



# Public Libraries: Thoughts on Deselection

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This dissertation was submitted in part fulfilment of requirements for the degree of MSc  
Information and Library Studies.

## Declaration

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## Abstract

Deselection (weeding) practices in public libraries and the thoughts of library staff thereon has been a neglected topic the world over, including Scotland. Weeding covers the removal of material from the library for a variety of reasons and is often found as part of a well-rounded collection management policy. As an essential process of librarianship, weeding's role in public libraries is to help maintain the health and relevance of the collection in serving the local community's need. This role is expanded with the continued growth of electronic resources, with libraries facing opportunities in automated weeding software, ebooks and e-resources, and making space for new technologies. Research into public library weeding practices covers public reaction and anecdotal opinion, but little in the way of rigorous study into collection development staff thoughts and opinions.

The aim of this dissertation is to discover what public library staff in collection development staff in Scotland think of weeding, its practices, and future role. A literature review encompassing current and past research, and using thematic analysis, an online qualitative survey, was conducted with a final data set of 36 respondents from all over Scotland.

Three main themes in Scotland's libraries were developed from the 36 responses, that of the library's message, the role of governance and the future is now. With the pressure to provide the latest in technology and published works for users, all in safe, usable spaces, libraries are weeding to remain relevant and responsive. Governance structures controlled much of the policy and implementation of weeding practices, with respondents from Scottish public libraries overwhelming weeding through their respective systems stock exchanges or through the assistance of library headquarter teams/professional staff. There was found to be little concern for automated software assistance as long as a person was the final decision-maker. The larger concern for collection development staff was having the budget, time and staff to make weeding a continuous, efficient process.

Future areas of study could look at the link between professional qualifications and weeding practices in Scotland.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Research Problem

Material becomes damaged or irrelevant, libraries are pressed for space; the story is as old as time. Known by various names, deselection (weeding), has been happening in libraries since libraries started and since that time it has been one of controversy. At the centre of this oft-mentioned and silent service are the staff who perform the task of deselection. Scotland holds an enviable number of public libraries and a supportive population, yet research has neglected to explore how weeding is practiced and how library staff view weeding across the country. Filling in this gap of knowledge, learning through an in-depth survey how library staff in Scotland's public libraries implement and think about weeding, is the aim of this dissertation. In the current evolution of library services, balancing physical and digital material, this paper concentrates mainly on print material in the monograph format, while touching lightly upon ebooks as an extension of the physical. For the purpose of this study, deselection will be referred to alternatively as weeding and both will be understood to mean the permanent removal of print material from a library collection for any reason. Activities related to this task are explored, including, but not limited to, reviewing circulation statistics, evaluating collection items for damage/age/relevance, and physically removing books from shelves.

## 1.2 Research Context

For more than a hundred years weeding has been a polarizing topic of discussion in library literature; an early example, in the US, finds Asa Wynkoop publishing an article entitled 'Discarding Useless Material' in the *Wisconsin Library Bulletin* in 1911. As a subject, weeding has been expounded upon in numerous case studies, collection management articles, decision-making strategies, policies, and practices in libraries across the world; not to mention numerous 'how-to' guides or methods of weeding to avoid public outcry. This wealth of literature though, has ignored public libraries, and on a granular level, Scotland. While library patrons and the general public believe that their local libraries keep every book donated or purchased, this is not the case. Controversy surrounding deselection could be due to the words used to describe this activity (weeding, retirement, pruning, reverse selection, deaccession, withdrawal and discarding), all of which have a rather negative connotation, but when probed further deselection smacks of censorship to some and wanton destruction of priceless creative effort by others. Regardless of bad publicity or vocabulary, deselections controversial nature highlights the need for more study on this topic. Amidst it's notoriety, how do library staff view deselection?

Libraries are asked to preserve and share information, to protect civil liberties and engage their communities in life-long learning. How does this mindset answer the need to remove information from libraries? In the body of relevant public library literature deselection is often viewed through the lens of collection management and as part of a whole policy devoted to the curation of a library's collection. This results in deselection being lumped in with the more exciting idea of acquisition and collection development. Once pulled apart though, research on deselection's place in library's collection management policies is lacking. Libraries with well-developed policies



can use these to defend their decisions for purchases and discarded material, but without a policy to act as guide, what do libraries do? Moreover, the pressure from an ever-growing body of published material and demands of public consumption, leave library staff fighting for shelf space, community relevance and collection usefulness. What weeding practices do collection staff follow? What methods are preferred, if any? Missing from the research into increasingly crowded (both physically and figuratively) libraries is the voice of those engaged in deselection activities. Library staff are tasked with determining what material is weeded from their collection with broad questions as to criteria, evaluation, method and policy. Attitudes, opinions and thoughts on the practice of weeding all influence these activities. This gap of knowledge may hold the answers to many thorny book-tossing questions.

Consensus on the totality of deselection criteria has not been reached, but methods such as the CREW (Continuous Review, Evaluation, & Weeding) Method, offers a type of guidebook to deselection (Larson, 2012). CREW evaluates materials by year of copyright, last use, and condition. A criterion guide similar to CREW is another acronym, MUSTIE (Misleading, Ugly, Superseded, Trivial, Irrelevant, and Elsewhere). MUSTIE is concerned with the book in hand versus an overall deselection policy, but it has been cited as a practical guide to help library's make those choices (Ford, 2015). As technology advances though, automation offers another tool for evaluation of collections for weeding through the use of data, but with obvious challenges to libraries. How is this automation accomplished? Will software, making data-driven decisions, replace the library staff's professional judgement? Since books can bring out strong feelings in everyone, automation can be a controversial subject on its own.

As an area of study, most work concerning weeding practices and policy are rather well documented within academic libraries, with a small handful of studies interested in the public library sphere. One study in particular, carried out in the US and Canada delved into the idea of weeding as a path to success and fundamental to a public library's mission through staff opinions (Dilevko and Gottlieb, 2003). But while university libraries offer case studies on methods and practices, less knowledge is available on the public library side as to their methods and practices, including how librarian's view this highly emotional, politically charged process. Furthermore, Scotland has not been subject to this type of review and with the abundance of Carnegie built libraries and strong commitment to keeping public libraries open, research into this area will be of great value to those practicing there today. Of relevance to the field and of interest is the gap in information on public library staff's thoughts and feelings toward weeding, its implementation, and the various practices, policies and methods employed. Dilevko and Gottlieb's study is years past and was conducted in the US and Canada, allowing this research study to extend the field in a new country and culture.

This dissertation will look at Scottish public library staff thoughts, opinions and attitudes regarding three areas of deselection highlighted above: practice and method, policy, and automation. These areas are encapsulated in the research questions below.

### 1.3 Research Questions, Methods & Objectives

Missing from the body of work is an overview on public library staff attitudes toward weeding. To explore this area in-depth the ensuing questions were posed.

1. How do collection development staff in Scotland view weeding?
2. What methods or practices do public libraries in Scotland follow?
3. What concerns collection development staff about the future of collection management, e.g. automation and electronic resources?

To answer these questions an extensive literature review was undertaken to find deselection considerations, collection management policies, and general opinion on weeding in the field. Additionally, this dissertation partially replicated a previous study's email questionnaire (Dilevko and Gottlieb, 2003) by using selective questions and transforming them into an online survey, with a mix of open text and multiple-choice questions to uncover what 36 Scottish public library staff thought about deselection.

The overarching goal of this dissertation is the understanding of public library staff attitudes and opinions about weeding and how collection management policy plays a role in deselection practices throughout main and branch libraries in Scotland. Specifically, this study, aims to offer a compelling narrative from Scotland's public library staff in regards to the role of policy in deselection practices and second to highlight the value of library staff in the evaluation, selection and discarding of collection material, especially in the face of changing technologies.

### 1.4 Learning Outcomes

Undertaking this dissertation offered the researcher an opportunity to learn new software programs, including NVivo and Qualtrics, to conduct a survey and analyse the results. The software knowledge gained is expected to be of value in career development and as an asset to advancing future research questions. Conducting the survey provided experience in survey question development, pilot testing, time management and best practices for collecting qualitative research. Analysis of qualitative data and coding techniques were also valuable take-aways.

The literature review gave the researcher an in-depth knowledge of collection management evaluation, deselection practices and the public relations challenge facing public libraries in response to limitations in space and budget, and technological advancement.

### 1.5 Structure

This dissertation follows the below format:

Chapter 2: Literature Review: A review of deselection literature in the Scotland and the UK, why weeding is needed and how it is accomplished, e.g. collection management policy, evaluation and public influence.

Chapter 3: Methodology: Outlining the research approach, survey design, analysis method and reasoning behind choices made herein.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion: Descriptive analysis of the research's data and thematic findings.

Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusion: Reflections on the research's results and future implications, along with concluding thoughts.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Scotland and the UK

In Scotland, 1 in 2 people used the public libraries when data was collected in 2016 and 77% of those asked believed it to be important to the community (Peachey, 2017). With statistics like these, Scotland's weeding projects could be major influencers when it comes to how the public view and use its public library spaces. With this responsibility, Scottish public libraries need to have clear policies, practices and reliable research to support their decision-making. However, the current literature does not appear to support an in-depth look at weeding as a practice in public libraries therein.

Public libraries are generously represented by the Scottish Library and Information Council's (SLIC) recent *Ambition & Opportunity: A Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland 2015-2020*, but this treatise is focused on carrying Scotland's libraries into the future and does little to mention collection management practices aside from encouraging "resource sharing among all types of libraries for the purpose of achieving economical and efficient delivery of library services to the public" (Carnegie UK Trust, 2015, p.39). Collection policies in Scotland were the study of a previous University of Strathclyde dissertation, where it was found that 93.3% of local authorities surveyed had collection management policies and of those all urban and town policies included weeding components, with 80% of rural and 90% of mixed areas (Scanlon, 2012). Scanlon also mentioned that electronic resources were lightly treated in the collection development and deselection policy with staff treating ebooks like their physical counterparts (2012).

Outside of Scotland specifically, the UK as a whole is moving forward with shared services, as Froud updates a 2011 review of UnityUK, an OCLC created service for e-resources and inter-library loan and FABLibraries it's public-facing national catalogue, he noted that, despite growth in regionalism and localism "national solutions remain both relevant and cost-effective" for public libraries to access (2016, p.171). Under the 2010-2015 Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government the *Independent Library Report for England* was published stating that "A national digital network could allow for existing stock to be better sourced, shared and curated on a wider basis" (Department of Culture Media & Sport, 2014, p.13). Politics challenging the local authorities with budgetary constraints and changing management structures aside, the UK, like Scotland offers little current literature on weeding practices and collection management for their public libraries. Union catalogues and regional cooperation seem to be common, however the largest research is focused on special and academic libraries.

Specifically relating to deselection policy in special libraries, NHS libraries in Kent, Surrey and Sussex have withdrawal standards that exclude anatomy books, but have a standing practice for pharmacology books being kept only 5 years (Fairclough, 2012, p.220). In the academic sphere, collection development takes a different track; Corrall dates the debate of “access vs holdings” and the shift away from acquiring stock to inter-library loan (ILL) and document supply in the UK to the 1990s (2012, p.10). This shift continues with JISC Collections, Scottish Higher Education Digital Library (SHEDL), and the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) offering electronic access and shared services, allowing for de-duplication of collections (Fieldhouse, 2012, p.36). Updates in policy have to take distributed collections into consideration and adjust their deselection practices in tandem; however, for public libraries, weeding research outside the UK and Scotland offers more varied and applicable accounts for this research focus.

