# Deselection of print monographs in the humanities and social sciences in the digital age

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – For most college and university libraries, deselection of monographs should be an essential component of collection development. Few of these libraries have unlimited space for book stack expansion. This research study aims to cover the reasons why this should be undertaken and how it can be accomplished in the humanities and social sciences. At the main campus of Adelphi University Libraries, a conservative approach was used to identify and carefully review monograph titles that were published more than 50 years ago, and, in most cases, this resulted in their deselection without significantly affecting the collection. For some of these titles, the author determined that they might be worth replacing with available e-books and the author did so.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A brief overview is provided to delineate why deselection is important, and how it can be accomplished. A literature review was prepared. It included a review of deselection at small-, medium- and large-sized college and university libraries. The pros and cons of print versus e-books for collection development were reviewed, including four case studies. The feasibility of replacing print reference titles with e-books was also covered. A review of the monograph weeding project at the Adelphi University Library in the humanities and social sciences is provided. Conclusions and a projection of next steps are also included.

**Findings** – An overwhelming majority of the monograph titles reviewed were deselected without adversely affecting the overall quality of the collection. A small number of available e-book editions were selected to replace some of these deselected titles.

**Research limitations/implications** – All of the titles deselected were published more than 50 years ago. All of these titles were in the social sciences and humanities. The deselection review was limited to philosophy, religion, history, political science, sociology, education and psychology. There were limitations on the amount of time available to review titles in most of these fields, and as a result, only a small percentage of the titles in our collection could be reviewed.

**Practical implications** – The library has very serious space constraints, which has made it difficult to provide the needed study space for members of the Adelphi University community. Some sections of the book collection are jam packed, with no room for expansion. Deselecting older less used titles and eliminating some sections of book shelves help address both of these problems. Replacing some of these print titles with e-books contributes as well. This deselection project has reduced the holdings of monograph print titles significantly. In the future, the author hopes to rely less on print titles and more on e-books for collection development.

**Social implications** – In most fields, college and university students would be better served for their research by more recently published titles. Older, less used titles, as well as those not used at all, should be deselected to make room for more useful and up-to-date titles. As more and more titles become readily available as e-books, the collections of print titles can be reduced. Being able to use e-books even when the library is closed is a great advantage. It should also be noted that these titles can be used by more than one user simultaneously.

**Originality/value** – In conducting the literature search, the author discovered that there were a large number of titles on deselecting print titles. There was also considerable research on e-book collection development. However, there were few that linked these two important topics. In this research article and case study, the author hopes to have made a significant contribution to linking them together.

**Keywords** Weeding, Universities, E-books, Colleges, Deselection, Monographs

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

A vast amount of research has been published on both deselecting print titles in monographic collections and the merits of acquiring e-books for libraries, especially for college and university libraries. Unfortunately, few libraries and researchers have attempted to link these two topics. The focus of this article is a case study on deselection of older print titles in the humanities and social sciences at the main campus of Adelphi University Libraries. The feasibility of replacing some of these titles with e-books will also be explored. This approach may be especially prudent for older, out-of-copyright titles.

At the outset, it should be noted that, sooner or later, unless "blessed" with the luxury of unlimited space for the growth of

their collections, academic libraries have to review and deselect some print titles in both their reference and circulating collections of print monographs. There are a number of reasons why this is essential. Some titles in the collection may be woefully outdated. In most subject disciplines, researchers prefer to use more recently published titles. It should also be noted that collections can expand to the point where they exceed shelf capacity. Further, some titles may be in such poor physical shape that they are unusable and should be discarded, even if replacement copies are not available. In some instances, there may be multiple copies of a title, possibly because several copies were ordered to make the book readily available for a class assignment. If this assignment has not been made for the past several years, then there may no longer be a need for multiple copies. In other cases, more than one edition of a work is included in the collection. In these instances, the most recent edition frequently supersedes the older editions, which can be deselected.

One option for review and deselection is to replace older print titles that are candidates for deselection with e-books, including titles that are ordered from a vendor as well as those that are readily available in the public domain. Many book titles that are no longer covered by copyright restrictions may be available inexpensively as e-books. There are a variety of sources that can be used to find free or inexpensive copies of these and other titles that can be downloaded and added to the library's collection. These sources include WorldCat, Amazon, the Gutenberg Project, Google Trust, HathiTrust and a variety of others. For titles that are still copyright-protected, it may be necessary to contact the publisher and a fee may be imposed before the e-book can be downloaded and made available to library users. The publisher may restrict access to one user or allow for multiple users simultaneously.

There are several reasons why it may be advantageous to replace print titles with e-books. To begin with, e-books can be accessed from any location (the library, the dormitory, at home or from any workstation) at any time. With the emergence of a nontraditional student population (including distance learners), the accessibility factor can be critical. Another advantage is that researchers frequently can more easily browse and manipulate sections of an e-book for key information. However, some library users may still prefer to browse available print titles on a subject. If a title is available in an e-book format, the user need not be concerned about finding the one and only print copy of a title, which may be charged out, misshelved or missing from the collection. They need not renew an e-book, and more than one user can access it simultaneously. Replacing print copies with e-books also makes it less likely that book stacks will become jam packed. E-books do not need to be reshelved after they are used and they cannot be damaged, mutilated or stolen. There are several ways to make e-books readily accessible, and vendors have a variety of platforms to accomplish this. Titles may be added to a library's online public access catalog (OPAC). A link from the OPAC to an online research database that includes the title may be feasible. Libraries may also create a separate online database specifically dedicated to e-books. They may choose to restrict use of an e-book to one or

multiple library users. It should also be noted that with the availability of online programs, some print resources have become irrelevant. Before libraries can determine whether a print title that has been identified for discard should be replaced by an e-book, they must consider whether the title needs to be included in the collection. If the title in question has not been used, then it might not be worth keeping, especially if it no longer supports the curriculum. Some titles in the humanities and social sciences may be considered classics in the field worth keeping indefinitely. For example, works of literature written over a thousand years ago might still be invaluable for your collection. But most titles are not irreplaceable. If a circulating title has not been charged out for home use in the previous 20 years, then it is unlikely it will be missed if it is discarded. Keeping these titles because it is impossible to predict they will never be charged out will make weeding the collection a hopeless task.

