Introduction

Ashland University Library has identified a pressing need to evaluate and weed physical titles from its collection in order to best align itself to current library trends and prepare for an eventual library renovation project. The collection is also in need of an update and refinement due to the general trend over the years of reduced circulation in favor of electronic access.

Estimates of usage and space requirements have identified that approximately 25-30% of the collection needs to be moved to long-term storage or weeded in order to align the collection size with usage and storage requirements. With a general circulating collection comprised of over 112,000 items, this means identifying, evaluating and removing over 30,000 items; preferably before renovation would necessitate moving the items several times. Factoring the availability of materials through online access points and the OhioLINK catalog, it was decided weeding the material would be more economically feasible than developing an off-site storage solution independently.

This project was developed to create a workflow that would speed up the weeding process by identifying subsets of the collection with reduced circulation or relevance to current course offerings, thus shortening access time for both for students and the OhioLINK consortium. It also reverses the traditional weeding process by primarily evaluating a title before pulling titles for review.

The following project goals were identified:

- Establish where (age-wise) in LC Class would be the highest priority to weed.
- Quickly be able to identify titles being used frequently, recently, or both.
- Develop a list of underperforming titles to check against additional criteria.
- Identify titles duplicated by holdings in the OhioLINK catalog or through other online access points.
- Evaluate whether a title still aligns to Ashland University course offerings or interest.
- Create a developed weeding list with demonstrable reasoning to use to pull and withdraw titles.

The workflow that resulted from this development was applied to two LC Class areas within the AU Library general collection for weeding accomplished over the summer of 2019. In LC Class L (education), the faculty librarian conducted weeding in a traditional manner by evaluating the collection as a whole and pulling titles one at a time to evaluate them. The index scoring process was then applied retrospectively to see how many titles identified were actually weeded by the librarian. In LC Class Q (science), the faculty librarian conducted the index scoring process first to develop a pull list, then weeded again afterwards to refine the two processes. In the area reviewed by the librarian in LC Class L, 83% of the titles identified by the index scoring process were weeded using a traditional workflow. In LC Class Q, only 18% of the titles identified by the index scoring process were weeded.

The difference in effectiveness between classes may be due to scope of the areas reviewed and previous weeding projects; the smaller scope with more similar items in class L may have allowed for easier identification of titles to remove, while the larger scope and diverse subject area in Q meant reviewing the collection in whole precluded the removal of more indexed titles.

Reference Literature


Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework is applied using data imported into the spreadsheet. Four inputs are applied by the evaluator: number of library holdings copy of a title, if an ebook is available, and availability of title in OhioLINK. Due to age and dated content of deselected titles, many were discarded instead of presented to the campus population as free book options.

Future Weeding: A custom template was developed for use with the weeding process. If a title met deselection criteria and was retained, it was stamped. This book was last evaluated by: ________. In total, 3,672 titles were evaluated in Class L of which 1,584 were weeded (42%).

The weeded titles had an average index score of 14. 398 titles within the evaluation area met the additional criteria (a publication date and base score) to be index scored, of which 94 titles were weeded; 63% of titles identified by the process were then weeded by the librarian using traditional methods.

Findings

Scatter Plot of Index Scoring Data in LC Class Q

In class 7,176 titles were evaluated, and of those 577 were weeded in total (7%). The weeded titles had an average index score of 15.8. Using the index scoring process and criteria, 1,047 titles were identified, but 989 were weeded. 18% of titles weeded were those weeded by the librarian using the index score as a guide.

Conclusions & Future Use

Mixed results found when applying the index scoring process may be affected by:

- Library experience and familiarity with surveyed collection - The librarian weeding Class L has 20 years experience of collection development and uses of the collection for the College of Education and its programs; the librarian weeding Class Q is new and not as familiar with the collection development.
- The breadth of the collection surveyed - The librarian in Class L focused on a specific subset of the collection. While the scope of the collection was significant, especially given it serves a student population from undergraduate to PhD, identification of materials for de-selection was straightforward. Weeding the Class L was streamlined as a three step process. The librarian in Class Q surveyed the class in its entirety, meaning that a wide array of subjects needed to be represented by the material existing in the collection, and therefore it was harder to remove materials that did not have subject matter covered by other holdings. Furthermore, the Qs had been weeded twice in the last seven years.

In both classes, it was demonstrated that the index scoring process was successful in identifying titles to be weeded by defining their score above the average. In part of the collection that were not scored, both librarians also identified materials to weeded that had lower than average scores represented by importing the use and publication data within the weeding index score spreadsheet. Without further application, the dissemination of the index score data could be expanded, but further application for other parts of the collection could be considered.

Further use of the index scoring process is recommended for inclusion with other parts of Ashland University Library’s collections, as well as continued reiterative scoring against traditionally weeded titles to compare results.

Moving forward, it may be possible to automate some parts of the index scoring process using XML/web-scraping to count the number of holdings in the OhioLINK catalog. The author has already developed a script to do this, though difficulties with multiplicity of editions and existing record.

Comparison of index vs. print holdings could possibly be accomplished through comparisons of data in title data. Further summation of the process would significantly reduce the time the librarians would spend manually checking titles in online catalogs or before weeding in the surveyed areas, and help to ensure that the subject area (the librarian’s judgment of a title’s representativeness to the subject and institution) would remain the most important factor in the process.