



Finding Funding in Tight Times

By Mona Kerby

ON OCTOBER 4, 1957, THE RUSSIANS LAUNCHED the world's first satellite. *Sputnik* wasn't much bigger than a beach ball and emitted a cheery beeping sound as it spun around the world. But that shiny little beeping gizmo scared the Americans. Big time.

To the Americans, it seemed Russia might take over the world. President Eisenhower and Congress came up with a plan to develop trained scientists, and lo and behold, their first step was to support schools, building science labs and libraries. Federal funding poured into school districts with the express purpose of purchasing library materials. It was a glorious time.

Federal funding for school libraries continued for almost forty years until President Reagan's administration ended it. Individual school districts were supposed to assume the responsibility of funding school library materials. Not surprisingly, that responsibility often shifted to school librarians. Nowadays, librarians regularly schedule book fairs to earn money to purchase library materials.

I don't like knowing that you must scramble for money on top of all your responsibilities. But, staying mad doesn't help matters. In this article, I'll explain how to get additional funds by analyzing the collection according to age, quantity, and quality of the materials. Your goal is to shock your principal into action.

To be sure, this project is time intensive. But, you won't mind the work because, first, what you learn about your collection will provide a systematic plan for improvement, and, second, you'll likely get the funding.

Evaluate the Entire Collection

Using the automated circulation system, find the report that gives data for fiction and the ten major Dewey divisions. For each section, tally the number of items, percentage of total collection, circulation numbers, and the average copyright ages. The report will fascinate you. In one quick glance, you'll be able to see the

strengths and weaknesses of the collection—and, just so you know ahead of time, expect to be dismayed.

Add an ending column where you make a judgment call on

Category	Number of Items	Percentage of Total Collection	Average Age	Circulation	Section needs work? (Y/N)
Reference					
000					
100					
200					
300					
400					
500					
600					
700					
800					
900					
92/920					
Easy					
Fiction					
E-books					
Databases					
TOTAL					

FIGURE 1: *Collection Analysis Overview Chart from An Introduction to Collection Development for School Librarians, Second Edition, by Mona Kerby (Chicago: American Library Association, 2019). Used with permission.*

whether each section needs work. See Figure 1: Collection Analysis Overview Chart. How do you make that decision? Compare the quantity and age of items to Figure 2: Kerby's Chart of Considerations: Possible Quantities and Ages by Section.

Use this chart when making judgments about how to improve your collection. The suggestions are considerations only.

Category	Grades K–5		Grades 6–8		Grades 9–12	
	Approximate Percentage of Items*	Average Age of Items (Years)**	Percentage of Items	Average Age of Items (Years)	Percentage of Items	Average Age of Items (Years)
000	.5-1	5	1	6	1	7
100	.5-1	11	1	11	1	10
200	.5	11	.5-1	11	.5-1	9
300	6-10	11	7-10	10	10	7
400	.5	12	.5	11	.5	9
500	12.5	8	6-7.5	7	5-6	7
600	5-7	9	5-7	8	5-7	7
700	5.5-8	9	6-8	8	6-8	9
800	2-2.5	11	2.5	7	6-8	13
900	6.5-8	8	12	9	12	9
92/920 Biography	5.5	10	9	12	5-9	10
Easy Fiction	28	11	na	na	na	na
Fiction	22	12	38-40	12	26-30	12

FIGURE 2: Kerby's Chart of Considerations: Possible Quantities and Ages by Section. from *An Introduction to Collection Development for School Librarians, Second Edition*, by Mona Kerby (Chicago: American Library Association, 2019). Used with permission.

Choose One Section

Don't ask for funding for improving the entire collection, even though you'll most likely need it. The costs will be exorbitant. Think small and strategic. Choose one section. If you're successful, repeat this process every few years.

Any section will work for this project. You might choose science (500s) or history (900s) because those materials are likely to be outdated, and no principal wants to know that you've got a book on Pluto the planet or on the country USSR. You might choose fiction and use Follett's new diversity analysis because no doubt, you have too many books with white characters.

In addition to deciding how old the section should be and how many items you need, you also need to determine the quality. To do this, compare a 10% randomized sample of the section by looking up each title in your vendor database to see if it was reviewed by *Booklist*. (A review in *Booklist* constitutes a recommendation for purchase.) This comparison is likely to be the most distressing realization of this project. You won't have many recommended titles. How do I know?

I teach collection development in a state that supports libraries. The best school libraries in the best districts never have more than a 25% match to a highly recommended selection source. Let me be plain. Some 75% of school library materials were not worthy of being purchased.

And yet, the solution is so simple. Adjust your vendor settings so you are selecting titles that have received three positive reviews. Of course, there are exceptions to that suggestion. But, the simple act of tweaking your settings will slowly begin to improve the quality of items.

Deciding What to Weed and Purchase

The primary way to improve the section you've chosen is by significantly weeding. Run a report on the section that lists all the titles with their corresponding copyright years and circulation data. You'll discover still another disconcerting fact—few titles have circulated. Note that books reviewed by *Booklist* have been checked out. It seems that students intuitively recognize quality.

