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Using EBLIP for Collection Assessment

Courtney Fuson and Paige Carter

In spring 2017, Bunch Library set out a three-year strategic plan that included a strategic priority to “build and curate robust and unique collections to enhance the student learning experience and attract leading scholars” (Lila D Bunch Library, 2017). One of the objectives of this strategic priority was to improve the collection, with a specific goal of weeding the physical collection. Additionally, the strategic plan called for the library to “create a welcoming and secure space for study, research, and collaboration in an environment that fosters intellectual freedom and the open exchange of ideas” (Lila D Bunch Library, 2017) by improving existing spaces. Weeding the physical collection would allow the library to be reconfigured to better meet student needs. To the knowledge of the current staff, it had been more than 20 years since the library’s collection was last assessed. A deselection committee, made up of seven faculty and staff from around the library, was formed to do the work necessary to meet this goal. Members included representatives from the Access Services, Asset Management, Music, Research and Instruction, and Systems departments within the library. The library director led the committee, which met throughout summer 2017.

Setting

The Lila D Bunch Library is located on the campus of Belmont University—a private, Christian, liberal arts university in Nashville, TN. Belmont’s student body has approximately 8,700 undergraduate and graduate students. Belmont offers more than 120

undergraduate programs and more than 40 graduate programs. The most popular undergraduate programs include music business, nursing, audio engineering technology, commercial music, and songwriting. The most popular graduate programs include law, pharmacy, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.

Lila D. Bunch Library (the main university library) occupies 56,108 square feet of space and houses four floors of resources, seating for 400 students, a spacious lobby, study rooms, 15 public access computers, a music library, a special collections room, and two atriums. The library provides access to printers, copy machines, and book and image scanners. In addition to the library, the building is home to three art galleries and the offices for several of the university's Information Technology Services departments.

Bunch Library has sixteen full-time employees—eight non-tenure-track faculty librarians and eight staff. The library has a physical collection of more than 200,000 items and an extensive electronic collection of books, databases, streaming media, and serials accessible via its website. Because Belmont prides itself on being a teaching institution, the focus of the collection is primarily on supporting the university's curricular needs.

In December 2017, the library's basement, home to 75,000 books in Library of Congress (LC) classification A–F, was closed to students. Using the lists created by the deselection committee, the books in the basement that were marked to keep were moved to the first floor, while books on the first floor that were slated to be weeded were moved to the basement. Moving these books allowed students to keep immediate access to the materials they needed the most and allowed them to request materials from closed stacks, as necessary.

In late 2018, renovations to the lobby of the library were announced that included the addition of the Hart Studio Museum. The Hart Studio Museum is a permanent museum and a repository of Frederick Hart's work. The works are housed in a recreation of his home studio in Hume, Virginia. This addition resulted in the loss of some library shelf space, increasing the urgency for the library to pursue its goal of weeding the physical collection. Immediately after the opening of the Hart Studio Museum in March 2019, the library was refreshed with new paint and carpet throughout. This required moving every single book and bookshelf in the library and resulted in a new layout for the shelving and seating.

Areas that were ready to be weeded before they were moved were weeded, and the books from those areas were packed up and sent to Better World Books. Better World Books is a company that receives materials from libraries, then sorts and scans them for resale online. Some of the proceeds from the sale of the materials go back to the library. Approximately 8,000 books in LC classifications B, G, H, and M were sent to Better World Books. Some items in areas that were not ready to be weeded were sent to temporary off-site storage. Items sent to off-site storage were primarily in LC classifications J, K, and Q–Z (approximately 20,000 books) that had been published more than five years ago and/or items that had no recorded circulation in the last three years.

In spring 2021, the library's basement was renovated to create space for the Information Technology Services offices. This resulted in the installation of compact shelving on the library side, which allowed the 75,000 books in the basement to be housed in half of their previous footprint. The remaining half of the basement was converted to offices. Additional compact shelving for approximately 30,000 books was installed on the first floor in fall

2021, increasing space available for books in the LC classifications for the Fine Arts (N) and Technology (T). This space became increasingly necessary as Belmont University merged with O'More College of Art and Design in 2018 and Watkins College of Art in 2020. These two mergers have added approximately 9,000 items to the Bunch Library collection.

The structure provided by evidence-based library and information practice (EBLIP) provided an excellent framework for this extensive, long-term project. This project has made use of the cyclical nature of evidence-based library and information practice as well, with lots of opportunities to adapt the process to meet the various challenges faced over the past few years.

