



Disposal of Weeded, Discarded, and Unwanted Books

For agencies and institutions, a book is not a permanent acquisition. Space limitations, collection development, and customer service dictate that periodic weeding or discarding of books occur.

However, one library or school's unwanted book might be appreciated by another organization or individual. Environmental awareness also mandates that books be re-used rather than trashed.

Here is a list of options to consider and test to see what fits your needs best. Consider your staff and volunteer support because each method requires some time and effort to set up and maintain.

Association for Library Collections and Technical Services Duplicates Exchange Union

<http://www.ala.org/ala/alcts/pubs/duplicatesexch/duplicatesexchange.cfm>

A group of libraries that communicate via electronic discussion list to exchange usable library material. Members send exchange lists and want lists via the email list. Membership is free and open to all libraries.

- Pros: Additional resource for both obtaining and removing library materials
- Cons: Library pays for shipping (may request shipping charges if cost to ship is above \$3), Additional e-mails in inbox

Better World Books

<http://www.betterworldbooks.com>

A commercial organization that sells discarded and donated materials from libraries through many online marketplaces. The program has no fees or service agreements (unless requested). Also, the donating library is eligible to earn a percentage of the net sales, and many unsold books are given to non-profit literacy partners. If books are not sold or otherwise donated, they are recycled. The organization has acceptance guidelines. They will not accept books in poor condition and are unable to accept academic journals, literary criticisms, activity books, books published by magazines, as well as a number of other types of publications, LP records, VHS, magazines, and so forth. See additional acceptance requirements on their website.

- Pros: No cost option, Organization supports non-profit literacy and education partners, Library may be eligible to earn percentage of the profit, rids library of excess books
- Cons: Library is not eligible for percentage of the profit if the books have already been "picked over." Not all books are accepted, library pays for shipping.

Blogistics

<http://www.blogistics.com/>

An online sales program intended to supplement or replace the traditional community book sale. The library selects and ships weeded and donated materials to a Denver distribution facility. The company will help select items most likely to sell, and can coordinate and pre-pay the freight for qualified shipments. Blogistics enters items into its database, and uploads them for sale at competitive prices to all the leading online marketplaces. When the items sell, Blogistics picks, packs and ships the orders, and handles all the payment processing and customer service. Net profit from the sales is split 50/50 between the company and the library. Items are listed for sale for three to five months, and anything not sold is either donated to a literacy partner or recycled.

Pros: Opportunity for profit, no obligations, books offered at various online markets more likely to sell, rids library of excess books, will pick up materials.

Cons: Library does not receive all of the profits from sales.

Book Prospector

<http://www.bookprospector.com/site/library/index.php>

A used book company that purchases discards and donations from libraries through a simple online process. Libraries sign up for an account with Book Prospector, enter a UPC, ISBN or book title into their site and receive a price quote for the item. If the library chooses to accept the bid(s), the company provides a pre-paid shipping label. Book Prospector pays for books that have been received by the 1st of the month on the 10th of every month.

Pros: No obligations, profit for the library, little investment beyond time, rids library of excess books, company pays for shipping.

Cons: Not all books accepted—must check the eligibility of each book, does require time

Book Clearinghouse Concept (not currently available)

An untested proposal is to establish a book clearinghouse through which libraries and other donors move books from their facilities to a central clearinghouse for eventual shipment to agencies that want the items. The Canadian National Library offered a similar service but is closing its doors because the number of donations declined and budgeting priorities changed. The organization accepted weeded and surplus books, serials, and overruns from publishers. The publications came free to the exchange, the Canadian National Library covered some costs, libraries paid some shipping charges, and the Department of Public Works paid for recycling and storage lease. Every month a list was made of the inventory, and the list was sent to active clients. About 90% of books were claimed. A similar service also could be implemented without the warehouse by computerizing lists of donations and direct shipping from one library to another.

Books Beyond Borders

<http://booksbeyondborders.com>

An organization that sells used books to help fund school building projects and other education initiatives. Accepts donations of unwanted used books and provides a pre-paid shipping label.

Pros: No obligations, no acceptance guidelines, rids library of excess materials, helps with a cause.