## 2.2 Deselection: A Bad Rap

“If you are sure you have to weed, do it after midnight on a Sunday, and bury the discarded books at the bottom of the barrel, under the rest of the trash” (Berry III, 2013).

The above quote stands out and impresses upon the reader that deselection (aka weeding) is a controversial thing. Weeding, deselection, deaccessioning, etc. are all terms for the same thing, but is the reputation as a shady, midnight rendezvous with a dumpster, deserved? What is known about deselection in public libraries? Weeding wasn’t so much an issue when private collections were the norm and most collections numbered in the tens and low hundreds; yet by 1892, it was recorded that Crane Memorial Public Library in Quincy, Massachusetts was running out of space, verging on 20,000 titles and needed a massive deselection project, complete with the creation of the Quincy Plan (Roy, 1988). Following up on this uproar is Wynkoop in 1911 writing articles on discarding books deemed of little value. Moving forward a hundred years and weeding is an ever-growing problem for libraries, Davis opines, as he likens the current times to another book-burning era reminiscent of the second World War (2011). This similarity may well be down to newspaper clippings that vilify their local library for weeding projects, like the *Washington Post* inciting criticism of the Fairfax County Library system for their practices (Oder, 2007). Yet, deselection is essential according to an ever-growing list of articles, books, and blogs (Lee, 2009; Chant, 2015; Mathews, 2010; Allen, 2010).

All of this leads to the question: why bother weeding?

## 2.3 Why Weed?

Answering the question why we weed, Johnson offers a list: “because [materials] are inaccurate, out of date, misleading, unused, or in poor condition...because [libraries] have run out of space or want to repurpose space for other uses” (2013, p.2). Slote, the leading authority on weeding, offers a list of seven reasons why weeding is a necessity: stimulate circulation, save space, save time, enhance appeal, establish credibility, respond to community need and interests, and make room for new technologies (1997). However, Slote also lists five weeding barriers: importance

placed on stock levels, time consuming, public outcry, differing criteria, and a museum mentality (1997).

Gaining popularity in the 1980s the term collection management freed libraries up to tuck communication, material selection and deselection, information gathering, and policy-making under one umbrella (Nilsen, 1994). Policies developed under this wave of management now dealt with issues of fiscal uncertainty, resource sharing, rapidly evolving technologies, and buried somewhere inside, policies on why and how to weed collections. It was at this time Segal published, *The CREW Manual: A Unified System of Weeding, Inventory, and Collection-Building for Small and Medium-Sized Public Libraries*. The CREW method previously mentioned, advocates a step by step process of policy, usage data analysis, tools for implementation and material inventories, etc. (Boon, 2009). However, Chant labels weeding “counter-intuitive” (2015) in his opinion piece and Dubicki’s USA-based case study of Monmouth University testifies, “There are a number of reasons why librarians avoid weeding as a part of collection management: desire to maintain the size of the collection, lack of time, lack of experience, and of course, the belief that a book may be needed sometime in the future” (2008, p.132).

Weeding, controversial or not, is still the best word to come to mind when libraries engage in the act of removing material from library collections. Gardens are weeded for a number of purposes, choking ivy, nonnative species, ugliness, etc., but all with the purpose to help the rest of the garden flourish. This act of helping the garden grow is deeply entrenched in library culture, with weeding helping remaining books “stand out” (Chant, 2015, p.34). It is assumed that the remaining books after a thorough weeding are the most current, accurate and representative books. As a result of weeding, it is argued, patron satisfaction and circulation numbers go up, but other research studies differed on the actual change seen with some seeing no increased usage (Dilevko and Gottlieb, 2003; Banks, 2002). Yet, weeding is held as a normal and vital part of collection development (Johnson, 2013) even when the “majority of people see most books as permanently valuable” (Berry III, 2013, p.10). In the realm of opinion, John Berry III wonders if the “real” weeds are supplanting beloved classics when weeding takes place, a commentary on contemporary reading preferences it seems (1997).

This idea of value differs from academic to public libraries, with the former placing emphasis on specific subject areas, cross-referenced lists, and faculty involvement to determine value (Soma & Sjoberg, 2010) and the latter under no such specific charter, but tied inextricably to local community needs. In content analysis of seven collection development policies from public libraries in Australia, Kelly coded three main sub-categories, “Australian Content, Local and Regional Focus, Recommendations from Staff or Community” to be relevant across policies when choosing material for acquisition (2015, p.49). Striking a cord between the two library types though is the ability of weeding to highlight gaps of knowledge or an imbalance in representation within the collection (Lee, 2009). Bottom line is that despite funding, time constraints, and no method working perfectly for every library’s needs, there is “never an excuse for not weeding” (Larson, 2012, p.8). Weeding can be a dreaded task, but when libraries avoid weeding in order to “maintain respectable stock levels” it has a “detrimental impact” on circulation and patron satisfaction (Jones, 2007, p.172).

Discussed next is the conditions under which weeding is usually conducted, regardless of a formal policy, or in addition to a continual review process.

## 2.4 Conditions for Weeding

In this section, it seems appropriate to begin with the need to free up space, which stands outside the purview of criteria for weeding methods, like MUSTIE, as an end benefit.

### 2.4.1 Space

The need for more space is a continuing trend in weeding studies as noted by Cottrell in his 2013 article *Weeding worries, part 1: books*. The factors leading to weeding collections come from budget meetings, shared-space designs and “space repurposing” for things like makerspaces (Cottrell, 2013, p.99). In Dilevko and Gottlieb’s article as well, librarians are quoted as saying,

The more new materials we buy for a certain collection, the more shelf space we will need [...] If we use 10 books per foot as an average, that would mean we need 3,300 linear feet of available shelf space every year just for the new materials [...] If we didn’t weed every year . . . we [would] get into trouble fast (2003, p.79).

Andrew Carnegie’s libraries were designed around the community or lecture room, Simon reminds us, as “an integral function of most public libraries” (2002, p.104). Looking back to the American Library Association, 1985-87 president William Poole, “railed against weeding” and believed the solution lie in building “bigger libraries” (Johnson, 2013, p.2). Would bigger libraries have solved weeding and still fostered Carnegie’s idea of a library’s purpose? While the option of eliminating weeding by building more spacious libraries has never taken, this brings back the debate over a public library’s purpose. Are they archives or are they ephemeral (Dilevko and Gottlieb, 2003)? Certain patrons may believe public libraries should hold every book ever printed like national repositories and yet other patrons want the latest and greatest nonfiction to grace the shelves with ample room for seating and computers. Needing mention in this section is also the boom in publishing in recent years. The Publishers Association reported that the UK has seen an increase in book and journal publishing equal to £4.8 billion in 2016 (PA Blog, 2017). With so much content available and so many platforms which to read from, libraries are crunched for space in the bid to keep up.

### 2.4.2 Misleading, Ugly, Superseded, Trivial and Irrelevant

Without infinite space, libraries must remove old items to make room for newer ones. This is true for all types of libraries, but whereas academic libraries strive to be repositories of collective knowledge, most public libraries do not. Public libraries instead strive to offer contemporary materials and services (Mandel, 2007, p.59).

As Mandel states above, public libraries are not housing core collections for the benefit of an educational institution, but instead are focused on their local community’s needs. From this standpoint, public libraries will not be investing in textbooks, research specific materials or

holding the whole history of a particular topic. As Jones' study into public libraries in New South Wales, Australia discovered, libraries that had general collections with majority holdings aged fewer than five years recorded higher than state average circulation statistics (2007). With a young collection and high stock turnover rate, this is a huge indicator of how public libraries and communities can interact successfully with each other to improve patron use and library relevance. A guidebook to Los Angeles from 10 years past is removed because it's outdated, regardless of its "print or pixel" formatting (Palmer, 2012). Having a fresh and vibrant collection doesn't mean that every book on the shelf is the most recent best-seller, but may just mean that the material on hand is not misleading, outdated or inaccurate. Ugly, was another trait found in research as a reason for weeding; Dilevko and Gottlieb, quoted a participant using weeding as a means to combat the "dusty archives" stereotype (2013, p.80). A final note on evaluation comes from a Norwegian weeding project that found their adult non-fiction collection to be "the most obsolete category" and were weeding irrelevant material like "'Daily Life Computing' from 1982" (Røgler, 2014, p.384). It all points to the need for print collections in public libraries to follow the trends of public consumption and balance these ups-and-downs with careful consideration of collection balance as they serve a diverse population as to age, race, education and interests (Boon, 2009).

#### 2.4.3 Found Elsewhere

"Weeding [...] also presents the library as a more credible source for information and enables patrons to find what they need more easily" (Mathews, 2010, p.54).

Another consideration for weeding is the ease with which patrons can find, access and use library materials. To highlight ebooks first, Chant interviewed San Antonio's head digital public librarian Ashley Eklof who says, "Materials can get lost in a vast digital collection just as they can in a large library. Easy accessibility in the key. This is why I weed--it's certainly not because of lack of space" (2015, p.37). Even when space is a factor, weeding for findability is equally found to be an essential practice. Patrons will be driven out of a library if its appearance is one of chaos, clutter and outdated material (Allen, 2010). When public libraries rely on their communities' good opinion this idea of credibility becomes incredibly important. If libraries can't find books or even tell if some are missing, patron services are negatively impacted. When viewed as the place for attractive, current, and accessible material, the library's value to their patrons is that much easier to sell. Also helping sell public libraries is their innovative spirit in banding together with other libraries.

Sharing collections is of growing value to small public libraries as the financial outlook seems to only shrink. This leads to library consortia, pooling several libraries' resources to stretch accessibility and still remain nimble in the face of budget cuts. The ever-popular inter-library loan fills a resource gap for many libraries and in academic spheres trust plays a large role in shared print agreements, especially when libraries decide what needs weeding (Howard, 2013).

## 2.5 How to Weed

Since it has been frequently agreed that weeding is necessary and even desirable, how does the library go about performing it? And a better question, who should perform it? Libraries can have all number of staff, but the roles they play in weeding vary and are best seen from the weeding process:

- handling material by frontline staff allow them to be best informed on collection movement and condition of material,
- collection development staff next have the best handle on community “needs and expectations” while balancing the collection,
- thirdly, if the library has in-house repair, this group of staff is suited to determining the cost effectiveness of saving damaged books versus purchasing replacements
- Last in this process would be managers, tasked with implementing procedures and training that reflect the library’s policy (Goldsmith, 2016, p. 28).

Now that you have the who, it comes down to the how. “When it comes to technology and science, unless a book is historical or classic, it had better be current. Weed this area with abandon and don't look back” (Kalan, 2014, p.43). As glib as this line is several articles and magazine headlines call for facing weeding fears and weeding without tears (Roy, 1990). Young goes a step further with an almost self-help, eight-step weeding guide that begins with admitting your emotional attachment to your collection and ends with finding the discards a loving second-home (2009). Boon is a bit more prosaic in her advice to libraries, suggesting that

[S]taff should take the time to familiarize themselves with the circulation history, interlibrary loan requests, publication ages, and shelf availability for every part of the collection before diving headlong into the weeding process (2009, p.327).

Adding to this viewpoint by addressing what weeding is not, Goldsmith states, it is not censorship, keeping your favorites (and weeding your dislikes), or circumventing the Code of Ethics by treating this task as best done quickly, with the easiest material to reach (2016). Using objective means like data and a policy informed by stakeholders is the surest way to weeding appropriately. Thus, in an ideal world, the deselection process would begin with a policy.