Articulate

After the deselection committee was convened in spring 2017, the first step was to *articulate* the question—to define the scope of the project and clearly define the evidence necessary. Using the SPICE framework (Table 15.1), the committee defined the scope of the project by asking, “How can deselecting physical materials from the library’s collection provide additional space for student seating and provide a more useful collection?” As mentioned previously, improving the physical space of the library and the library’s collection tied in with the library’s strategic plan.

TABLE 15.1

SPICE FRAMEWORK

Setting	Private liberal arts university library (Master’s College and University M1)
Perspective	University faculty, students, and staff
Intervention	Deselection of books from library collection
Comparison	Status quo
Evaluation	Additional space available for student seating

This question provided clear boundaries for the committee and required specific decisions to be made. These decisions required evidence, which was the next task for the deselection committee.

Assemble

Professional knowledge and local evidence were the key types of evidence *assembled* by the deselection committee.

Professional Knowledge

The professional knowledge used by the committee to determine the criteria for deselection was just that—the knowledge that committee members built over time that places the “situation in the context of the organization and environment” (Koufogiannakis &

Brettle, 2016, p. 38). With an average of eight years of service at Belmont for the committee members, the committee used a combination of personal experience with the collection and its users and guidance from the book *Rightsizing the Academic Library* by S. Ward (2014) to help determine the initial deselection criteria.

The committee also used information available in *Resources for College Libraries* and determined content level using the levels assigned in GOBI. This addition to the evidence available helped to decide which titles would be key titles for a library like Bunch to hold. *Resources for College Libraries* is a list of core print and electronic resources for academic libraries that is curated by ACRL's *Choice* and Bowker (the official ISBN agency for the United States). GOBI content levels are assigned by bibliographers when the titles are profiled for addition to GOBI (Help/Frequently asked questions, n.d.).

Local Evidence

The most important evidence assembled by the deselection committee was local evidence in the form of information from GreenGlass reports created from the library's data by OCLC. GreenGlass is a service provided by OCLC that allows libraries to combine local data with World Cat, HathiTrust, and CHOICE data (*GreenGlass*, 2021). This combination of data allowed the deselection committee to run reports based on specific criteria and create lists of items to either keep, review, or deselect. GreenGlass reports were created based on criteria such as publication date, last recorded use, last copy available in Tennessee, and others. For a complete list of the criteria used, refer to Figures 15.1–15.3.

After running the reports from GreenGlass and reviewing them, the resulting lists of items slated for deselection were sent to faculty for their feedback on what items should be kept. Three lists were created for each area: a list of deselected titles for faculty review, a list of titles that would be kept in the print collection, and a list of print titles that would be replaced by e-books as the budget permits. Faculty also received information on the assessment criteria used for each list. These lists were distributed via email that included a link to the library's deselection LibGuide (<https://belmont.libguides.com/deselection/facrev>). Faculty marked their lists in Google Docs, and library workers reviewed this additional evidence before items were removed from the collection.

Assess

After submitting the library's data to OCLC for importing into GreenGlass, the deselection committee then began the *assessment* process to determine how useful the GreenGlass data would be. Using the TAPUPAS standards (Table 15.2), the committee decided that the evidence available from the GreenGlass reports was of sufficient quality to be used by the committee for decision-making.

The TAPUPAS standards are a set of “should” statements designed to force a consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of evidence to ensure that it is of sufficient quality. These standards encourage a “more reflective and critical stance towards information arising from the diverse sources of knowledge” (Long et al., 2006, p. 209). This model was chosen because of its focus on looking critically at information from a variety of sources.

TABLE 15.2**TAPUPAS STANDARDS**

Standard	Definition	GreenGlass Data
Transparency	Open to scrutiny	Data generated from library ILS data is available to library workers; data from WorldCat is not openly available.
Accuracy	Accurate and well-grounded	Circulation data is not limited to a specific date range but is over the lifetime of the item, which could be problematic.
Purposivity	Fit for purpose	Using circulation and holdings comparison data in this manner is an appropriate use of the data.
Utility	Fit for use	
Propriety	Legal and ethical	Aggregated circulation data cannot be traced back to the individual users and holdings information is freely available via WorldCat, so there are no ethical or legal questions about using this data.
Accessibility	Accessible and intelligible	GreenGlass data is presented via a website that can filter the data and allows for download to Excel files. This makes the data accessible to those who need to use it. The presentation of the data does assume some familiarity with library terms and concepts, which is not unexpected.
Specificity	Meeting source-specific standards	There are no formal standards for GreenGlass data, but they are produced by experienced library workers who are aware of the needs of the profession.

After assessing the GreenGlass data and deciding it was adequate, the deselection committee began to work with the evidence assembled to craft the list of criteria for deselection of physical materials.