Cons: No opportunity for profit

Library Book Sales

Many libraries conduct regular library book sales to rid their libraries of unwanted donations and weeded books. These sales often serve as a source of marketing and community building, but also take a great deal of effort. Often the amount earned in these sales is negligible compared to the effort it takes to smoothly operate the sale. Many public libraries now are offering end-of-sale opportunities to approved nonprofits for free books, simply to clear them out.

Pros: Community relations event, opportunity for profit

Cons: Very time intensive, profit could be negligible

LibraryBooksales.org

<http://www.librarybooksales.org/>

A website that provides a venue for public libraries and their affiliates to sell donated books over the Internet. Additionally, the site includes features such as an on-line forum, tools for bookselling and resources for the book lover. The library must complete an application and, once the application has been verified, the library receives a password to access its account. After an account is established, individuals enter the book information into the entry form and submit for each book intended for sale. There is no limit on the number of books listed. If a book buyer selects your copy for purchase, you are sent an e-mail notifying you that an order is forthcoming and to "hold" the book. The library ships the book after a check or money order is received. The cost of the site is commission-based and the library pays 10% of the sale price of the book. Project is open to all libraries, but not to commercial booksellers.

Pros: Opportunity for profit, venue for selling rare and hard-to-find books

Cons: Data entry of book information can be timely, no guarantee of disposal of books, library pays 10% commission

Library ELists

Library ELists, such as Colorado's "Libnet," can serve as an avenue to get rid of weeded books and also provide the opportunity to connect lower-budget libraries with needed books.

Pros: Books are still used in library community, can ship via Colorado library courier.

Cons: No opportunity for profit.

Operation Paperback

<http://www.operationpaperback.org/index.htm>

A non-profit program that collects gently used books and sends them to American troops deployed overseas. Books must be in good condition and of interest to the troops. Must sign up to be a volunteer in order to donate.

Pros: Rids library of excess books and donations.

Cons: Limited books are acceptable, library pays for shipping.

Nonprofits

Preschools, literacy groups, senior centers, health clinics, institutions, and other local nonprofits can be great and grateful recipients for discarded books. Especially desired are children's volumes and Spanish materials. Establish a process, procedures, and ongoing partnerships for best results for both donor and recipient.

Recycling Centers

Recycle America: <http://www.recycleamerica.com>, *Eco-cycle:* <http://www.ecocycle.org>

Recycling centers around Colorado take books that are not suitable for resale. Most require the library deliver the books and also desire notice when large quantities are coming.

Pros: Disposes of books not suitable for sale.

Cons: No opportunity for profit.

Used Books Websites

Abe Books: <http://www.abebooks.com/>, *Alibris:* <http://www.alibris.com/>, *Amazon:*

<http://www.amazon.com/>, *Half.com:* <http://www.half.ebay.com/>

Many websites offer opportunity to sell books and other items online. Most, but not all, of these sites come with either monthly subscription fees or listing fees and can be expensive. Check terms and agreements for each site.

Pros: Opportunity for profit.

Cons: Opportunity for loss, no guarantees.

United States Book Exchange

<http://www.usbe.com>

A non-profit organization that supplies back issues of scholarly periodicals, trade journals, popular magazines and other serials to libraries worldwide. Accepts donations from libraries of periodicals and other serials. The library can either send a box of donations to the organization or send a list of duplicates, and USBE provides selections and directions for sending materials. The materials are made available to all member libraries. After members have had time to make selections from USBE's holdings, the remainder are put into the USBE Donational Program from which libraries with no back-issues budgets may select at no charge except postage.

Pros: No obligations, rids library of excess periodicals and serials

Cons: Library pays for shipping, no profit available



Additional Information

- ALA Collection Evaluation -- and De-Selection (Weeding) Wiki
http://wikis.ala.org/professionaltips/index.php/Collection_Evaluation_--_and_De-Selection_%28Weeding%29
- Librarians Without Borders (see Where to Donate and Obtain Books)
<http://www.lwb-online.org/links.html>
- International Donation and Shipment of Books
<http://www.ala.org/ala/iro/iroactivities/intlbookdonations.cfm>



A big hooray for Maura McGrath, Colorado State Library staffer and library student, who researched this topic for the benefit of all, March 2008.