CREW: A Weeding Manual for Modern Libraries (<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ld/pubs/crew/index.html>) provides comprehensive guidelines. However, to save time, I've crafted a one-paged chart. See Figure 3: *CREW Weeding Guidelines for Fiction, Nonfiction, Multimedia, and E-books*. Use the formula X/X/MUSTIE. The first figure is the item's age. The second figure refers to how many years it has been since the item was last checked out. The third component stands for the six negative MUSTIE Factors:

- *Misleading* (or factually inaccurate). Weed outdated editions and books that are no longer accurate.
- *Ugly* (worn and beyond mending).
- *Superseded* (by a new edition or a better book on the subject).

CREW Weeding Guidelines for Fiction, Nonfiction, Multimedia, and E-books

Section	Formula	Guidelines
Picture Books	X/2/MUSTIE	Evaluate carefully using MUSTIE as a guide. Replace popular titles that are worn. Weed any book that has not circulated in the past 2 years. Picture books are so heavily used that every title should go out at least once in a 2-year period. Weed books that reflect racial and gender bias.
Fiction	X/2/MUSTIE	Evaluate for MUSTIE factors. Consider weeding anything that hasn't circulated in the past 2 years. Weed primarily based on current interest except award books and those on school lists.
YA Fiction	3/2/MUSTIE	Any item that has not circulated within 2 years should be considered "dead" and removed (and anything that hasn't circulated within the past year is suspect and should be evaluated for promotion, relocation, or discard).
Graphic Novels	X/1/MUSTIE	Because of their popularity, consider weeding any title that hasn't circulated in the past year. Weed titles that are falling apart.
004 Computers	3/X/MUSTIE	Books on computers are quickly outdated. Consider paperbacks or databases.
Other 000s	5/X/MUSTIE	Weed outdated encyclopedias, atlases, almanacs, and dictionaries, and direct users to databases. Books of oddities and the unexplained, including books on UFOs, should be weeded based on interest and MUSTIE factors more than on copyright date.
133 Paranormal	10/3/MUSTIE	Keep until worn. Replace lost and stolen titles regularly.
150 Psychology	10/3/MUSTIE	Weed based on popularity and use.
200 Religion	10/3/MUSTIE or 5/3/MUSTIE	Have something up-to-date on every religion in the school community and the six major international religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Taoism.
320 Political Science	5/3/MUSTIE	Be aware of changes in political rhetoric, and discard books with outdated ideas.
390-394 Holidays	10/3/MUSTIE	Holiday-specific books may only circulate once or twice a year. Discard books that are MUSTIE or that reflect gender, family, ethnic, or racial bias.
398 Folklore	X/3/MUSTIE	Folktales never go out of date, so weed based on the quality of the retelling, especially if ethnic bias is present. Evaluate for MUSTIE and low circulation.
500	5/3/MUSTIE	Evaluate all science books older than 5 years, especially physics, astronomy, environmental issues, dinosaurs, and astronomy. Check books on atoms every two years. Botany doesn't change often and may be older. Keep basic books of significant historical or literary value, such as Darwin's <i>Origin of Species</i> .
510 Math	10/3/MUSTIE	Math does not change rapidly, so weed primarily based on MUSTIE factors and lack of use.
520 Space and Astronomy	5/3/MUSTIE	Weed titles that include Pluto as a planet or that don't include information on the space station and Mars expeditions. Stargazing books may be retained longer but should be attractive and mention relevant technology.
560 Dinosaurs	5/2/MUSTIE	The popularity of topics like dinosaurs may mean that even outdated books are checked out. Discard most books that lack color illustrations.
600	X/3/MUSTIE	Evaluate medicine, health, and space exploration items older than 5 years. Books on gardening may be 10 years old, so circulation is the main weeding criterion. Popular subjects, such as pets and crafts, may need replacing because of worn condition.
700	X/3/MUSTIE	Consider keeping art books. Replace old books on hobbies with current interests. In sports, watch for gender and racial bias. Discard books that have outdated statistics.
800	X/3/MUSTIE	Check with classroom teachers for assignments before discarding. Weed noncirculating poetry and jokes. Regularly replace favorites.
930-999	10/3/MUSTIE	Consider demand and accuracy of facts when reviewing histories.
910 Geography	3/2/MUSTIE	Rotate the purchase of books on countries and states so that no title is older than 5 years.
B or 92 Biography	X/3/MUSTIE	Unless the person treated is of permanent interest or importance, such as a U.S. president, discard a biography as soon as demand lessens. Replace biographies of people of ongoing interest with newer titles at least once a decade because interpretation of their lives and public perception of their impact will change over time.
Multimedia	WORST	Includes a wide variety of formats. Check for items that haven't circulated several times in a year. Use the WORST formula: W orn out, O ut of date, B arely used, S upplied elsewhere, or T rivial and faddish.
E-books	Use formula for specific fiction or nonfiction.	Electronic materials are still rapidly evolving. Consider the following: What formats are available, and which are needed in the community? Is purchase for unlimited use or for a license limited to a specific number of circulations? Are the e-books included in the online catalog, or must learners use a vendor database?