The final criteria list agreed upon by the committee allowed the creation of three separate initial lists. One set of criteria determined if a book was to be kept at all (Figure 15.1); one set determined if the book should be placed on open stacks (Figure 15.2); and the final criteria created a list of items that were eligible for deselection after faculty review (Figure 15.3).

- Publications after 2007 for Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Business, CEMB
- Publications after 2010 for Science, Mathematics, Health Sciences
- Collections of distinction: Religion, Music, CEMB
- Last recorded use is 2012 or after and recorded uses is greater than 5.

Separate lists:

- Last copy in Tennessee AND NOT electronically available
- Last copy in Tennessee AND electronically available but ILL'd in last 5 years

Figure 15.1

Criteria for Books in Open Stacks

- One or more uses since 2016 = definite keep
- 5 or more from 2012-2015 = definite keep
- Published 2007 or after
- Last TN Copy = definite keep
- Choice Outstanding Academic Title = definite keep
- Resources for College Libraries Title = definite keep
- General-Academic + 5 or more peers
- Advanced-Academic + 5 or more peers + no Ebook
- General-Academic + Advanced-Academic + 0–4 Peers + 5 or less TN + 0 or 1 R1 SE
- Less than 100 US library holdings any edition
- Popular/Professional + 10 or more peers + no Ebook
- Popular/Professional + 0-4 Peers + 5 or less TN + 1 or more uses ever
- Popular/Professional + 0-4 Peers + 5 or less TN + 0 uses ever + 0 or 1 R1 SE
- NO CONTENT LEVEL BUT HAS ISBN + 10 or more Peers have it
- NO CONTENT LEVEL BUT HAS ISBN + NO ISBN (published prior to 1969) + 0 Peers + 5 or less TN + 0 or 1 R1 SE +1 or more uses ever
- NO ISBN (published prior to 1969) + 5 or more Peers have + no Ebook + 1 OR MORE uses ever
- NO ISBN (published prior to 1969) + 10 or more Peers have + no Ebook + 5 or fewer TN libraries have.
- 10 or more Peers have + no Ebook + 1 or more uses ever
- 0 or 1 R1 libraries hold + 5 or less TN libraries + no Ebook + 1 or more uses ever
- Held by 5 or fewer TN libraries + 5 or more Peers have + no Ebook
- Held by 5 or fewer TN libraries + Held by 5 or fewer R1 Libraries in SE + more than 1 use ever

Figure 15.2

Criteria for books in closed stacks.

- 0 Uses ever, Held by 5 or more TN libraries
- Held by 5 or more TN Libraries
- 10 or More Peers have + Ebook
- 0 R1 libraries hold + less than 5 TN libraries + Ebook
- General-Academic + 1-4 Peers
- General-Academic + 0 Peers + 1 or more TN Library
- General-Academic + 0 Peers + 0 TN Libraries + 1 or more R1 Library any edition
- Advanced-Academic + 1–4 Peers
- Advanced-Academic + 0 Peers + 1 or more TN Library
- Advanced-Academic + 0 Peers + 0 TN Library + 1 or more R1 Library any edition
- Popular/Professional + 1–4 Peers
- Popular/Professional + 0 Peers + 1 or more TN Library
- Popular/Professional + 0 Peers + 0 TN Library + 1 or more R1 Library any edition
- Popular/Professional + 10 or more peers + Ebook
- NO ISBN (published prior to 1969) + 5 or more Peers have + No Ebook + 1 or more uses ever
- NO ISBN (published prior to 1969) + 5–9 Peers have it + no Hathi Access + 0 uses ever + R1 has same edition
- NO ISBN (published prior to 1969) + 5–9 Peers have it + no Hathi Access + 1 or more uses ever + R1 has same edition + Held by 5 or more TN libraries
- NO ISBN (published prior to 1969) + 0–4 Peers have it + 1 or more R1 Has same edition
- NO CONTENT LEVEL BUT HAS ISBN + 5 or more peers have + no Hathi Trust access + 0 uses ever + R1 any edition
- NO CONTENT LEVEL BUT HAS ISBN + 5 or more peers have + no Hathi Trust Access + 1 or more uses ever + 5 or more TN Libraries
- NO CONTENT LEVEL BUT HAS ISBN + 5 or fewer peers have + 1 or more R1 has any edition
- 10 or More Peers have + Ebook
- 0 R1 libraries hold + less than 5 TN libraries + Ebook

Figure 15.3

Criteria for deselection (after faculty review).