### 2.5.1 Collection Management Policies & Practices

“While weeding can be controversial, a carefully prepared and fully documented policy on weeding (or deselection) can lessen or alleviate misunderstandings” (Allen, 2010, p.32).

Collection management starts with looking at the libraries inventory and assessing the collection as a whole; it covers the need of libraries to organize and maintain a stock collection that is flexible to patron needs while also open to resource sharing and alternative procurement to effectively serve the information needs of the community (Dixon, 2002). Described variously as a “blueprint” or a business plan, collection development plans are central to the “tasks of acquiring, organizing and managing library materials” (Gregory, 2011, p.31). This idea of



management or better yet, maintenance, of library materials is where policies concerning the deselection of materials can be found.

According to Cole and Usherwood (1996), England, Wales, and Northern Ireland had 56 authorities with collection development policies in 1992, around 15.6% of libraries, yet Scotland's numbers previously mentioned at 93.3%, reflect a significantly higher number of active policies (Scanlon, 2012). In the US, the numbers are less impressive with Engeldinger's academic library survey saying that out of 377 libraries only 77 (20.8%) had a written policy with another 98 (36.6%) claiming an unwritten policy (1986). Despite its date, Engeldinger's research is still being quoted today as an example of the number of academic libraries with collection development policies. Another study in the US by Truett, surveyed 14 librarians in academic and public libraries with only two having a written policy and no proof of "formal use studies" to guide policy development (1990, p.57). What's in these policies then?

A collection management policy may include the following areas according to Demas and Miller, especially if they are part of, or open to, sharing collections across libraries:

1. Collection goals and strategy
2. Collections analysis and decision support tools
3. Bibliographic records, discovery, and access
4. Selection for retention in open stacks, in storage, and for transfer to special collections
5. Selection for weeding
6. Guidelines for disposition of withdrawn materials
7. Education, outreach, and communication (2012, p.175-176)

Reflecting this mentality of collaboration, IFLA/UNESCO guidelines state that a collection development policy cannot ignore the advances in technology and "must reflect not only a library's own collections but also strategies for accessing information available throughout the world" (2001, p.50). This reminder is significant in that libraries need to keep patrons at the center of their policies and confront the fact that they can't hold a universe of knowledge, nor should they; there are other ways to serve their communities through innovative practices in collection development.

### 2.5.2 Evaluation

Touched on in other sections, evaluation of collections in public libraries varies from place to place. Methods previously highlighted are CREW and MUSTIE, which cover quite succinctly the main criteria used by libraries in their weeding programs. In 2003, Dilevko and Gottlieb used qualitative survey data from 294 public libraries to underscore weeding procedures and librarian perspectives. They found that data such as circulation numbers were a valued tool, "mentioned as the main criterion", but "librarians cited the need to ensure accuracy of information as the single most important reason they weed" (p. 80).

Consensus from blogs, research, and professional bodies offer the following evaluation standards when weeding:

- Duplicates
- Out of date, inaccurate content and/or illustrations
- Copyright, age
- Damaged, mouldy, poor appearance
- Overflowing subject area, available elsewhere
- Superseded
- Low circulation
- Format and functionality (ebooks)
- Alternative format
- To maintain the currency and attractiveness of the collection

(Dilevko & Gottlieb, 2003; Wilson, 2004; Mitchell, 2013; Doll & Barron, 2002; Hibner & Kelly, 2013).

With these standards, libraries can build a shelf-list of material to pull from the shelves. Evaluation is more than criteria though, and a collection development policy must needs consider more in the evaluation phase of weeding. An analysis of the community's needs, current collection depth, and feasibility of the project all need to be undertaken (Doll & Barron, 2002). Additionally, what will the libraries response be if someone comes in looking for that just-weeded book? How will replacement materials be offered? Evaluation is an essential step in weeding, but encompasses more than a casual look-over the shelves, Doll and Barron mention additional considerations "such as checking to see if there are any local constraints, regulations, or statutes that might affect your weeding program or laws that might prohibit the sale of books" (2002, p.61).

### 2.5.3 Public Opinion and Discarding Options

"The public relations aspect of a major shelf-load reduction project tends to receive less attention but can critically affect not only the success of [a] shelf-load project, but also the library's future relationship with its public" (Metz and Gray, 2005, p.273).

While research institutions or national libraries may not always be accessible due to policy or distance, public libraries are settled into a community and open for all. This leads Schonfeld and Housewright to comment,

Librarians have often discussed preservation responsibilities as if it were possible to undertake perpetual commitments, but specified time commitments coupled with regular reassessment of priorities and responsibilities permit better decision-making (2009, p.2).

This decision-making can then influence political agendas and professional responsibilities when communicating about a weeding project to staff and the public. To avoid negative coverage and outraged citizens, both political minefields, deselection is then often the unspoken everyday task of libraries. Martin and Manch, speaking from a medical library standpoint years past, argued that weeding would be more frequent if “library administrators worried less about criticisms of their weeding programs” (1971, p. 599). This preoccupation with public image is deserved in public libraries though, as Metz and Gray point out in their research; public libraries often bear the brunt of weeding controversies (2005).

Public libraries, being open and accommodating to all, can be seen as bendable to each and every patron whim, and while this is true to an extent, keeping outdated books, misinformation or damaged material is in no one’s best interest. Communicating the purpose of weeding then becomes key to buy-in and support from within and without the library. An example of public relations and weeding being fraught with challenging situations, Stourbridge library in England proceeded with a weeding project that the involved MP Lynda Waltho calling for an investigation and branding the project as “one step away from censorship and book burning” (McCormack, 2008, p.277). McCormack goes on to advise would-be-weeders to not “leave weeding so long that it becomes a massive and noticeable endeavour [and] if you do find yourself in a situation that requires extensive weeding, watch how you dispose of books...unless you can [get rid of them] surreptitiously” (2008, p.278). Yet, upfront communication before weeding has begun, with the intent of setting the story straight, creating a non-story, can be the most effective approach (Metz and Gray, 2005; Vnuk, 2016). Which links to the discarding options libraries choose from, either through policy or opportunity.

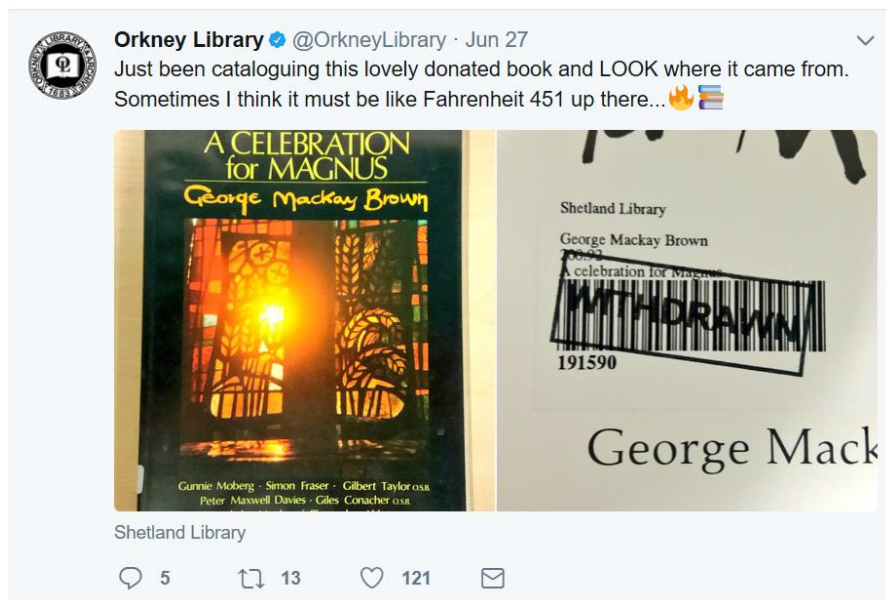
Bottom line for success in weeding and handling public relations appears to be a strong weeding policy and a willingness to show the need, explain the process, and listen to others input (Metz and Gray, 2005). Ultimate success, though, of a weeding project should be judged by if remaining books are found as being easy to access, with displays and blank spaces providing an inviting atmosphere, and happy patrons (Dilevko and Gottlieb, 2003).

The uncertainty and lack of confidence libraries feel in the face of discarding materials has been anecdotally documented by many, but giving a voice to the very real fear of weeding a book that is requested the next moment is McMullen. McMullen writes about a time when he had in the past week weeded a book that was the perfect candidate for a date with a dumpster, only to have someone ask for it. The book had never been checked out in its 35+ years on the shelf and was about an outmoded technology, but McMullen “consulted WorldCat and found there are only 63 libraries worldwide that hold this volume and only one in Pennsylvania – mine” (2013, p.134). This was a happily resolved story as the book had yet to have been removed from the library proper, but it highlights the challenge libraries are confronted with during a weeding project.

Once library material is chosen for deselection, aside from electronic resources which require their own removal from a library’s system, but do not occupy physical space, it needs to be

discarded. How this is done often is the reason for public displeasure. Yet if space is the real enemy of a library moving books from one area to another is not going to solve the problem (Martin and Manch, 1971). The options for libraries are often regulated by policy, but Khailova's 2014 article *Trash or Cash?: Partnering with Online Booksellers to Dispose of Deselected Academic Library Monographs* offers a review of online resellers, like Better World Books. The comparison doesn't rank the sellers, but it does offer a guide for other libraries considering partnering with an organization and how they can judge the services offered by their own priorities, be they charity or profit.

Recycling, donating, selling in Friends of the Library book sales and upcycling projects all are additional choices that libraries can consider (Khailova, 2014). But Boon advises "resist[ing] the urge to ship 20-year-old sets of encyclopedias and other useless items to Third World countries overseas with the mistaken belief that they will be treasured by those less fortunate" (2009, p.334). This good intention plays well in a press release, but it creates further problems and can potentially spread misinformation. The issue of deselected books making their way back to



libraries through a good Samaritan that only notices a library stamp or being sold and gifted back (Martin and Manch, 1971) leads to the recommendation for libraries to "permanently dispose" (Boon, 2009, p.335) of material. Coming to mind with "permanently" is an old-fashioned book burning or a room full of shredders, but either way this death

knell can bring dreaded viral photos of perfectly good books in dumpsters. Avoiding this is the job of a policy, yet sometimes policies themselves are the ones demanding dumpsters. In Pennsylvania the Free Library of Philadelphia, was reprimanded for throwing out thousands of books after following policy that determined that books could not be sold or given away. Library Director Elliot Shelkrot was quoted to say "We were working under procedures designed in the 1900s, [...] Our understanding, under those procedures, was that we couldn't give books away" (Lifer & Rogers, 1997).

## 2.6 Current Practice

"Much of the contemporary library science concerns itself with the psychology of weeding: how to overcome the reluctance, sometimes even shame, that committed custodians of the printed word experience when stripping a book of its call slip" (Brooks, 2002). While a significant portion

of the recent literature involves descriptive accounts from librarians on how-to weed, either without remorse or more efficiently, the research comes back to evaluating a library's decision-making procedures.