Some guidelines can be followed to help determine a final decision on each title. Has this title been charged at least several times within the past 20 years? Does this title still support the curriculum? Is the title still usable, or is it deteriorating or mutilated with missing pages? Is the approach to the subject matter outdated or inappropriate (e.g. characterizing the mentally handicapped as "retarded", African Americans as "coloreds", using phrenology to determine the mental capacity of members of some ethnic groups)? Does the collection contain more recently published titles on the same subject? How many other holding libraries are listed for this title – either this edition or a more recent one – in WorldCat? This consideration is important because if the title in question is discarded, then it may be necessary to provide a researcher at your library with a copy through interlibrary loan. It should also be determined if the print copy can be replaced by an e-book, assuming it is worth replacing.

There are several strategies to ensure that the titles that are discarded will not negatively impact the overall quality of the collection. The teaching faculty at the college or university can be asked to review these titles and identify those that they feel are critical. For any title that has been identified as a candidate for deselection, a search can be conducted in the OPAC to determine whether and how frequently the title has been charged out in the past 20 years. Another method is to identify how many other libraries are listed as reflected in a WorldCat record for this or other editions. One feasible rule of thumb is if at least 50 libraries are listed for this title nationwide, then it should not be difficult to obtain through interlibrary loan.

## Literature review

### Weeding

Several authors have focused on both the need to weed book collections and strategies to undertake it. In an article focusing on the critical philosophical reasons as to why college and university libraries of all sizes should carefully rethink collection management plans and carefully undertake their deselections policies, Demas and Miller (2012) emphasize that these plans should be revised to accommodate both local and shared print and digital considerations. The authors identify six questions to consider in selecting titles for deselection. Is the goal to make it easier to browse the collection, to ensure the relevancy of the collection or to free

up space (or some combination of these)? Has a thorough analysis of the collection been completed to identify which areas would benefit most from weeding? Would it be better to have an ongoing weeding project or would a one-time comprehensive project be preferable? Does the library have the necessary staff to undertake a weeding project, and can it depend on the HaithiTrust and other shared digital collections if the need to access a title arises? Have the holdings of other libraries, both locally and nationally, been considered? Have safeguards been put into place to prevent errors in weeding? The need to keep all campus constituencies in the loop to maintain their trust and support is a significant consideration as well.

The need for weeding or deselection of print titles has been recognized and undertaken by small, medium and large-sized college and university libraries, as well as by consortiums of libraries. All academic libraries must confront and overcome the fear of weeding their book collections, according to an article by Dubicki (2008). The Monmouth University Library in New Jersey, with a small collection of roughly 23,000 books, undertook a major deselection project in response to a significant library renovation. Dubicki discusses why there is a reluctance to weed and why it is nevertheless necessary and beneficial. She notes that a major incentive for weeding came from the faculty at Monmouth, who suggested that some of the library's holdings were outdated. The library chose a two-year timeframe and appointed a project coordinator. Librarians, administrators and faculty were "brought on board", and several steps were taken to address reservations about deselecting books in the collection. The criteria followed included reviewing all titles that had not circulated for the past 20 years (10 years for the sciences and professional social sciences), and they allowed for some exceptions. Each librarian was assigned several Library of Congress (LC) classifications and spent a minimum of 2 hours each week on this project. Books identified for weeding were reviewed by the project coordinator and academic faculty who were willing to do so. Because of this project, 18 per cent of titles reviewed were discarded, close to the original goal of 20 per cent. In addition, librarians involved became more familiar with the entire collection, and communication with faculty improved. Dubiki concludes that, in the future, weeding will be an ongoing project to maintain a collection that remains "current".

Academic libraries may adopt a long-term, comprehensive approach to weeding the print collection. However, under some circumstances, it may be necessary to accomplish this with all deliberate speed. Librarians at Fort Lewis College, in Durango, Colorado, undertook a "quick and dirty" approach to deselection. Arbeeny and Chittenden (2014) provided an overview of this project in a recently published article. The library in this small public liberal arts college, which had a collection of almost 200,000 books, was faced with a critical overcrowding of shelf space for monographs due to internal space reorganization. Specifically, some sections of the building had been reallocated to house campus organizations, and other areas would be used to increase seating areas and group study rooms for members of the campus community. Arbeeny and Chittenden assumed the responsibility of targeting 4,000 to 5,000 volumes for deselection within one

month. Recruiting two other librarians for this project, they used Microsoft Excel to conduct keyword searches to identify titles that were better candidates for weeding or conversely were more valuable for retention. The criteria included reviewing only titles published between 1911 and 1989, checking for the availability of duplicate copies, examining circulation statistics and ascertaining continued relevance to the changing curriculum. Most of the deselected titles were part of the more than 32,000 titles previously moved to basement storage. Although the authors categorized this unorthodox weeding project as ugly, they concluded that they were able to reach their primary goal by deselecting more than 3,700 items.