Adapt

This project was initially slated to be completed by 2020. However, this project is still ongoing. The acquisition of two art schools and their library collections has been a primary factor in the delays, but a lack of staff availability (because of the COVID-19 pandemic and general staffing changes) has also played a major part. We have now loaded data into GreenGlass three times. One limitation of GreenGlass is that it uses only a snapshot of data—it does not have a live connection to our library management system. As we have withdrawn titles and added entire collections, we have updated our GreenGlass data to reflect that information.

So far, we have evaluated nine complete LC classifications (A, B, C, D, G, H, J, K, L, M, and Q), totaling a little over half of the collection. We have removed approximately 19,000 items from the collection. One of the early adaptations made to the process was to pull most of the books labeled “copy 2” from the shelves as we moved books around the library. Before discarding books labeled “copy 2,” they are checked to be sure they are truly a second copy. If not, they are evaluated based on the deselection criteria and relabeled or discarded. We also moved more than 8,000 books with a copyright prior to 1920 to a rare books collection located in our Special Collections department. More recently, we have begun to focus on books that are freely available in HathiTrust as candidates to be removed from our collection.

Unfortunately, even with the removal of 19,000 items and rearranging the library, we have not been able to increase the number of seats available. We have been able to adjust where and what type of seating is available. We have increased the soft seating available and made it clearer which areas are quiet areas and which are better suited for group study.

Bunch Library has had an e-preferred purchasing model since 2016, where e-books are the default copy purchased and print books are purchased by special request of the faculty. Print copies of items are purchased if an electronic version is not available on one of our primary e-book platforms (ProQuest Ebook Central or eBook Collection (EBSCO-host)). During 2020 and 2021, we did see a drop in our print materials ordering due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are nearly back to 2019 levels. The deselection project has not affected our print ordering in any significant way.

The deselection committee has officially disbanded, but the work is ongoing. The deselection process has been given a more prominent place in the library’s collection development policy. The head of Asset Management and the head of Access Services continue to work together to revise the criteria as needed. Their joint work will help to ensure that deselection becomes a routine part of collection management so that there should not be another decades-long gap going forward. As the university’s programs grow and change, so will the collection management criteria for the library.

Lessons Learned

Set Realistic Expectations

While we couldn’t have anticipated the moves and acquisitions that helped delay the project, weeding a collection of nearly half a million items in only three years was an

ambitious timeline. There will always be unforeseen hiccups, so give yourself some extra time to complete large projects of this nature.

We received mixed results from the faculty feedback that we requested. Some faculty were diligent and went through their lists. One faculty member marked 6,000 items (out of 7,000 items) to be kept in the collection. Some faculty were upset that we were removing books from the collection at all. Better communication about why we are removing items and a more in-depth look at some of the assessment criteria might help the faculty understand the importance of their feedback.

Organization is Key

When embarking on a project of this scale, clear and consistent labeling is crucial. We had numerous printed lists (that could be hundreds of pages long). We learned that printing a heading on each page with exactly which list it is, page numbers, and dates were extremely helpful in ensuring that the correct items were moved around. Boxes, carts (both large and small), and other temporary locations for books should also be clearly and consistently labeled. Putting the call number range, where the books are supposed to be going, and why they are in that location are the key pieces of information to include. Do not rely on color coding systems (you'll quickly run out of colors!) or simply remembering what something is or why it is where it is. This leads to confusion when the work is done in shifts by varying workers. Having a clear summary of what was accomplished by each shift is also helpful. Clearly communicated labeling practices help maintain continuity, ensuring that work does not have to be repeated.

Digital files should also be clearly labeled with what they are and the date they were created. Using a service such as Google Drive or OneDrive can help prevent mismatched file versions by allowing multiple people to work on the same file.

Staffing

A deselection project is very physical. Books rapidly get quite heavy, with one box of books weighing approximately 40 pounds. The standard book trucks can hold up to 200 pounds, and the large capacity book trucks we used for this project could hold up to 900 pounds. That requires a lot of physical effort to move. Staff should be encouraged to take care of their physical needs—take frequent breaks, drink lots of water, and listen to their body when lifting or pushing heavy objects.

Even if staff are not lifting and moving books, the repetitive nature of pulling items from the shelf based on a printed list can quickly wear on you. Many, many podcasts and playlists were used to help keep staff focused on the task at hand while also alleviating the tedium of the job.

Clear and consistent labeling practices and a clear summary at the end of each shift (as mentioned above) are also key for allowing staff to move in and out of the project as they have time or ability. Having more than one key person also helps because it allows the burden of project leadership to be shared and allows the leaders to take breaks as necessary without losing momentum on the project. The entire library was involved in

this project (student workers, staff, and faculty), and without clear communication, it would not have been possible.

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