The concept of deselection decision-making is the basis of several data-driven studies, and making a clear case of the issue, Lugg advocates for the aggregation of "deselection metadata" to help libraries develop "rules to generate lists of titles eligible for withdrawal, storage, or inclusion in shared print programs" (2012, p.198). Lugg additionally comments that this isn't the only criteria necessary for decision-making, but that librarians or third-party vendors will need to gather external information from other libraries, WorldCat, authoritative lists, etc. With the scale of weeding projects this is only feasible Lugg contends through "batch matching and retrieval" which most libraries do not have the time or resources for (2012, p.200). Another factor for decisions is the weeding staff's depth of subject understanding to supplement data, which Miller laments is "the whole problem of collection development" (1990, p.11). Beyond physical condition, Miller declares the "sole bibliometric criterion of whether the item has circulated within the last decade (rather than whether it has intrinsic worth or belongs in a theoretic core collection) will determine the fate of each of the rest of the books" (1990, p.12).

In his study on university libraries, White agrees that librarians are often making choices based on little background knowledge of the topics up for deaccession, with data serving as an "essential safety net" (2017, p.63). But circulation data is only part of the information required to make an informed deaccession choice; relying on circulation data ignores the fact that patrons use and value the library for different reasons and White contends "decisions need to be informed by an understanding of the book in its full context" (2017, p.63). Using citations in addition to circulation data takes into account the importance of a selected work, leaving in White's words "a core research collection of high value titles" that retain their value in the face of more current issues (2017, p.63). This highlights a difference between academic and public libraries in that keeping a core collection has a steady place of importance rooted in specific curriculum taught fields versus a core collection that can evolve and change with the community, as is the public library's remit.

### 2.6.1 Ebooks

This is where we talk about ebooks and briefly 'other' electronic resources. The rise and continued push for the latest in technology, be it databases, periodicals, magazines, or ebooks, presents another aspect of weeding for libraries. While some of these formats, like ebooks, may take up no physical space on a shelf, they are still subject to deselection criteria like accuracy, currency and appropriateness. Moroni asserts that "Ebook collections can be equally difficult to browse, and patrons of ebook collections are often not traditional library patrons" (2012, p.27).

These electronic resources are often leased, not outright owned by libraries, for a time-specified contract. Gregory, back in 2002 lightly remarked on the care libraries needed to take in purchasing digital packages as they "frequently include less desirable items that must be accepted in order to get the items the library actually wants" (p. 84). With the speed that

technology evolves, the challenges facing libraries in regards to licensing have only multiplied. Library staff have to evaluate authorized use clauses, warranties and liability, access terms and the availability of support for systems operations (Anderson, 2016). Anderson notes that for academic libraries “weeding print means losing content the library has already invested in” and that electronic access is wonderful, as long as the license also “guarantees perpetual access” in formats that match quality with their print predecessors (2016, p.3).

For public libraries, the licensing confusion is added to when the audiobook trend is accounted for, showcased by the increase of “titles produced by major publishers [...] from 3,073 in 2007 to 35,000 in 2014” (The Business Research Company, 2017). Access to these resources and then the management and organization of electronic licensing is all a part of a library’s mandate. Patrons expect full access when it comes to electronic resources, conditioned as they are to the libraries physical collection (Anderson, 2016). Weeding can’t be considered separate from new technologies and perhaps it is more important, as digital services can be subscription based and subsequently a financial drain if unused. Advertising these new electronic resources brings libraries to the attention of different patron bases, and as stated above these are not your traditional users, which underlines the importance and challenge for public libraries in purchasing and discontinuing electronic licenses. Moving forward into the next incarnation of the public library will incorporate more technology, not less, as the research shows.

### 2.6.2 The Future

The future of libraries weeding projects seems destined to be tied up with an increased reliance on data. Systems developed for this in mind are the open-source GIST Project developed by SUNY Geneseo and designed to “streamline library workflow for processing gifts and evaluating materials for weeding” (Leach-Murray, 2014) and POW (Paperless Online Weeding) developed by systems librarian, Guy Dobson, which works by creating shelf lists and identifying candidates for weeding (*Library Journal*, 2011). These options are the 2.0 versions of the traditional shelf-lists and are often based on circulation data, the most commonly found way to weed. For example, GIST can use an exported list of ISBN or OCLC numbers to provide libraries with a “spreadsheet of data, including; how widely held is the book, is it available free from HathiTrust or Google Books, etc.” (*Weeding Library Collections*, 2013). POW will create a shelf-list for staff, allowing for a color-coded status of a book, and even allowing staff to mark items missing, edit call numbers, etc. Not every librarian is on board with this move to data-driven decisions though, as reported by The Guardian,

Two staff at East Lake library [Florida] have been suspended for allegedly creating bogus borrowers, in order to outwit automated book-culling software designed to ditch titles that are not being read. The accused have alleged that the practice is widespread among librarians fighting to protect book budgets from unnecessary purchases (Kean, 2017).

Taking this reaction to data-driven weeding into account, current practice deserves a closer look to determine why libraries are implementing weeding practices, what their methods are and who is being included in the conversation.

Another opinion on the future of weeding and collection management is Bee,

The fact that some librarians are beginning to take the paper artifact more seriously is important both for scholarship and for the preservation of America's cultural heritage, concerns that should be factored into collection management in research libraries. These moves are significant because at times some librarians have failed to see the importance of printed artifacts, and there is a threat they will fail to do so again as we head deeper into the digital age (2008, p.189).

While projections into the future foresee a clear movement toward digital content, how libraries will accommodate that and provide access while maintaining a large print collection is yet to be seen (Breeding, 2010). The warning that libraries will 'forget' the importance of print collections and possibly the role of the librarian in making decisions about what is weeded calls for the voice of libraries to be heard in contrast. The next section will cover this study's methodology and methods to understand what Scotland's public libraries are saying about weeding, their practices and the future as they see it.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Research Questions Revisited

As demonstrated again and again, missing from the body of work detailed above is a study asking public library staff what their attitudes toward weeding are. This study has not been done in the UK, and Dilevko and Gottlieb's study from the US and Canada is a decade plus removed, allowing this study to explore the latest opinion in light of technological advances and changing patron needs. As an area of study, most work has been carried out in academic libraries, with a small handful of studies interested in the public library sphere. While university libraries offer case studies on methods and practices, less knowledge is available on the public library side as to their practices and how library staff view this highly emotional, politically charged process. Of relevance to the field and of interest is the gap in information on public library staff's thoughts and feelings toward weeding, its implementation, and the various practices and methods. This dissertation will address the following questions in an attempt to bridge this gap:

1. How do collection development staff in public libraries in Scotland view weeding?
2. What methods or practices do public libraries in Scotland follow?
3. What concerns do collection development staff have about the future of collection management, i.e. automation and electronic resources?

This chapter introduces the research methodology for this study. A qualitative research approach was used to answer the posed research questions. The following sections will explain the approach methodology, how participants were recruited, how the study was designed, implemented, and finally how data was analysed using the thematic analysis method.



### 3.2 Research Approach

The chosen epistemological standpoint for this dissertation is contextualism, which is defined by the world of psychology and understood to be the view of many realities, with truth in knowledge found only in context (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Contextualism is appropriate for this qualitative survey as it will allow for each participants opinion on weeding to be valid and true from their perspective. With this acceptance, weeding attitudes, thoughts, and practices can be seen in many lights and still be true experiences. This research positions itself to learn participants' truth from the context of their current work environment and value each participants' experience equally for a holistic understanding of weeding in Scotland.

In order for this study's objectives to be reached an online qualitative survey was chosen as the best method of data collection with respect to the allotted time and resource constraints. Qualitative research, according to Braun and Clarke, "seeks to understand" and collects "narrow, but rich" data (2013, p.4). To learn about the thoughts and opinions of public library staff in Scotland this is an ideal style of research with the emphasis on understanding participants thoughts and experiences versus a quantitative numbers-based approach. As Lynn Westbrook closes her article on qualitative research methods, "Qualitative research methods enrich and augment the toolbox of LIS research approaches" (1994, p.252).

This dissertation questionnaire included a limited selection of demographic questions to place respondents into broad categories (such as years of experience and gender), and limited numerical questions regarding number of library holdings and area population. These captured geographic information and ranking criteria for analysis. The bulk of the survey was open-ended questions with free text answers. In a qualitative survey, open questions allow for "unanticipated answers and they let respondents describe the world as they see it" (Fink, 2003, p.17). Czaja and Blair agree that open questions are good for sensitive topics and the geographic distribution can be wide (1996). In this study's bid to gather data from across Scotland the format worked to the best advantage.

Additional research noted in the literature review provided depth and a worldwide view of deselection in public libraries. Next is discussed the participants, recruitment strategy, survey design and data analysis.

### 3.3 Participants & Recruitment

Participant criteria for this study involved two conditions: that participants were Scottish public library staff and as part of their position performed collection management activities. All recruitment material, participant consent form and information letter, can be found in **Appendix C**. The survey defined participants as 'public library staff' to offer all staff who perform deselection tasks the chance to take part, regardless if they carry the title of librarian or not, as this could be the reality for many libraries. The narrow geographic focus on Scotland was due to the study's limited time for collection and the robust presence of public libraries in Scotland. According to the SLIC in their *Ambition & Opportunity* strategy for public libraries there are over



600 libraries and other service points, such as mobile libraries, in Scotland (Carnegie UK Trust, 2015). Collection management deselection activities for this dissertation's purpose include, but are not limited to: reviewing circulation statistics, evaluating collection items for damage, age, relevance, and physically removing and relocating books.

The survey was open from 31 May to 1 July 2017. Participants were expected to take 15-20 minutes on this survey from previous pilot testing. On average, the participants took 32.36 minutes to complete the survey, which could highlight the reason that some respondents abandoned the survey before completion. The survey had a total of 52 respondents and 36 response candidates for inclusion in the data set. For qualitative surveys, the number of respondents is less of a concern as the purpose is not to generalize, but to gain rich in-depth data, as Jansen notes, "This type of survey does not count the number of people with the same characteristic (value of variable) but it establishes the meaningful variation (relevant dimensions and values) within that population" (2010, para 6). The survey approach fulfilled this end by gathering free-text from respondents and allowing for a depth and variety in thought.

Participants were recruited through a variety of channels including social media, newsletters, email, and listservs. The survey dissemination benefited from the help of associated professional organizations and groups. The Chartered Institute of Libraries and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS) used their listservs to email CILIPS members and included it in their mid-June newsletter; SLIC emailed all 32 council authorities, and the Public and Mobile Library Group (PMLG), a specialist group within the Chartered Institute of Libraries and Information Professionals (CILIP) offered to share it among their members. Colleagues and others contributed to the recruitment by retweeting, sharing and networking.

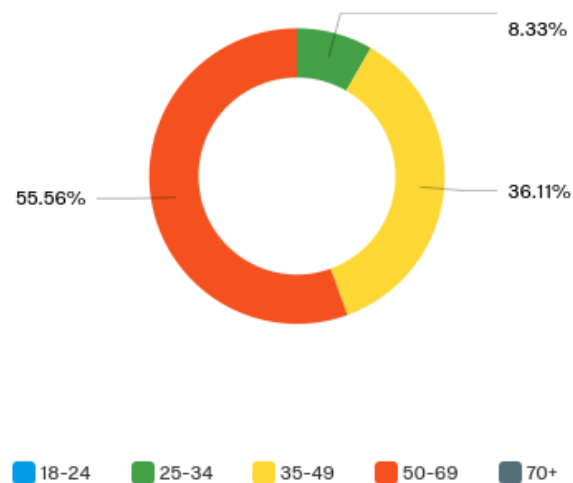
This sampling approach was based on snowball sampling, which Atkinson and Flint note "offers real benefits for studies which seek to access difficult to reach or hidden populations" (2001). The decision for this form of sampling was a consequence of the unknown number of library staff in Scotland who performed deselection activities and the understanding that these tasks can be hidden within job descriptions, thus potentially including every member of staff at a public library. However, unlike true snowball sampling this survey was not passed from one person to the next, serving as a type of gatekeeper for the researcher, but sent in email and listserv formats to groups associated with the target population. To that end, a multi-prong approach was deemed the most effective way to reach as large an audience as possible. Targeted social media platforms were Twitter and Facebook, both spaces of heavy library use for education and promotion of services (Vassilakaki and Garoufallou, 2015). An anonymous link, which did not collect participants' IP addresses, was attached to each email, post or tweet with the request that the recipient after completing the online survey spread the survey to others who fit the criteria and would be interested. Word of mouth was the ultimate goal with the survey making an organic journey through libraries and professional networks to create a comprehensive representation of Scotland's public library staff opinions, thoughts and attitudes.