In an article, evaluating a collaborative approach to weeding at Concordia College's Carl B. Ylvisaker Library in Minnesota, Soma and Sjoberg (2011) report on the implementation of this long-term project. The library had holdings of more than 333,000 print volumes. This project involved a thorough assessment of the collection, the development of both a short- and long-term plan, a team approach to reviewing potential weeding candidates and allowing members of the teaching faculty to review these titles. A weeding evaluation checklist was used for each title that delineated when the book had last circulated, whether it was browsed, whether it was a duplicate or a superseded edition, whether more up-to-date titles on the same subject were available, and whether it was important enough to be listed in *Resources for College Libraries.* At the outset, a special weeding project was undertaken that involved discarding 61 titles from the *Area Handbook Series*, because they were available online. This aspect of the weeding project highlights a method of weeding that involves making replacement titles available electronically at no additional cost to the library. Soma and Sjoberg concluded that this collaborative approach to weeding was complex and time-consuming. Nevertheless, the long-term benefits of this weeding project included improving staff camaraderie and their knowledge of the collection, and making the remaining collection more relevant and appealing. As a result, deselection is no longer a dreaded task, and this project was ongoing after more than four years.

At the Olin Library of Rollins College, in Winter Park, Florida, with holdings of more than 285,000 print books, multiple point data were used as a decision support tool in monographic deselection. In a 2014 article, Snyder (2014) provides an overview of the successful use of a support tool, the Sustainable Collections Services (SCS, http://sustainablecollections.com) at this library. This commercial decision-support tool combines circulation and item data with holdings in both WorldCat and HathiTrust, as well as in other sources. By using this tool, the librarians at Olin Library were able to go beyond simple circulation statistics. The SCS identified six retention and deselection criteria, all of which had to be met for the title to be a candidate for withdrawal. Specifically, the book had to have been added to the collection prior to 1996 and not circulated or been used in-house since then. There also had to be more than 100 holding libraries listed in WorldCat. Moreover, either the University of Florida or the Florida State University had to possess a copy of the title, and the book should not specifically be about Florida. Finally, the book could not be listed in *Resources for College*

*Libraries* or reviewed in *Choice*. The titles for deselection were flagged, allowing for review by librarians, faculty, students and other members of the college's academic community. Because of this project, more than 20,000 books – almost 7 per cent of the entire collection – were deselected over a two-year period. Although the criteria used for this deselection project were rather elaborate and specialized, the end result was nevertheless impressive.

In another recently published article, Way and Garrison (2013) outlined the development and implementation of a data-driven disapproval plan conducted during 2011 at the Grand Valley State University Libraries in Michigan. The library undertook this project because the university would be opening a new library. The project was undertaken at the existing off-site storage facility, which included almost 88,000 titles. All of the books in this facility were published before 2001, and circulation data were available as far back as 1998. Subject liaisons in the library used three methods to identify withdrawal candidates. Instead of assuming that each title should be kept unless there was a reason to discard it, they assumed that it should be withdrawn unless there was a reason to keep it. Most deselection candidates were pulled off the shelves for review by the subject liaisons, although some were flagged while still shelved. The latter arrangement allowed the liaison librarians to review these titles in context with similar titles in the collection. Another consideration was the availability of a title in the six other university libraries in the newly established Michigan Shared Print Initiative consortium. The titles under consideration were in the humanities, the social sciences, the hard sciences, technology, engineering and medicine. The project resulted in the withdrawal of more than 33,000 titles (86 per cent) from the off-site facility. The librarians involved were so pleased with the results of this project that they undertook a modest weeding project in the main library, with equal success. They also plan to implement a systematic and ongoing disapproval plan in the future.

The University of Arizona Libraries developed a systematic five-year plan for managing physical collections, including both monograph and serial titles, within their large collections. Martin *et al.* (2013) reported on their experience with this ongoing project. The primary concern was a lack of space for continued expansion of the collections, which included approximately 4.75 million printed volumes within three main facilities. There was also a critical need to convert shelf space to study and research space for the more than 38,000 student full-time equivalents and 2,500 faculty at the university. The library developed a project management process, which, for monographs, included acquiring fewer print titles in favor of titles in digital format, including e-books, where possible. They also established parameters for deselection, focusing on duplication, either multiple print copies or between electronic resources and their print equivalent. In evaluating the use of monographs in the collection, they considered statistics on how recently and how often the title was used in addition to the relevance of the material to the current curriculum and the importance of the title to the integrity of subject area collections. In most cases, older editions of titles were deselected when more recent editions were available. This project has freed up shelf space and facilitated longer-term

planning for the use of library space. This article is complemented with an appendix outlining the plan (239-242).

In a case study on deselection involving a large university library, Murphy (2013) reports that 8 per cent of the main circulating print collection of more than 250,000 volumes was removed. This project was undertaken at the John Paul II Library at the National University of Ireland Maynooth, which includes three schools: Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy, Science and Engineering, and Social Sciences. The main circulation collections had not been systematically assessed since 1984. A planned new extension to the library served as a major catalyst for this project. In consultation with the university's academic staff, the criteria established for this assessment included whether the title was:

- relevant to the curriculum;
- a standard or seminal work;
- of historical or archival interest; and
- one of many copies or editions.

Another consideration was the physical condition of the item. This project was undertaken in three steps including the compilation of a list of potential discards, a review of the list by the librarians and teaching staff and deselection of some of these titles. The results for the social sciences were particularly striking:

- 20 per cent of the psychology and sociology collections;
- 14 per cent of the business and politics collections;
- 18 per cent of the economics collection;
- 16 per cent of the anthropology collection; and, most significantly
- 41 per cent of the education collection were deselected.

Murphy credits careful collaboration of the librarians with members of the academic community for the success of this project.

A final conclusion to be drawn from the literature review is that a consortium approach to deselection may prove to be fruitful. One example involves the Tri-University Group of Libraries in Ontario, a consortium with a combined collection of approximately 4,300,000 book volumes (Gillies and Stephenson, 2012). The three university libraries had established a joint print repository for infrequently used books and journals in 1996. By 2006, the facility was at 94 per cent capacity, necessitating a shutdown and a comprehensive review of this collection. Significantly, the project was undertaken after the development of a Preservation of Last Print Copy Agreement (220-221), which required the consortium to retain one copy of each title deselected. Of the 78,000 duplicate monographic titles that were identified at the repository, 50,000 (64 per cent) were removed.