Source: Chart created by Mona Kerby using *CREW: A Weeding Manual for Modern Libraries* (Larson & Texas State Library and Archives Commission 2012, 61-80).

From *An Introduction to Collection Development for School Librarians* by Mona Kerby (Chicago: American Library Association, 2019).

FIGURE 3: *CREW Weeding Guidelines for Fiction, Nonfiction, Multimedia, and E-books* from *An Introduction to Collection Development for School Librarians, Second Edition*, by Mona Kerby (Chicago: American Library Association, 2019). Used with permission.

- *Trivial* (of no discernible merit). Weed titles that reflect outdated popular culture.
- *Irrelevant* to the needs and interests of your learners.
- *Elsewhere* means when information may be obtained expeditiously elsewhere via electronic format or interlibrary loan.

Don't presume you'll purchase the same number of books you weeded. It's impossible. Say you weeded 200 books from science. You won't find 200 highly reviewed science books published within the last year or even in the previous two years. And you're certainly not going to purchase books that are older. You've already got plenty of those.

As far as what to purchase—compare the section to the grade level curriculum. Ask the teachers if the topic is covered briefly or if the topic is one where all the kids do research. If rocks are briefly mentioned, then having three to five books should be enough. If all third graders do research on planets, then you'll need more than twenty books and database access to support that research. And, check to see that the new materials are written at the third-grade level. That's another problem you may have—curriculum materials written at the wrong grade level. See Figure 4: Curriculum Map Evaluation Worksheet.

Prepare a Succinct Report for Your Principal

The key word is succinct. Your tendency will be to share too much information because this topic fascinates us. Clearly summarize your findings. Make the results disturbing and dramatic. Provide the solution. Make the report one page long, maximum. Principals are busy.

Begin with the distressing details of the age of the section, number of items, and how many titles are highly reviewed. You may want to list a few old titles you found. The amount of funding you ask for depends on how many books you can find that are highly recommended and were published in the current year. You might consider asking for funding for three years—but not any longer.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Dewey Number or Curriculum Subject	Grade Level	Level of Support	Number of Items	Average Copyright Year	Percentage of Positively Reviewed Titles	Number of Items to Weed	Number of Titles Recommended for Purchase

FIGURE 4: Curriculum Map Evaluation Worksheet .from *An Introduction to Collection Development for School Librarians, Second Edition*, by Mona Kerby (Chicago: American Library Association, 2019). Used with permission.

Promises of money have a way of being forgotten.

Have two pals proofread the letter. Have them identify any sentences they had to read twice. Most importantly, check your math. See Figure 5: Report to Principal.

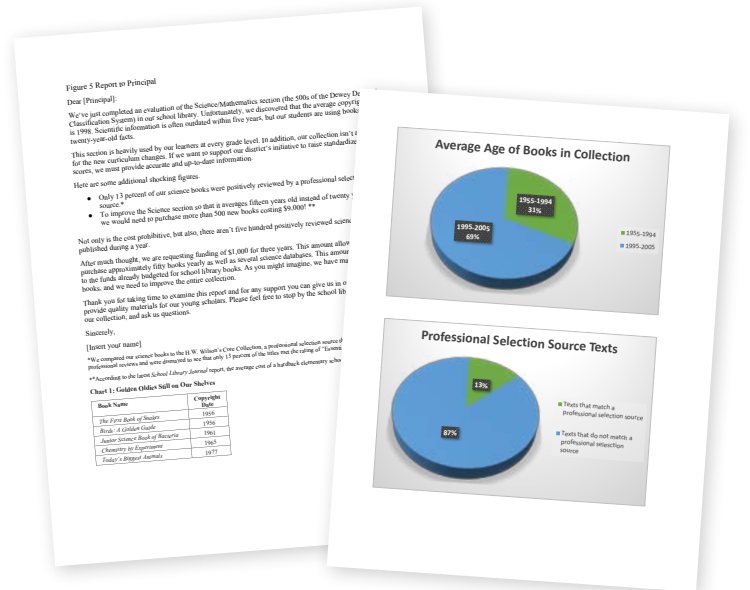


FIGURE 5: Report to Principal . from *An Introduction to Collection Development for School Librarians, Second Edition*, by Mona Kerby (Chicago: American Library Association, 2019). Used with permission.

In Closing

In the late 1950s, when curriculum publishers were churning out library books because schools had money to spend, there wasn't much thought to quality. Today's school librarians face ever decreasing budgets. But, turn this into an advantage. Be strategic; use data when making decisions; and make long term goals to improving the collection.

Here's hoping this article gives you the steps to success.

Works Cited

- Kerby, Mona. *An Introduction to Collection Development for School Librarians, 2nd ed.* ALA/AASL, 2019.
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Kerby, her husband, and their two energetic rescue mutts live in northern rural Maryland. The two-legged family members like reading and walking. The four-legged members dig holes.