Administered through an online questionnaire using the software program, Qualtrics, all data collected were anonymous and respondents were offered the chance to view aggregate data and study findings at the conclusion of the study through an email request to the researcher. Qualtrics was chosen for the platform's built-in analysis options and for the accessible program support available to the researcher. It also ensured ethical anonymity to respondents.

### 3.4 Demographics of Responses

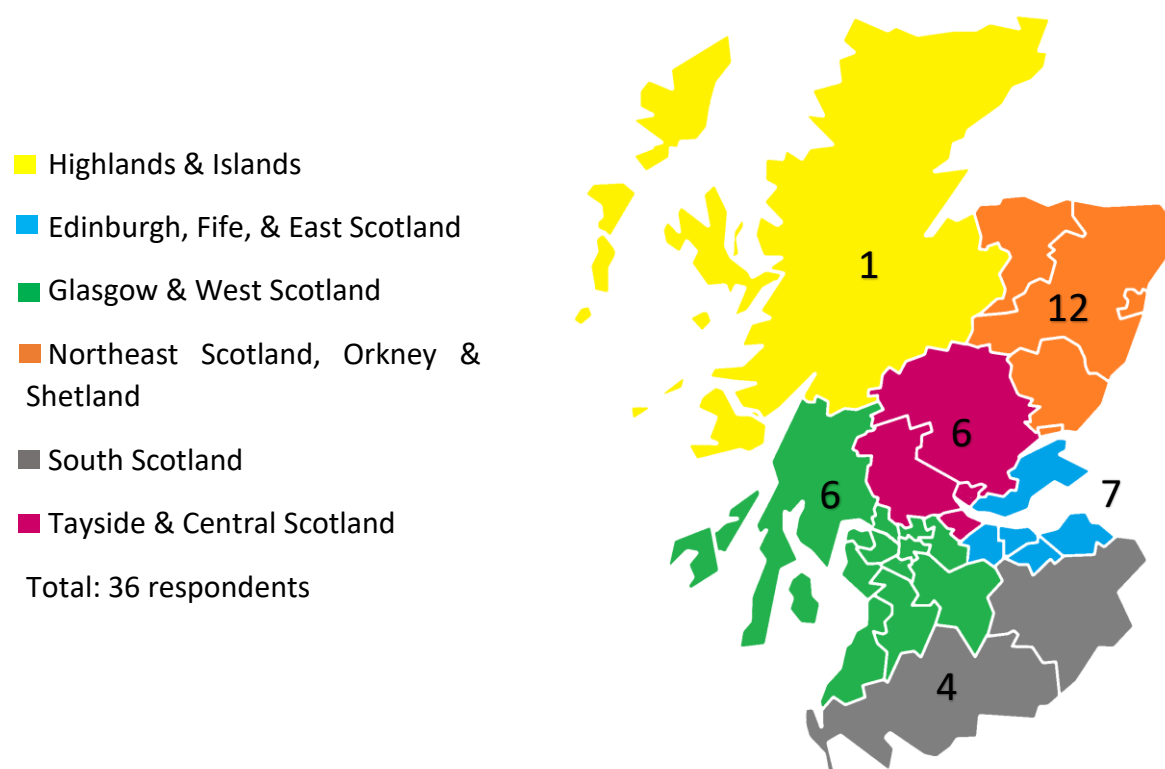
Of the data corpus, 36 responses were included in the data set to be analysed. The demographic breakdown of responses by gender, location and age can be seen in the graphics below. The gender of respondents skewed to the female, with 29 of the total, males accounting for six of the total and one respondent preferred to not say. In **Figure 1** below, age ranges skewed to the older, 55.56% (20) of the population was 50-69 years old, 36.11% (13) were 35-49, and 8.33% (3) were 25-34 years old.

**Figure 1:** Age Range of Respondents



The regions of Scotland were represented as can be seen in **Figure 2** below. The map regions have the number of corresponding responses listed: one for the Highlands and Islands; 12 for Northeast Scotland, Orkney & Shetland; six for both Glasgow & West Scotland and Tayside & Central Scotland; seven for Edinburgh, Fife, & East Scotland; and four for South Scotland.

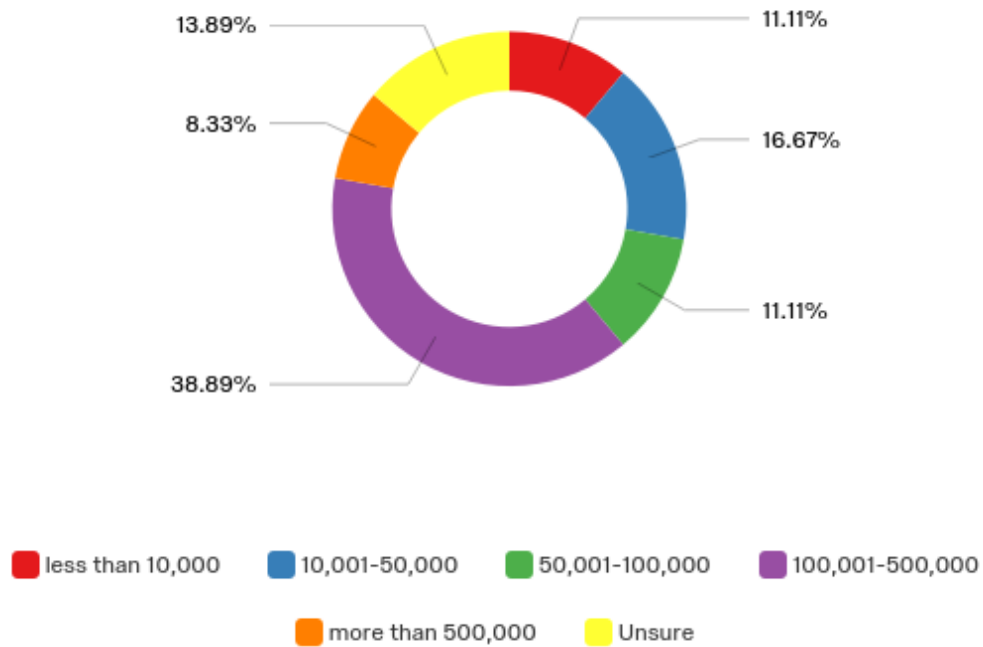
**Figure 2:** Responses by Regions



As for survey reach, the whole of Scotland was very well represented with at least one respondent from each region, and highlighting where librarianship may be the most active in Scotland with 12 responses coming from Northeast Scotland, Orkney and Shetland. Within these regions, the respondents indicated how many people they served in a population range from fewer than 10,000 to over 500,000 and how many print materials their library held in a range from fewer than 10,000 to over a million. **Figures 3 & 4** below depict these results respectively.

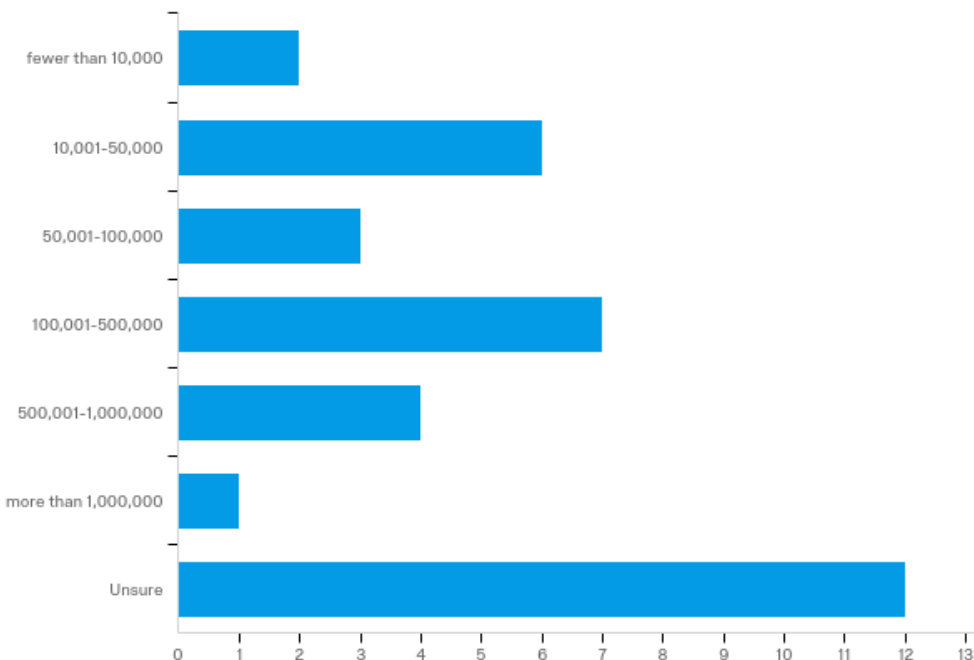
In answer to the question, 'select the population range your library serves', from six choices of population ranges, seen in **Table 3** below, 14 respondents chose 100,001-500,000; the next highest response rate going was 10,001-50,000 with six respondents. Of the remaining, four chose less than 10,000 people, four chose 50,001-100,000, three chose more than 500,001, and five respondents were unsure.

**Figure 3: Population Ranges**



Respondents also answered how many print materials their library currently has, with one respondent opting to leave the answer blank and 35 respondents answering as indicated below. A surprising number of respondents (12) indicated that they were unsure of the number of print materials their library currently had, but this could be explained by respondents not being in a position to quickly access that information while filling out the survey. Only one library responded as having over a million print materials, with six libraries each claiming 10,001-50,000 and 100,001-500,000 print materials respectively. Full breakdown is outlined in **Figure 4** below.

**Figure 4: Number of Print Material**



Respondents worked fairly evenly between main libraries and library headquarters, nine from each. They also worked evenly between branch libraries and a combination of branch and main libraries, with seven respondents from each. Only 4 respondents worked between several branch libraries. Headquarters was not an option on the survey, but through the 'other' open-text box, nine respondents uniformly listed library headquarters or support section in a library headquarters as their main workspace.

When asked if respondents weeded at more than one library the answer was mixed, with more staff weeding at their main workspace (14) and staff weeding between several branch libraries (10). Fewer staff, six respondents, weed between a branch and a main library. Six respondents opted to explain more fully in the 'other' open text box, with three respondents reflecting a management level of involvement, by giving answers on managing the staff who weed at branch libraries, managing book stock and librarians, and issuing guidelines on weeding across an authority. The other three respondents did refer to weeding directly, for excess stock returned to headquarters, for an area of stock service-wide, or at libraries that fall in the grey area between branch and main libraries, e.g. specialist sections or mobile services.