## Print titles versus e-books for collection management

One recurring theme in the literature is the replacement of print titles with e-books. For college and university libraries, this transition has both advantages and disadvantages. In this section, four surveys that have addressed this problem will be discussed. In 2008, the Springer e-book Pilot Project was initiated at the University of California Libraries. Based on the

use of Springer e-book collection, the results were compiled by Li *et al.* (2011). Of the respondents who indicated a preference, 49 per cent preferred print books, 34 per cent preferred e-books and 17 per cent had no preference. The primary barriers to e-book usage included perceived distractions as readers reviewed the text and the difficulty of carefully reviewing long passages of text. Conversely, the e-book users valued the ability to annotate and highlight the text, the ease to search for specific content and download it and the ability to download e-books on mobile devices. E-book usage was highest among postdoctoral researchers (68 per cent), followed closely by graduate students (67 per cent), undergraduates (55 per cent) and faculty and lecturers (57 per cent). Researchers in the physical sciences and engineering reported the highest level of e-book usage (68 per cent), followed by respondents in the arts and humanities (57 per cent), the social sciences (54 per cent) and business and law (47 per cent). The authors concluded that e-books and their use can be improved with better interfaces, enhanced quality of content (especially illustrations), better access at the chapter level and easier discoverability using the library catalog and search engines.

Another survey was designed to provide librarians at Wellesley College and six similar colleges (2,000 to 3,000 full-time equivalents) with data to help plan e-book collection development. The resulting report was prepared in 2012 by Lenares (2012). By then, more than 400,000 e-books were available as individual titles or as part of large collections at Wellesley's library. In total, 40 per cent of these titles were available exclusively as e-books. The strength of the e-book collection was greatest in the humanities and the social sciences. Strong use was also reported in the sciences. All seven colleges surveyed showed improved usage of e-books. Among the Wellesley respondents, 33 per cent were in the social sciences, 27 per cent were in the arts/humanities, 27 per cent were in the sciences and 13 per cent were interdisciplinary. Overall, 73 per cent of faculty and 70 per cent of students reported using e-books. Within this group, 12 per cent expressed a preference for e-books, 35 per cent described them as an acceptable alternative and 39 per cent indicated that they used them but preferred print titles. Faculty respondents had a more positive acceptance of e-books (45 per cent) than students (41 per cent). In measuring functionality of e-books, over 70 per cent of respondents ranked the ability to search within the text, read offline and download as important or very important and 57 per cent cited unlimited printing. At least one chapter from e-book titles were read either sometimes or always. One conclusion of the survey is that e-book formats and platforms need to be standardized. Nevertheless, e-book use has blossomed at both Wellesley and the other six college libraries surveyed.

Ithaka S+R, a consulting and research service, is sponsored by ITHAKA, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping the academic community use digital technologies to preserve scholarship and advance research and teaching in both areas. The organization conducted an e-mail survey among 160,008 randomly selected faculty at four-year colleges and universities in 2012, and the results were presented in a report by Housewright *et al.* (2013). Ithaka received 5,261 usable

responses from faculty, with some overlap, teaching in area studies (455), the humanities (1,753), the social sciences (1,900) and the sciences (2,066). This survey revealed that 70 per cent of respondents had used e-books for their research either often or occasionally within the last six months. Respondents indicated that they preferred print format for reading the full text or sections in depth. However, they preferred the e-book format when searching for a particular topic or references within a title. The ability to access a wider range of scholarly e-books in the future was seen as a significant functional improvement. Few respondents, however, believed that their libraries could abandon their print holdings.

In academic libraries, the use of e-books continues to expand while the use of print titles continues to decline. In a recent study and survey of undergraduate students, Walton (2014) concluded that this trend might primarily be a result of convenience rather than preference (Walton 2014). His study revealed that approximately 95 per cent of academic libraries are providing access to e-books. Walton surveyed traditional undergraduate students at Southwest Baptist University in Missouri. The survey evaluated eight factors and how they related to student use of e-books. Four research questions focused on how students used e-books (for leisure, as textbooks, for research, for a class assignment or in-class reading) and whether this use was directly related to the absence of print alternatives. Almost 75 per cent of the student respondents had used e-books prior to this study. Nevertheless, when a title was available in both digital and print formats, students usually chose the latter. They used e-books primarily when the print title was unavailable. For leisure reading and research, e-books were looked upon as a viable alternative. However, students looked upon the use of e-books to read aloud in class negatively. Although these students were willing to use e-books, they still preferred to use print copies when available. One significant implication of this study is that academic libraries should maintain a hybrid model that supports student preference for printed books but still provides them with e-books when it is convenient or necessary. Even though adopting this approach can be somewhat expensive, the University Libraries at Southwest Baptist University chose to do so.

Safley (2006) reports that the University of Texas System chose to purchase electronic access to the full text of several collections of titles as a direct result of the limits in the depth of their history collection. Many of these titles were available within their microfilm collections. Unfortunately, despite the fact that more than 350,000 electronic titles from these collections and other sources were made available, there is no indication that the library considered discarding either the microfilm or any of the print titles that would have served as duplicates for these e-books. Safley also noted that although the use of electronic books was increasing dramatically, the circulation of print titles was declining. Safley concluded that e-books offer both traditional and distance learners considerably improved access to monographs. As a result:

> Many users already prefer the online version of a text to a printed resource. Advances in technology can make reading online comfortable. Collecting the e-book format will only make libraries more relevant in the coming decades (456).

