



## Weeding vs. Reappraisal and Deaccessioning

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| <b>Weeding:</b> the process of identifying and removing unwanted items from a collection.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Appraisal:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the process of identifying materials offered to an archives that have sufficient value to be accessioned.</li> <li>2. the process of determining the length of time records should be retained, based on legal requirements and on their current and potential usefulness.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Reappraisal:</b> the process of identifying materials that no longer merit inclusion in an archives and that are candidates for deaccessioning.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Deaccession:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the process by which an archives, museum, or library permanently removes accessioned materials from its holdings.</li> <li>2. to remove archival resources from intellectual and physical custody.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Practical differences between Weeding and Deaccessioning</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Articles by Marcella Huggard and Laura Uglean Jackson:</b> <p>Huggard, Marcella, and Laura Uglean Jackson. “Practices in Progress: The State of Reappraisal and Deaccessioning in Archives.” <i>American Archivist</i> 82, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2019): 508–547. <a href="https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc-82-02-04">https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc-82-02-04</a>.</p> <p>*Their analysis of survey conducted of reappraisal and deaccessioning practices in archives in 2017 noted confusion among respondents between routine decisions to “weed” content in archival collections and more systematic and formal deaccessioning practices.</p> <p>Huggard, Marcella. “Good Intentions: Distinguishing Deaccessioning from Weeding.” In <i>Reappraisal and Deaccessioning in Archives and Special Collections</i>, edited by Laura Uglean Jackson, 1–11. Lanham, MD: Rowman &amp; Littlefield, 2019.</p> <p>*Defines difference between weeding and deaccessioning based on experience with earlier survey.</p> <p>*Available for purchase as ebook (\$\$). Preview on Google Books includes most of this chapter: <a href="https://shorturl.at/PuHPT">https://shorturl.at/PuHPT</a>.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Differences noted by Huggard:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p>Intent of weeding is to keep collection, including all its series or other substantive groupings, but remove redundant or non-archival content.</p> <p>Small-scale, routine decisions made in the course of processing a collection.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>Intent of deaccessioning is to remove entire collections, series, or substantive groupings.</p> <p>Large scale and part of a more exhaustive, systematic process.</p> |



## Weeding vs. Reappraisal and Deaccessioning

### Society of American Archivists:

Technical Subcommittee on Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning. *Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, approved May 2012, revised May 2017.

[https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/GuidelinesForReappraisalDeaccessioning\\_2017.pdf](https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/GuidelinesForReappraisalDeaccessioning_2017.pdf), preserved at <https://perma.cc/V7R3-GC8E>.

\* Document distinguishes that it is not meant to “address weeding or separating items, folders, and other materials found during accessioning and processing stages.”

### Examples:

#### Weeding examples:

We don't need 20 copies of this flyer.

Why are we keeping McDonald's receipts from 1995?

These photos are slightly different views of the same thing. Let's just retain a representative sample of the “best” ones.

There are books (not annotated) in this archival collection that should be removed to our library collection and discarded if we already have copies there.

This is routine literature (literally junk mail) received by a farmer in Vermont in the 20th century. It tells me nothing about his experience that cannot be inferred from secondary sources and it's taking up a lot of space.

We have original documents as well as digital scans of the same thing on a format that is going obsolescent (e.g., floppy disk or CD). The cost to access and preserve the digital content on CD would be a lot more than the current cost of just rescanning the original.

We have a retention schedule or policy dictating that this pre-defined sensitive or legally protected information be shredded or returned to the donor/source.

#### Deaccessioning examples:

We've just revised our collection policy to stop collecting in an area or format that we'd previously focused on and are doing a repository-wide systematic reappraisal of all collections.

We accepted a large collection of papers from a professor who lived in Vermont and was also a recognized national expert on data security who worked in academic institutions across the US. Since we're only interested in papers they inherited from earlier generations of the family in Vermont, should we offer the series of their academic research papers to a university that already has a substantial collection of their papers?

This is a collection of diaries from a family that came to Vermont from Canada but stayed less than ten years before going west. Most of its contents were written in Ohio. Should it go to a repository there instead?

How did this letter between two people in China in the 1930s end up in this collection? I've researched the family thoroughly and can find no connection to explain its presence.

Legal requirements have changed and require us to keep or shred material that we'd previously treated differently.