### 3.5 Survey Design & Data Collection

According to Czaja and Blair, there are five stages to conducting a survey: survey design, pretesting, final survey design and planning, data collection and data coding, data-file construction, analysis and final report (1996). Fink's survey system expands Czaja and Blair's five stages to seven activities, "setting objectives for information collection, designing the study, preparing a reliable and valid survey instrument, administering the survey, managing and

analysing survey data, and reporting the results” (2002, p.1). Of vital importance to the first stage is the design of a qualitative survey questionnaire as it will be the only contact with the respondents and must be attractive and persuasive (Czaja and Blair, 1996). The researcher thus established a clean, white background and one colour font throughout the survey to emphasize clarity.

This dissertation partially replicated Dilevko and Gottlieb’s 2003 qualitative study, *Weed to achieve: a fundamental part of the public library mission?*, which used an email questionnaire, to acquire primary data through an online survey. Dilevko and Gottlieb’s survey, performed as part of a library and information science course, covered 294 randomly selected public libraries in the US and nine English-speaking Canadian provinces asking 19 open-ended questions (2003). As a partial replication, this survey was designed for online completion and expanded on Dilevko and Gottlieb’s questions to capture a more demographic look at region and population level in conjunction with library staff opinions and library policy. This survey focused similarly to Dilevko and Gottlieb’s, on printed material, with several questions singling out monographs, but for other questions leaving the phrase ‘printed material’ up to the respondent’s discretion, which could include magazine or newsprint.

Compared to Dilevko and Gottlieb, the study’s online survey posed eleven new questions; six questions underwent wording changes, but remained the same in substance; three were merged and five questions were unchanged for their clarity and relevance to the research questions. For example, “Have you ever personally saved a book or books that should have been weeded, i.e., met your library’s criteria for weeding? If so, why did you save this book or books?” This question met the research aim of learning library staff’s personal weeding opinions vs the library’s policies, if any. Questions that were modified were done so with the express purpose of consolidating several questions into one where appropriate. Questions that were added covered the regional differences and library staff locations when conducting weeding activities. These questions highlight the research aim of what methods or research practices Scotland’s public libraries follow, which are administered through regional authorities.

The survey consists of 3 yes/no questions, 9 multiple-choice, 1 rank and 12 open-text questions which can be found in **Appendix A**. The yes/no questions constituted the consent form and validation that respondents fit the criteria and were chosen to satisfy ethical requirements to provide consent and confirmation where necessary. All multiple-choice questions were chosen for efficiency and where a pick list was most appropriate. The rank question was provided to offer another dimension to the research aims on participants personal views on weeding. Further, the open-text questions provided the rich, narrative data needed for this dissertation’s qualitative research aims.

The survey was tested through an informal pilot with colleagues and University of Strathclyde staff completing the survey and offering critiques. After the first pilot, changes were made to convert appropriate questions to multiple-choice to improve time management. Subsequent pilots highlighted the need to separate questions to allow for clarification and improved flow.

### 3.5.1 Limitations

The limitations of this study are identified in four areas: study sampling technique, lack of population information, survey length, and the nature of online surveys.

Snowball sampling is subject to a number of challenges, but for this survey selection bias and the referral chain are areas to be judged. For this survey participants have been selected based on some very limiting criteria which creates a bias “towards the inclusion of individuals with inter-relationships”, over-emphasizing “cohesiveness in social networks” and missing those unconnected to the researcher’s main chain of referral (Atkinson and Flint, 2001, p. 2). Within the referral chain another issue is the limitation of initial respondents sharing through “subjective perceptions [...] about the involvement of others in the same activity” and with this creating a like-minded pool of opinion (Atkinson and Flint, 2001, p. 3). To combat the sampling biases the survey has been offered in various media and through different professional bodies to obtain as wide a selection as possible, but despite all efforts the target population is of unknown number and the sampling method enacted was the optimal decision.

Secondly, the study suffered under the limitation of having no known population numbers. SLIC offers the statistics of 423 staff with library qualification and 1,839 other staff in Scotland from the Chartered Institute for Public Financing and Accountancy (CIPFA) 2013-14 Actuals, but this data does not distinguish staff engaged in deselection tasks or narrow the numbers to Scotland alone (Carnegie UK Trust, 2015). Data that specific was not collected or found by efficient means in time for this survey to be conducted.

Thirdly, the survey length had an advertised time of 15-20 minutes. Nine respondent’s timing for the survey was consistent with this timeframe. Pilot testing had indicated time as a limitation and steps were taken prior to survey release to convert open text questions to more time-friendly, multiple-choice questions, where appropriate. Nevertheless, survey length was a possible hindrance to respondents and a challenge to reaching maximum participation.

Lastly, surveys conducted online are unable to support follow-up questions or follow nuances in expression to round out a question, as in interview based situations. Questions posed independently of one another also suffered from a lack of consistency, leading to a collection of incomplete data in one instance.

### 3.6 Ethics

With the participation of human subjects, ethical approval was sought before research commenced. This study was granted ethical approval through the Computer Science and Information Departmental Ethics Committee at the University of Strathclyde.

In order to conduct ethically supported research, the researcher decided that with deselection (aka weeding) considered to be a sensitive subject, the most appropriate form of data collection would be through an anonymous survey. This online survey would not capture any personally identifiable information and keep participant responses separate from the option to request

aggregate results. If participants indicated they would like to receive aggregate data results shared through email, the researchers email address was offered for contact. This allowed for complete anonymity for participants between their responses and their personal information. Data collected is securely held on University of Strathclyde servers and will be disposed of one year after the completion of this dissertation and/or one year after publication.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was the chosen qualitative technique through which to render the survey responses, used to identify themes or key ideas in the respondent's textual data. The researcher decided on this method due to the study's overall aims, its time constraints and the type of data being collected. Thematic analysis is defined for this study by Ayres for The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods, who states:

Thematic analysis is primarily a descriptive strategy that facilitates the search for patterns of experience within a qualitative data set; the product of a thematic analysis is a description of those patterns and the overarching design that unites them (2008, p.868).

Noted for its flexibility, the researcher adopted a step by step guide derived from Braun and Clarke's 2013 paper which described thematic analysis as "foundational" and part of the "core skills" necessary to qualitative research (p.4). Additionally, with time constraints in mind, thematic analysis did not require extensive technical knowledge be learned, allowing for a "more accessible form of analysis" (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.9).

Ascribing to Braun and Clarke's view that thematic analysis is a method in its own right, the study will follow their six phases to identify themes inductively and at a semantic level, with the research questions subject to evolution through the coding process. These decisions were made to allow for flexibility and a wholeness across the data set. The six phases are:

1. Familiarising yourself with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Given the study's interest in gathering themes around perceptions of weeding and understanding how participants see weeding, qualitative research, in particular thematic analysis, was the natural choice. The researcher generated initial codes manually, through an iterative reading process of "active" immersion in the survey results, searching for meaning and patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.16). The survey was analysed in concert with Qualtrics and NVivo software, using their respective strengths in analysis. These tools are complimentary and support manual



reading and researcher assigned themes. Qualtrics, as a software platform offers a question by question response view, numerical charts to closed questions, and filtering options used to find the final data set of 36 respondents. This was used to run an initial report and provide graphical representations of closed questions. At this point, the question ‘Do you personally believe that weeding increases book usage and/or patron satisfaction? If yes, what is your reason for thinking this? If no, why not?’ was chosen as the cut off point for intent to finish the survey and generated the final data set. Separately, NVivo software has the ability to pick out frequently used words, but it prides itself on helping to organize and find insights in unstructured data (*What is NVivo?*, n.d.) that would otherwise be missed and as such was used to organize codes and final themes with its capabilities.

Sticking to the thematic analysis guidance of Braun and Clarke, the survey response data set was read to generate initial codes, re-read to search for themes, and read a last time to review the themes before final definition and naming. Codes were developed with each reading. Throughout the process similar codes were combined and placed into categories. Categories with broad connections informed the themes identified. Final steps involved analysis of the themes for overall meaning, implications, and further gaps for future research.

This study is proved trustworthy and reliable as far is possible by the methods and steps followed by the researcher clearly indicated. An iterative approach to the data and discussion with colleagues informed coding practices to ensure a broader approach and fairness of depiction. Transferability is confirmed with findings consistent with those from Dilevko and Gottlieb’s research from 2003. Presented and discussed below are the study’s findings.

## Chapter 4 Analysis of Findings & Discussion

Opening this section will be the first theme of a library message, then the theme of governance in weeding practices, and ending with the findings for future weeding.

### 4.2 The Library Message

First, the role of a public library was not the main focus of this study, but it became a main theme when viewing how library staff replied to survey questions, drawing connections between weeding practices and how the library is viewed. This viewpoint fairs similarly to the findings of Dilevko and Gottlieb, with their participants emphasising the currency and relevance and bookstore-esque appearance of library collections to serve their communities well (2003).

The quantitative data gathered from weeding criteria and importance of that criteria supports this idea of a message. Respondents were asked to choose all reasons for weeding that applied to them, from a list of seven reasons: damaged or mouldy, no longer meets the library’s objectives, low circulation of item, age/copyright date, misleading or factually incorrect, superseded by another work, and space considerations. An option for other, with free text, yielded an additional two reasons: software recommendations and duplication. From the question respondents chose these reasons for weeding as seen in **Table 3**:

**Table 3**

Reasons	%	Number of Times Chosen
Damaged or mouldy	18.7%	35
Low circulation of item	17.1%	32
Misleading or factually incorrect	14.4%	27
Superseded by another work	14.4%	27
Space considerations	11.8%	22
Age/Copyright date	11.2%	21
No longer meets the library's objectives	10.2%	19
Other:	2.1%	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>187</b>

On average, the 36 respondents chose approximately 5 reasons for weeding (5.2 basic average) and when asked to then rank, using radio buttons from 1-6, how important each reason was to weeding the respondents overwhelmingly choose damaged/mouldy as the number one reason for weeding (79.31%, 23). The rest of the reasons were indicated in order as misleading or factually incorrect, last circulation date, superseded by another work, no longer meets the library's objectives, and copyright date. Neglected from this ranking was space considerations, but an 'other' option provided room for respondents to comment, "Space considerations also play a part. I have limited access to secondary storage for items I want to keep but are no longer circulating." Another comment added the number of issues an item had, as indicated by the software CollectionHQ, would help identify items "potentially grubby through use", which then could be replaced or discarded. Full results from this ranking can be seen in **Table 4** below, with *n* representing the number of respondents to each rank. A graphical representation of this ranking can be found in **Appendix B: Figure 6**.

**Table 4**

Rank	Damaged or mouldy		No longer meets the library's objectives		Last circulation date		Copyright date		Misleading or factually incorrect		Superseded by another work		<i>n</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>74.2%</b>	23	3.2%	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	16.1%	5	6.5%	2	31
<b>2</b>	9.7%	3	3.2%	1	<b>32.3%</b>	10	0.0%	0	<b>35.5%</b>	11	19.4%	6	31
<b>3</b>	6.3%	2	18.8%	6	25.0%	8	12.5%	4	9.4%	3	<b>28.1%</b>	9	32
<b>4</b>	3.6%	1	25.0%	7	21.4%	6	10.7%	3	17.9%	5	21.4%	6	28
<b>5</b>	4.6%	1	<b>31.8%</b>	7	22.7%	5	18.2%	4	9.1%	2	13.6%	3	22
<b>6</b>	0.0%	0	18.2%	4	4.6%	1	54.6%	12	9.1%	2	13.6%	3	22

Proving to be important enough to be a main theme is the library's message. This theme

encompasses several components important to weeding including the quality of the stock (as evidenced above), space considerations, reasons to keep items, and customer needs.