Lugg and Fisher (2008) published two brief articles that emphasized the urgent need to weed the book collection and the possibility of replacing some of the titles with e-books. The first article cited the experiences of a number of college and university libraries to illustrate how book collections have become overcrowded and unmanageable. In the second article, Lugg and Fisher delineate a disapproval plan for weeding and replacing some discarded titles with e-books. They developed a disapproval plan using the template of an approval plan. Libraries should consider three deselection factors:

1  How difficult is it to replace a print title with an e-book or some other format?
2  If a discarded title is not immediately replaced, is it likely that it can be replaced with an e-book if the need arises?
3  If so, then how costly would it be to replace, taking into account the staff time needed to process it?

The authors conclude with the observation that deselection is a worthwhile approach to free up space for titles that are more likely to be used.

Several authors have addressed the potential of e-books to replace out-of-copyright print titles in academic libraries. A brief article by Steele (2011) suggests that libraries can use an open-source product, GIST Gift & Deselection Manager DSM, to find and use freely available collections of e-books to accomplish this task. At the Citadel's Daniel Library in South Carolina, Steele discovered that a large percentage of the older print book collection could be replaced with free e-books because they were no longer covered by copyright restrictions. Steele reports that "[. . .] I nearly fell out of my chair when I discovered that the GIST Gift & Deselection Manager (GDM) does exactly what I want" (161). She was able to use GDM to access Google Books, OCLC's WorldCat Collection Analysis, the HathiTrust and other open-source e-book databases to find and add freely available e-books to replace out-of-copyright print titles.

A related article focuses on the potential of the HathiTrust to revolutionize the ability of libraries to provide electronic interlibrary loan copies of older titles. Eden and Beaubien (2012) report that the full text of books published more than 75 years ago and no longer restricted by US copyright laws are now available as e-books through HathiTrust. HathiTrust can also provide full access to any book published anywhere in the world if it was published in 1871 or earlier. Although the focus of this article is on interlibrary loans, the potential of the HathiTrust to be used by academic libraries to replace older print titles with e-books is strong, and it poses a significant breakthrough in this area. It should also be noted that the HathiTrust has reached a milestone by making 1 million titles available in an e-book format.

E-books are posing a significant challenge to academic libraries as a direct result of their expanding role, especially for patron-driven acquisition. In a 2010 article, Hodges *et al.* (2010) contend this challenge can and will be met. Despite the fact that library users are increasingly dependent on online resources, making e-books more accessible remains problematic. A more standardized format for e-book publication would make titles more appealing to libraries. Printing ability (the whole title and not just one chapter) must be expanded, including titles made available for interlibrary

loan. The resistance of publishers, who are concerned that making e-book titles available will generate revenue shortfalls, must be overcome. The authors also report that many print titles that have not circulated may now be given new life by being replaced by e-books.

In a brief article focusing on the role of digital titles in collection management, Horava (2011) indicates that libraries must be willing to provide alternative materials, including e-books to remain relevant for researchers. Even large academic libraries do not have unlimited space to expand or even to maintain their existing print collections. Budgetary considerations require that they use free and inexpensive resources available wherever feasible. In the near future, digital collections will dominate library collections. Horava concludes that it is critical for libraries to work collaboratively and in partnership with publishers and vendors to provide the services needed by library users. One can surmise that making e-books readily available to save space and to replace some print titles can be a significant contribution to this strategy.

Rose-Wiles (2013) addresses the feasibility of replacing older print book titles and ordering new e-books to either replace or supplement the print collection in her library. An analysis of circulation statistics between 2005 and 2009 at the Seton Hall University Library in New Jersey determined that only 21.5 per cent of the print titles circulated and overall circulation of print books declined by 23 per cent during this period. In recent years, academic libraries have increasingly dedicated more of their budgets to electronic resources and less on developing print book collections. One result of this circulation analysis was that the library undertook a comprehensive weeding project and introduced a patron-driven e-book acquisition program. Collection development was thus revised from an almost total reliance on print titles to one also emphasizing e-books.

According to a recent article by Herther (2015), the "logjams" inhibiting the wide distribution of e-books within the past 10 years have been breached in the USA, and this problem will be shortly resolved in other advanced countries worldwide (Herther, 2015). She notes that the "Big Five" publishers – Hachette, HarperCollins, Macmillan, Penguin Random House and Simon & Schuster – are now licensing e-books. Because these companies control more than 60 per cent of all consumer book publishing in the USA, a veritable deluge of e-book distribution is upon us. According to a 2014 member survey conducted by the American Association of University Presses (AAUP), the conversion to electronic formats is becoming the norm for scholarly publishing. In addition to their effort to reform and improve licensing and access for users, librarians are embracing a new twenty-first-century role in support of self-publishers and even join the publishing ranks. Herther concludes by applauding librarians with the following observation: "By working collaboratively, libraries are finally joining with their governments, communities, users, authors, and publishers to create a new ecosystem for information in the 21st century" (48).

Patron-driven acquisition (PDA) of e-books offers a novel approach to collection development. In reporting on a case study at the University of Iowa Libraries, Fischer *et al.* (2012) make a strong case for using PDAs for collection management.

Using ebrary and Yankee Book Peddler (YBP), the library initiated an e-book only PDA plan in 2009 . Funds were set aside to purchase titles recommended by the students, faculty and staff. Each purchase was triggered when the e-book had been accessed for the tenth time. The library took steps to prevent the acquisition of any tile they already had from their other e-book packages. The experience with this pilot project, after the first year, was sufficiently successful for the library to continue it. The PDA purchases were in a very wide range of subject areas. A subject analysis of e-book use reflected the high value of these acquisitions. The authors concluded that on the basis of their experience in this case study, e-books can make a valuable contribution to collection development.

