice include National Geographic. And Life magazine.

Audio-Visuals: Worn out or damaged, rarely used, trivial or the faddish are the general criteria taken into consideration when weeding audio-visual items. Also to be taken into account is the format of the audio-visual materials. Antiquated and dying formats will be weeded as use declines.