#### 4.2.1 Quality

When reviewing the data, the idea of quality was reflected again and again with responses concerned with how the library was seen through the stock, with staff adamant that shelf appearance and collection relevance were of vital importance. Data to this effect can be seen in **Table 3** above. Several open-text responses also told of the library's role in borrower recommendations, borrower knowledge and being "organic" and "ever-changing" with weeding an essential component to avoid borrowers switching off or thinking the library offers "sub standard [*sic*] items". The main question of this survey was how do collection development staff in Scotland view weeding and how is it accomplished. One respondent wrote,

I think nowadays people should know their audience as it were. Whether it is a Large or smaller Library and cater accordingly. If a certain type of book is very popular in your library then get more [of] them. Too often we have quantities of books in the Library that simply do not go out and are simply filling a space. Our Libraries are changing and we have to change with them. Our thinking and policy decisions. What once worked 10 years ago no longer does now.

As implied in the above quote, libraries need to be thinking about how they are perceived and the quality of their offer is proving to be an apt vehicle.

**Table 4** showed the importance of certain criteria for weeding, but additional comments noted that 'importance' varied depending on when staff came in contact with the item, with one respondent saying, "Sometimes we do not always know which books [are] coming off the shelf and why until we start to physically check them on the shelf." At this point of contact though it appears that books are scrutinized overwhelming for damage or mouldy condition. This focus on appearance was mentioned throughout the survey, damaged items were repeatedly singled out as removed "immediately" and one respondent noted, "No-one wants to borrow damaged or stained items." The idea of attractive shelves and displays was mentioned as well with one respondent spelling it out as such,

Removal of tatty items means that our stock looks better, more attractive. People are more likely to browse "nice" books and borrow something different. I like some breathing space on the shelf. Removal of tatty/old/damaged items mean more space for display.

This removal of "dead stock" allows room for new stock. New stock could be hidden, library staff observed, when the collection is overwhelmed by titles that don't circulate and look "old and worn". This increase in findability in turn increases print material usage "as the library looks much more cared for and inviting" and testimony from one librarian in the unlooked-for benefit of water damage said,

this has been an eye opener to me, I thought more made for much more borrowing but I found out this was the reverse when I had an accident at my old site and lost a third of my books in a water damage accident. The ones left had more space and the users found it easier to find and borrow less books!

Findability is the key to patron satisfaction, one respondent asserts, not shelf tidiness or weeding. Shelves “mainly of unused and unwanted material” make finding the “‘good’ material” harder and “If people don't see the new titles they think the library is out of date and will go elsewhere for their books.” This perceived threat of library users going elsewhere for their reading entertainment is interesting for the idea that libraries are in competition with bookstores, Amazon, etc. and if they are not seen as equal or better to a paid-for service then the libraries relevance will falter. Leading to the importance of quality stock, “Libraries need to hold relevant, up to-date, quality materials that appeal to readers and meet borrower needs.”

Quality translates for many respondents into having factually accurate, enjoyable, visible, and up to date materials. One comment on the downside of maintaining quality stock is that it is “hampered by lack of funds in purchasing replacement stock. Books tend to be kept perhaps longer that they should for fear of empty shelves.” Another fear behind the library message. Empty shelves were not a concern mentioned by others, as space is always a premium, but bare shelves were described one respondent at least as not a good look with “less new stock being purchased.” A recommendation was to keep stock balanced by moving it around; Scotland's public libraries almost uniformly participate in stock exchanges between libraries to move stock around, which will be discussed more in the next theme on governance.

A clear staff opinion was that weeding keeps collections “fresh” and libraries relevant with several respondents recommending weeding as a task all libraries should be aware of. This necessary practice keeps shelves clear for incoming stock and informs purchasing decisions. As one respondent highlighted, weeding “indicates books that are not meeting borrower needs and removing them to make way for ones that do.” Circulating statistics in this situation found themselves to be the second most important consideration, married to the condition and relevance of stock, as “vital to keep the issue statistics up.” Circulation of stock in Scottish libraries was noted as carried out largely by computer software and library management system (LMS) reports run by either senior staff or headquarters and sent to libraries to “action”. Another opinion registered that age and issue statistics shouldn't be the only threshold for weeding. Valuable content could be lost to future generations if not considered, they contended. While not receiving overwhelming mentions, circulation underlined a number of other considerations, like space.

#### 4.2.2 Space

Space, as mentioned in the previous section and in the literature review, is still a major consideration of weeding programs. Challenges informing weeding criteria can be traced to the need for more space and policy creation was mentioned several times as stemming from a space

shortage within the survey. Bearing in mind the library's message to community members, the need to be a usable, welcoming, safe space also weighs heavily in this issue.

Weeding for space revealed issues with allocations to print collections in competition with community wants and budgetary constrictions. "The shelf space available...is shrinking as other [facilities] are introduced and it is essential that the quality (physical and readability) is maintained at service points"; however, "we want to be providing the public with what they want." Libraries appear to be struggling in adding more technology and perhaps other shared services into the finite building space and finding room for it all. Weeding plays an important role here in helping to maintain the collections integrity in the face of fewer physical resources. New stock can also be inserted here, as a space consideration when weeding since it is, "necessary at the most basic level- libraries have limited spaces and with new stock coming in weekly, it is necessary." Frequency of weeding as well was found to be a reaction to space restrictions if a set schedule was not in place, irregular weeding listed space as often dictating the timing.

The planning of a weeding policy, or criteria in general, was noted as driven by a lack of space and need to make room. Lack of space can come from too many materials on the shelves, but also from "re-organisations" or library refits, and as a result weeding needs take place "as books and most collections are allocated less space." Capturing this process, one respondent wrote,

The library in question was getting a spruce up including new shelving units etc. This was long overdue. However, the shelving space on the new units were considerably less than the old. An extensive weeding programme was necessary. When all the work was done and the library re-opened the initial worry was that library users would see there were less books and perhaps complain. On the contrary. Users were able to see the books we had to offer. New titles were better displayed; front facing and gave off a more attractive feel.

Expecting a public wail of despair, this library instead found library users to be more than happy with the new look to the library, proving that weeding programs can indeed be done without tears (from customers at least). Another facet of space considerations is the move to electronic resources and ebooks, as noted by another respondent, "online journals and newspapers can be a valuable way to save space and can often be more convenient for a customer to use."

The space created by weeding isn't just to improve visibility for new technologies or make room for new stock and community areas, but because some library staff have limited access to secondary storage. One respondent lamented the lack of space to save good condition stock and having "no choice" but to weed items that haven't circulated. Another respondent referenced a library "tank" that has been discontinued and now "there is very little space for keeping these older items." Contrary to this point though, more library staff expressed the value of their library system's "pool stock" or library headquarters where they can shift stock if the local branch is "struggling for room". The library system in place at Scottish local authorities appears to hold the customer at the centre with the ability to shift stock based on what is popular for each library. This responsiveness is the face of the library message and the whole reason to it's needed.

#### 4.2.3 User-Centred Weeding

Catering to the public, library staff reaffirm that they are here to serve a mission that places customers at the heart of a free, accessible, resource-sharing, community organization. The library's message fits weeding practice nicely in with this subcategory. Survey respondents mentioned customer needs and desires, with weeding "necessary" to help libraries "engage with [our] customers and deliver an excellent service." Staff's concern for and pride in serving customers was seen in equal measure in the responses. One respondent reported,

We have high standards in our libraries and have a commitment to our customers that items will be of good quality, relevant and meet the demands of customers. We have one of the hardest working stock collection in Scotland according to cipfa [Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy] stats and weeding plays a crucial role here. Customers are able to find new stock of interest and shelves are not overly burdened with stock that is no longer issuing.

Offering materials to customers and ensuring that those materials are of the best quality is a major part of library services according to staff. It is noted that some library users visit on a "regular basis" for their entertainment and know that they will always find something new. This responsibility on library staff then is to get to know their users, their likes and needs, to provide them with the best possible assistance. Format can matter as well as, "Not all customers will want to use ebooks or online resources but it's important to make provisions for those that do," notes one respondent. Knowing your borrowers and then basing selection and evaluation choices on this includes the reasons library's keep materials instead of weeding.

#### 4.2.4 Emphasis on Local Interest

"Any book we discard deserves to go in the bin! Working in a library is the best way to cure yourself of any romantic notions attached to print material." This pro-weeding statement from one respondent was carried over to another illustrative comment, "everything we currently have is transitory and will only be part of the library [...] for as long as it is useful and /or circulates." Concern for material to be of use and help to the local community highlights its place as a key part of the library's message.

Staff noted that they would save or find a way to keep certain stock if it had local significance, had a foreseeable rise in popularity due to media attention/global trend, or if it was a particular favourite, but otherwise weeding was necessary. One exception to this was a respondent who noted that they had observed staff hoarding "collections of items which were in very poor condition behind the scenes as readers often requested them." In their opinion, this reflected negatively on the library, to be issuing damaged and worn material, even if they were popular with users. This could be a side effect of budget restrictions on purchasing replacement copies, but it also could be showcasing a library staff reluctance to weed.

Carrying over the idea of a user-centred library mindset, respondents stated over and over again that material was kept mainly because it was thought to be of use or interest to the local public.

One comment highlighted the need to keep certain material even if they circulate rarely as “there are directives from our HQ on collections we should have. E.g Healthy Reading, Skills Zone etc, these may not go out as often but are necessary to a small part of the community if they come in.” Aside from keeping a quota of low circulating, but essential material, it was mentioned strongly by one respondent that “a lot” of library staff are not ‘experienced’ enough to weed appropriately.

[S]taff[...]do not appreciate that sometimes 'old' titles require to be kept. [F]or instance we had a copy of a book entitled pure, white and deadly which was a 1986 copy. Shortly after saving it as I felt it was one of the few titles (at the time) on the subject - the title was referenced in a programme on the BBC and we were inundated with requests for it. The title was currently out of print so it proved valuable to keep it in stock.

Last copies or reference material were also mentioned as criteria that could exempt print material from being weeded. One respondent used their power to transform lending stock to reserve stock for older material “unlikely to be replaced by new stock. For example books on old clockmakers, art books, old crafts etc.” The use of secondary storage and closed stacks helped these library staff to convert and save material that was still of value, either permanently or until alternative material was available and a suitable replacement.

In all steps of weeding for Scottish public libraries the level of review was minimal, with a two-step process mostly, between the branch library and main library or headquarters. In some cases, a single person made the call. This was felt by respondents to be enough and users were not included in the weeding process. “The decision of weeding is basically up to the person in charge of the Library [...] Community is not Involved in this process at all. Essentially one level of review.”

However, staff mentioned several times that users were informally included in the weeding process by being given a final opportunity to borrow books. Staff would create “last chance” displays of candidate material, with one respondent commenting, “It is amazing how many library users go straight to book display and grab items which would otherwise have been overlooked.” But if this display fails to entice readers, the book is withdrawn and in a number of cases sent on for final decisions, exchanges, or reserve stock holdings at a central library or headquarters.

#### 4.2.5 Implications of the Library Message

The theme of the library message held a lot of staff thoughts and opinions on how the library is and should be viewed. The public library should have “breathing room” and attractive shelves with maximum findability, as staff have witnessed “library users be put off by over stuffed shelves and stock which is in poor condition.” These quotes echo those held by participants of Dilevko and Gottlieb’s questionnaire (2003).