Academic libraries have now embraced the need to integrate e-books with print titles for collection development. This has necessitated the weeding of e-book titles to improve the quality of collection management in some of these libraries. In a recent case study, Waugh *et al.* (2015) describe their experience in this area at Louisiana State University (LSU). A review of the quality of the more than 424,000 e-books in the collection revealed that some of these titles, especially in the areas of health and technology, were outdated and superseded by more up-to-date titles. For example, between 2001and 2007, LSU had purchased more than 52,000 NetLibrary e-books as part of a consortium package. Because they were batch-loaded, regular collection development routines were not followed, and they escaped deselection review during a weeding project from 2005 to 2010. It should also be noted that unlike print titles, e-books cannot be evaluated on the basis of their deteriorating physical condition, and they require vendor mediation to be withdrawn from the collection. In some cases, the content of these titles was outdated and included references to URLs that no longer existed. Unfortunately, the interface with the vendor did not allow for the removal of e-books that the subject liaison for medicine felt should be deselected. On the basis of their experience in this case study, the authors offer three conclusions. First, due to the low quality of the health sciences collection, it was easy to identify some titles for deselection. Second, the authors identified a need for e-book vendors to work more closely with libraries to find and remove some titles in their collections. Finally, in the absence of a written policy for weeding e-books at LSU, they should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by identifying titles with the same characteristics as titles already identified for deselection.

## Replacing print reference titles with e-books

Researchers typically consult reference titles to address specific and narrow research. They generally do not read these sources cover to cover. The transition from print reference to e-book reference can therefore be more significant than the corresponding transition in circulating books. Academic libraries should, therefore, prioritize the deselection of print reference titles and replace them with e-books.

Print copies of reference books can be replaced by e-books for many of the same reasons as apply to circulating books. A reference title received in an electronic format can more easily be updated than a print copy. Researchers using reference indexes and abstracts online can complete their searching considerably more quickly than by using a paper abstract or index. For example, *Index Medicus* was published in ten or more volumes each year, and accessing either the annual index volumes or even the five-year cumulations was very time consuming. As of 2015, the online database for this title covered more than 45 years. Because this resource is available online, the huge space previously occupied by the paper volumes can be freed up and used for a large number of other reference titles received in print.

Print editions of bibliographies become outdated within as little as five years, and researchers are usually unwilling to use the older ones. In contrast, an electronic bibliography can be updated as needed. Most researchers have come to depend on online research databases rather than printed bibliographies and abstracting and indexing sources. Another benefit of online research databases is that they frequently include links to the full text of journal articles and books.

In a 2008 article, Singer (2008) makes a strong case for weeding print titles in the reference collection and replacing some of them with electronic titles. A major review of the collection at Bowling Green State University's Jerome Library, in Ohio, was necessitated by the integration into the reference collection of titles from their science library. The already crowded reference stacks were now overcrowded. This problem prompted the removal of little used, obsolete and superseded titles. Singer also noted that "Students and faculty have developed an insatiable appetite for online resources [. . .]" (257). She cites several examples including *CQ Researcher*, *Editorials on File, Facts on File* (superseded by *World News Digest*) and language dictionaries. As a result of their review, 13 per cent of the newly combined print reference collection was deselected, and an increasing portion of the reference book budget was designated for online resources to replace print titles.

The critical importance of weeding print titles in the reference collection is stressed by Francis (2012), in a case study focusing on her experience at the library at Dakota State University. She cautions against the lack of collection management in this area because it will ultimately render the collection outdated and useless. As the reference collection deteriorates, library users will increasingly ignore it and obtain the information they need from online sources. After developing a reference collection policy, which is included in an appendix to this article (233-234), the reference librarians undertook a review of titles regularly received on standing order and identified those for which newer replacement e-book editions were available. The entire reference collection was systematically reviewed, outdated titles were weeded from the collection, and some were replaced either by new print titles or e-books. Another result of this weeding project was adding a subscription to Credo Reference, which complemented the existing subscription to Gale Virtual Library. The library utilized both of these sources for new electronic reference collection development. This project opened up approximately 20 per cent of the space in the reference collection. Francis concludes with this observation:

> For the reference collection to retain its value to patrons, periodic weeding is a necessary component to maintain a collection of quality resources. The benefits of the reference collection review and weeding are numerous and have resulted in an enhanced collection that serves the needs of a current group of library patrons (231).

Another case study on reference collection development focuses on the William F. Ekstrom Library, the main library serving the 11 colleges and schools within the University of Louisville, Kentucky. Detmering and Sproles (2012) explain that this project was necessitated by two factors:

1 growing dissatisfaction with the quality of this collection; and
2 the creation of a learning commons in much of the space previously used for print reference titles.

An ongoing project of weeding the reference collection and replacing some of the titles with electronic resources has transformed this collection. The library abandoned its existing collection development policy in favor of a new streamlined policy that:

• focused on satisfying the needs of library users;
• emphasized the importance of timeliness; and
• stressed a clear preference for electronic formats.

Reviewing the reference collection resulted in a more cooperative and collaborative approach. In the past, librarians often duplicated the efforts of their colleagues in developing and maintaining the reference collection. As a result, both students and faculty found it increasingly less user friendly and used it less frequently. Usage data and anecdotal evidence from the Ekstrom librarians reflected this trend. To address these problems, the librarians adopted a more active and cooperative approach to collection development and maintenance. They successfully weeded the existing print reference collection and largely replaced it with available electronic titles. It was projected that this ongoing deselection project would result in reducing the collection by half of the original 15,000 print reference items within the next three years.

