Deselection vs. Weeding: A Systematic Approach to Collection Management

The Michigan State University Libraries (MSUL) is embarking on a major weeding project to alleviate significant overcrowding in the stacks. Although new remote storage space is available, monographs with little or no use are being considered for deselection rather than transfer to the new facility.

MSUL enlisted the services of Sustainable Collection Services™ (SCS) to run GreenGlass™ reports to assist in identifying items that could be removed from the collection. In addition to circulation and acquisitions data from the MSUL OPAC, the reports provide information on regional and national holdings for each title, providing subject librarians with a comprehensive set of data and allowing a more systematic approach to deselection vs. usage-only based weeding.

The reports used the following criteria:

- Zero circulation since 1989
- Publication date before 1995
- Added to collection before 2005
- Excluded items with local protection (collections of distinction and Special Collection)
- More than 8 copies of the same edition in the US (per OCLC)
- More than 1 copy held in Michigan; more than 1 copy in the CIC (Committee for Institutional Cooperation)

Reports also included volume numbers (if applicable), barcode, a link to local catalog and WorldCat records, and HathiTrust public domain holdings.

Factors considered outside of report data:

- Items with gift plates cannot be withdrawn
- Publication dates prior to 1900 checked for “medium rare” status
- Individual volumes were not removed from sets
- Areas of special interest to faculty research/curriculum retained

Looking Ahead:

GreenGlass™ reports can generate other data; high and low use item reports will be used as decisions are made on what goes to remote (low use) and what areas are emphasized in future collection decisions (high use). Other potential uses for the report data are endless!