## Weeding project at the Adelphi University Library

This research was prompted by the author's weeding experience. The author serves as the Coordinator of Reference Services at Swirbul Library, the main campus library of Adelphi University in Garden City, New York. Adelphi is a medium-sized university that has satellite campuses and supporting branch libraries in Suffolk County, Manhattan and the Hudson Valley. The total student enrollment is roughly 7,300, including undergraduate, graduate, doctoral and postgraduate certificate programs. The university includes a school of arts and sciences; a special, primarily evening program to serve the needs of working adults; and an honors college. In addition, Adelphi has professional schools in business, education, nursing, psychological studies and social work. Graduate programs, by their very nature, tend to be more research oriented, and our university is no exception in this regard. As a result, our collections must support the research needs of undergraduates, as well as graduate, doctoral and post-doctoral researchers in our professional schools.

Swirbul Library, located at the Garden City campus, has almost 700,000 paper titles, including books, periodicals and federal depository items. The collection of electronic resources, including more than 27,000 e-books that are owned and almost 138,000 e-books that can be accessed through subscription, has increased substantially over the past 10 years. All 12 full-time librarians, as well as one of the part-time adjuncts, function as subject specialists and liaisons to the diverse academic units within the university. The author serves as the liaison to the history and political science departments and had also served as the liaison to the philosophy department (covering the discipline of religion as well as philosophy) until 2011.

One of the major drawbacks of relying on print titles for our diverse university community in a small building is a collection that all too often seems to be bursting at the seams. In response to major revisions in the curriculum and the introduction of new programs, the library was adding considerably more titles than it was deselecting. Frequently, when new print titles arrived in a circulating stack area, it was discovered that the shelves were already filled to capacity. In some instances, titles were stacked atop the crowded shelves. This arrangement resulted in either shifting volumes, if there was room to shift, or a "quick and dirty" weeding in a subject area.

To address the continuing problem of overcrowded book stacks, several librarians initiated weeding programs in their subject areas. As a part of this process, older and lesser-used titles were transferred to storage facilities. First, the attic of another building on campus was used. When this proved to be inadequate, three off-campus facilities were used over the course of the past 35 years. All three of these moves proved to be problematic as well. Many library users were unwilling to wait several days until off-campus titles could be retrieved. Moreover, in some cases, the requested titles were lost. The experience with the last off-campus storage area was even worse because an overwhelming majority of these titles were lost, had deteriorated significantly or were completely unusable.

As a result of these shortcomings, the author had a strong incentive to systematically review and weed the print book collections, both circulating and reference, in his areas of specialization in a prudent manner. Starting with the philosophy and religion collections in 2007, titles that were published more than 50 years ago were reviewed for discard decisions. As each title pulled from the shelves was reviewed, a variety of factors were considered to determine whether the title should be deselected. These factors were delineated in the introductory section of this article. Most books that circulate for home use have a DATE DUE slip in the inside back cover. By checking this slip, it could be determined when and how frequently the title had been checked out (i.e. the due date stamped is usually four weeks after the book is charged out). If the book was charged out frequently, the latest DATE DUE slip would probably be only the latest of several. This occurred only rarely for these titles. As a result of our online checkout system, it could be determined if and how frequently a title had been charged out for home use during the previous three years. This proved to be even rarer for these titles. If the review process revealed that a title published more than 50 years ago had been charged out fewer than five times or not at all, then that title was a candidate for deselection.

Another factor considered was how easily a title could be borrowed through an interlibrary loan request. For example, if

a WorldCat search revealed that at least 50 other libraries had this or a more recent edition of this title, then interlibrary loan could be an option. Our online public access catalog could also be checked to determine if at least five more recently published titles on the same subject headings – preferably the first and most relevant subject heading listed – or call numbers were available to members of the Adelphi community. In 2010, the availability of free or inexpensive e-books to replace paper copies was added to the criteria. If a title is readily accessible through a link to the Gutenberg Project or as a free or inexpensive e-book, it may be worthwhile to discard the paper copy and make the title accessible electronically in our online public access catalog, ALICAT (*A*delphi *LI*brary *CAT*alog). The availability of a full-text electronic replacement in WorldCat or in several other online databases was also considered.

At the start of this weeding project, the entire philosophy and religion collections were reviewed. The circulating book collection was reviewed first and then the reference collection, shelf by shelf. Titles that were published at least 50 years ago were removed from the shelves; a discard slip was prepared with the call number, author, title and year of publication; and the books were collected on book trucks. At the same time, a few more recently published titles in the same subject areas that were mutilated or damaged beyond repair were removed from the shelves and replaced, where feasible. A review of the circulation information revealed that very few of these titles had circulated more than a few times, and some not at all, during the previous 50 years. It was also possible to identify a few titles that were classics in the field. These books were stamped in the inside back cover:

## Reviewed for deselection – keep in collection

The month and year that this determination was made were indicated, and the inside back cover was initialed. In instances where there was uncertainty regarding the possible classic status of a title, subject specialists among library faculty colleagues or the teaching faculty at Adelphi were consulted. These books might be reevaluated for discard consideration in 10 years. After the classics were restored to the collection, more than 90 per cent of the titles remained on the book trucks. Library faculty adjuncts could then search WorldCat and our OPAC as delineated above. The final decision on discarding these titles rested with the author of this article, in consultation with our collection strategies librarian.

Because this was such a labor-intensive project, it was completed in a piecemeal fashion whenever there was a lull in the fulfillment of other, more pressing professional responsibilities (e.g. during the several weeks of intersession between the fall and spring semesters). Nevertheless, the project resulted in the discard of more than 95 per cent (approximately 1,000 print titles) of those reviewed in the philosophy and religion collections.

The same basic criteria used for these disciplines were applied to a review of the history collection in 2010. At this point, an additional criterion was added involving a search of ConnectNY, a consortium of 19 member libraries, including Adelphi. Borrowing from these participating libraries could be accomplished in a few days in most cases, making it a much quicker option than standard interlibrary loan. Over the

course of the past 10 years, there has been a dramatic increase in the availability of e-books coupled with more uniformity in the platforms available to access them. As a result, even if it was determined that borrowing a copy through ConnectNY was feasible, the WorldCat and other sources were still searched to identify print titles that could be replaced inexpensively with e-books. For these titles, obtaining an e-book replacement was seriously considered. The Gutenberg Project and other sources could also be used to create links to the full text of books in ALICAT. In most of these cases, the Cataloging Department was notified, a link to the e-book in ALICAT was added and the print copies were discarded. Ultimately, however, it was determined that only a small percentage of the titles reviewed were worth replacing with e-books. Nevertheless, discarding the print copies of the overwhelming majority of the books reviewed freed up considerable space for future collection development. It should also be noted that for all collection development in history and political science, new print titles are ordered only if e-books are not available.

Currently, the Swirbul Library is engaged in multiple ongoing weeding projects. Thus far, only a small portion of the history collection has been reviewed. Using this same approach in the political science collection yielded similar results for the portion reviewed. Subsequently, the library subject liaisons for education, sociology and psychology agreed to participate in the discard project. The outcome in these disciplines proved to be similar to the results in the subject areas already worked on. The librarians involved, therefore, concluded that the same basic criteria for deselection can be applied throughout the social sciences and the humanities. In instances where it was uncertain whether a title should be kept, discarded or replaced in any of the disciplines reviewed for deselection, the title could also be discussed with the teaching faculty members in that discipline. Unfortunately, the teaching faculty at Adelphi was not willing to review most of the titles identified as candidates for deselection. By default, the judgment of the library liaisons was heavily relied upon for this project. A few of these titles were retained, and the inside back cover was stamped to indicate this. Where necessary and feasible, an e-book replacement was ordered.

A recent restriction has been added for deselecting older print titles in our collection. Adelphi is one of 12 ConnectNY libraries that are participating in a Shared Print Archive Trust. This arrangement mandates that any of Adelphi's holdings that appear on a list of more than 90,000 titles must be kept for the next 10 years, with a review permissible in the 11th year. All of these titles are held by as many as three libraries in the Trust. All were published prior to 2000, were charged out three times or less and were last charged out at any ConnectNY library prior to 2007. The ALICAT records will be updated to indicate this status for these titles, and the following label is attached to the inside back cover:

Connect New York,

Shared print archive,

Do not discard,

01-01-2024.

Just prior to learning of this new restriction, Swirbul librarians had reviewed and were prepared to discard more than 100

older psychology titles. However, the ConnectNY restriction resulted in the retention of more than one-third of these titles until the end of 2023. Because one of Adelphi's schools, the Gordon F. Derner Institute of Advanced Psychological Studies, has psychology programs ranging from the undergraduate to the postdoctoral, the large older collection in this field may have been inordinately affected by this new ConnectNY restriction.

## Conclusions and next steps

The author's experience with deselection in the humanities and social sciences confirms that weeding the print collections of books is a critical and essential tool in collection management. In six of the seven disciplines reviewed, more than 95 per cent of titles published more than 50 years ago were discarded. In all the subject areas reviewed, the library was able to replace a small number of older print titles with e-books, which helped expedite the deselection process. The possibility of reviewing other subject disciplines within the humanities and the social sciences is currently being considered. At the present time, it has not been determined whether the author of this article or the other subject specialists will undertake this project.

In retrospect, this research project revealed a great deal of valuable information for our future consideration. By and large, this project went well. However, there are some changes that in the future might result in more rewarding outcomes. Should we choose a timeframe of less than 50 years to review titles in some areas of the social sciences and humanities? Historical research tends to be more consistent and changes little over the course of the years. In political science, however, perhaps 40 years might be more realistic for deselection review. For both philosophy and religion, it was discovered that only a small percentage of the titles were published more than 50 years ago, so 40 years might have been more realistic. However, in the field of education, which tends to change rapidly, as many as 99 per cent of the reviewed titles that were published more than 50 years ago were discarded.

For all of these fields, as more and more titles become available as e-books, it is hoped that they increasingly will be available to replace titles that we are considering for deselection. This would free up additional shelf space for print titles not available in an electronic format. Based on our experience in the humanities and social sciences, it can be projected that in the future users will rely less on print titles and more on e-books for their research. It should also be noted that the author of this article has concluded, after working closely with student researchers for more than 40 years, that they are more likely to use more recently published titles than older ones in these fields.

Some college and university librarians might dispute the validity of deselecting titles on the basis of their availability in at least 50 libraries listed in WorldCat. Others might not believe that having at least five more recently published titles on a subject is sufficient to support student researchers. It is hoped that in addressing both of these potential problems, Swirbul's reliance on interlibrary loans and ConnectNY will continue to support these researchers and avoid shortchanging them. In commenting on our approach to deselection in the social sciences and the humanities, it should also be noted that

we consistently followed a systematic approach. This approach was delineated in providing an overview of the Adelphi experience. Unfortunately, the literature review did not always provide a systematic approach to a strategy. As a result, we had to chart out and follow our own strategy to complete this project.

The experience with deselection at Adelphi could and should be duplicated in most college and university libraries. The ability to make use of freely available or inexpensive e-books to replace print book titles has contributed significantly to the deselection process. More than 165,000 e-books can be accessed in our collection, including replacements for older print titles, as well as newly published ones. We also rely on patron-driven acquisition for some e-books. In accordance with our subject profile guidelines, titles are loaded into our OPAC that are available from a vendor, Yankee Book Peddler Library Services. The first time a library user clicks on an item he or she can use it for seven days. A second click results in Adelphi's purchasing it. In addition, the library is considering subscribing to the HathiTrust, which would have an immeasurably positive impact on the goal of replacing potentially valuable older print titles with e-books. Finally, the library plans to conduct a nationwide survey of college and university libraries to collect data pertaining to their deselection strategies and their experiences with replacing print titles with e-books.

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