The library should have “experienced” staff that can judge accurately the usefulness of printed material for customer benefit and space is to be made for the changing times. Fear of the library

losing relevance and users good opinion featured as an underlining assumption as implied by several staff comments. This theme could be parlayed into libraries acting as if they are in competition for users, reflecting Dilevko and Gottlieb's investigation into commodification and homogenization of libraries in direct links to bookstore and fast food culture (2003). Library staff opinions and thoughts on these sections, though, all involve them answering with little variation in sentiment and reveals a similar attitude throughout Scotland of pragmatic weeding. How this image of a library as a gleaming hub of revolving trends came about is curious, and understanding if library management played a role in developing this culture is delved into below.

The next theme developed was the role of governance in library collection management, how it played a significant role in how libraries weed and their practices.

### 4.3 Governance of Weeding

Through analysis of how weeding was accomplished in Scotland's public libraries it became evident that the role of management and library hierarchy dictated many aspects of weeding practices and that most staff referred to a management level for weeding decisions. Following is discussed the how of weeding, policies and guidelines followed, and who is involved in the weeding process.

#### 4.3.1 How Weeding Gets Done

The governance of weeding works directly through the practices, policies, and persons in place. As a practice, the frequency of weeding on a regular basis was mentioned 19 times explicitly in the responses. It was implied in several other comments that weeding is a daily occurrence or on a continuous basis. These regular weeding practices were often seen in conjunction with a rotation system, or visits from library headquarter staff to conduct concentrated deselection based on stock format. Irregular weeding was explicitly mentioned 10 times, but the researcher concluded that weeding was not done in a scheduled manner from several more instances, as seen by this comment "[it] depends from branch to branch." One respondent mentioned wishing to weed more, not their historical items of local interest, but the 6 copies of "guides for Thailand all published in the same year". Frequency also depended on space availability, as mentioned explicitly by 5 different respondents as to how often they weeded.

Other comments on frequency discussed staffing levels and time as considerations when weeding:

"Different parts of the stock are weeded as time and space requirements dictate."

"At the moment we do not have enough staff time for each item to be checked on the LMS."

"We do not have sufficient staff time to review all items selected for withdrawal."

Mentioned in the previous section, the level of review in public libraries is often one or two tiered, with staff in the role of Librarian or Assistant Librarian making the final decisions as to what will be weeded. It was noted in several comments that all staff can pull damaged material,



and in some cases for 'one-person' libraries that weeding can be done on that level, but for several libraries an individual and a team from headquarters, "Exchanges team", will make weeding decisions together.

The frontline lending desk staff weed their own Libraries for items that are no longer issuing with them. These are returned to Library HQ where they are assessed by the Libraries Support team as to whether they should be withdrawn or kept in our pool collection to go out to other Libraries.

The number of libraries systems that participate in an exchanges scheme with a central headquarters was not ascertained, but from respondents this process was popular and the main way weeding was conducted. Print material would be identified at the local branches, removed at that level if damaged/mouldy, but if not sent on to a pool of rotating stock for better luck at another library. "Something may not issue in one branch but if moved it may issue in another," is the philosophy behind this practice and it appears that the support of a headquarters team relieves reluctant library staff from making a final call. One respondent explained "This varies between staff members and some do not like to make the final decision as to removal of a book so some books get left on a shelf for someone else to decide!"

While library stock can wear out quickly, the exchanges process allows for all stock to be reviewed and "new" stock to be brought in with one comment underlining the importance of rotating stock before withdrawing it. One respondent offered an exception to this deselection-free utopia though, "[I]n reality, we can often get our weeded books back from HQ or weeded books (via HQ) from other branches that are not relevant or damaged." Exchanges are also good for the budget. All libraries feel the squeeze when the economy is unkind to programs that don't see a tangible financial return. One respondent noted,

I like to do the weeding myself as it helps inform the type of books I purchase for the collection. Our print material budget has taken a big hit this year so it is not so easy to simply weed and replace titles.

The general consensus from library staff regarding the financial outlook of their libraries was of caution. It appeared unlikely that print materials funding or new software/radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags would be possible with current budgetary factors, even if those advancements would make a positive difference in selection/deselection of material and improve the quality of library stock. Moreover, "Books tend to be kept perhaps longer that they should for fear of empty shelves."

The last step in the weeding process is then disposal of unfit and unwanted material. Scotland's public libraries, from this survey, appear to discard as little as possible, but when they do materials are placed in charity sales, library stores, or given to Better World Books for a small profit. Unintentional disposal or "natural wastage" of materials can happen as well if borrowed materials are lost or never returned. For one library, "Stock is withdrawn and disposed of in an appropriate manner. Recycling is the preferred option. The book record remains on our

catalogue, status 'withdrawn', for around 6 months.” For another library, weeding is happening, but disposal is backlogged waiting on items to sell or be pick up by a charity.

#### 4.3.2 Policies and Guidelines

A policy at this point would be handy. Of the 36 respondents, 63.89% (23) answered yes when asked if their library followed any written guidelines for weeding print material, 27.78% (10) indicated no, and 8.33% (3) were unsure. The guidelines or stock management policies not established were under review or currently being drawn up for three of the respondents. The researchers understanding was that a whole governance structure was responsible in this creation process (or lack thereof). Another respondent indicated that their guidelines were only for last copies and could do with an updating. Only one respondent indicated that while there was a service wide collection policy they did not refer to it when weeding.

Common to all stock policies that respondents detailed were the weeding of material due to age, condition, and circulation numbers. Removal of stock that was damaged beyond repair was a universal finding. After this the age of items varied, with some commenting that items that haven't moved in 18 months were weeded or exchanged; less for children's books. Others reviewed and possibly discarded all materials over 10 years old. One library had an 'inactive stock' guideline for branch libraries that stressed the importance of generating a list of inactive stock regularly to weed the collection. Some policies included the use of material's titles to judge for content that is “dated, inaccurate, misleading, or no longer timely”.

Staff were found to be content with their policies for the most part, with one observing, “Quite happy with what we do. I do wonder if we should have a policy to keep the last copy of every title we purchase but realistically we don't have the storage space to put this policy into practice!” But when asked what they would change about their collection development policies, two responses from library staff clearly indicated a desire for the time, budget and staff “to run a weeding rotation where an area of the collection is weeded and refreshed in the same time period.” The need for more staff, or better trained staff, was a subtheme the researcher found to be important when taking respondents comments on confidence and mistakes in weeding. Training of staff on weeding guidelines is stressed in several points in the respondent's answers, like here,

It takes a bit of time for staff to get a feel for weeding, even with detailed guidelines. We list categories that are likely to get out of date quickly and try to give guidance on authors whose popularity has waned but customers are likely still to come back to. The Lib Sup team develop the skill and check over the weeding done by new members of staff until they get it.

Reflecting on this above statement, it can be found throughout the survey that library staff see a lack of confidence in other staff to weed or be empowered to weed. This is manifest in the stock policies and library headquarters support teams, who situate themselves as the final stop and relieve local branch staff of making tough decisions. Only obviously damaged material was seen

as a common strand in the decision-making process, i.e. everyone was encouraged to remove these items.

#### 4.3.3 Tensions Between Qualified and Unqualified Staff

While this survey did not ask for library staff to identify their qualifications or title the accepted weeding process frequently mentioned deferring weeding decisions to professional librarians, library headquarters or another senior person. Emphasising the role of governance, this choice to move weeding to a “management level” was noticed throughout the survey in every aspect of the deselection process, e.g. “If the item to be weeded is part of a series/ a last copy in stock/ or staff are unsure whether to weed, the item is passed to a qualified librarian (management level) who then makes the final decision.”

Management level survey respondents were recognizable through declarative states like, “I manage”, “I oversee”, “I issue”, yet they appeared to be in the minority and when discussing the decision to weed telling comments, like the one below, painted a less confident and empowered library staff.

All staff need to be aware of the expectations and guidelines regarding weeding and this may [give] some more confidence that what they are removing is correct. It would stop the "humming and hawing" about whether something should be removed and speed on the process. Often when books are returned and are checked prior to re-shelving its clear that they should be removed e,g damaged, pages ripped, coffee spilled over pages and they need to be removed at this point as well however not all staff do this.

Survey respondents answered overwhelmingly that the weeding was carried out as a team, part of a collective effort that “every member of staff is instructed on...and is expected to carry it out”. Library headquarters or a librarian were listed in tandem as the next step for decision making. “Branch staff all participate in weeding for condition but this is reinforced by main library staff who look at relevance/series/possible replacement/age.” Others noted that software like CollectionHQ can identify stock, but then it is the “professional librarian” who makes the decision if material should be removed.

The chance of human error is always there as well and one respondent noted that some donated material that passes through library headquarters has to be rescued as it has relevance/importance still, with “training or re-training” prescribed to enforce policies and have staff “understand what is required.” Highlighting this need for training and transitioning the conversation to the future, one respondent is advocating the embrasure of technological innovations and software since “professional staff numbers are dwindling” and efficiency is key. Another is concerned about the library changing governance structures and the “inevitable” volunteers placed in the position to weed collections from a list with no experience or qualification.

#### 4.3.4 Implications of Governance

The sentiment from Dilevko and Gottlieb's questionnaire participants was that weeding was a "professional task of the highest intellectual order" (2003, p. 93). This study did not quite bear out that feeling of professionalism though, with tension between who was qualified to make decisions.

Management level and governance structure in Scotland's public libraries was found to be crucial to the functioning of a deselection process. This theme identified a system of referral to another person or entity, a frustration with staff reluctant to make final decisions, and a call for clearly defined guidelines and training practices. The lack of professional qualifications marking the divide in weeding decision-making creates a bit of a bottleneck in libraries trying to make use of a deselection program, but it does help bolster the idea that weeded materials are being carefully evaluated for more than just damage and will be valued for their content by an expert (Miller, 1990; White, 2017). The presence of an Exchanges team or support staff from a library's headquarters allows a continuity of processes across an area; however, this places a stress on main and headquarter libraries to be a repository and the end result can be the loss of this space as one library experienced with the discontinuation of a library "tank". Assuming another staff member will make the decision, or inviting a weeding team to your library, may also result in a library staff less interested in the curation of their library and less interaction with the depth of the collection. This does not appear to be the case in Scotland, but it can be a danger of the future.

Lastly, the theme of the 'future is now' will be discussed with the impact of ebooks and software on staff confidence and attitudes toward the libraries weeding future.

#### 4.4 The Future Is Now

What is the future of weeding in libraries? Efficiency of space, of time, of resources (staff included). Is the CollectionHQ stock management system going to replace staff? Rogue, automated weeding from passionless software systems and digital everything? The panic is very subdued, if it exists at all, in Scottish public libraries and instead a sense of utility and compatibility reigns. Discussed below will be the software and automation emergence and the cause and effect, or lack thereof, between physical vs. ebook weeding with implications to conclude.

##### 4.4.1 Software and Automation

Survey respondents were relying on and adapting well to using specific software for weeding tasks in most respects, with only a couple libraries' returning to a staff-generated LMS "shelf-list" weeding after a period of trial and error. Many library management systems can run reports on circulation statistics, which can be used as a starting point for creating shelf-lists, if not automatically set to generate reports. CollectionHQ was mentioned by name throughout the survey as the service used by library staff and management. Reports run through CollectionHQ were identified as the impetus for weeding in several instances and another feature used for

stock exchanges was to generate popular author information to help libraries choose material to ask for. One respondent noted, “We have made use of Collections HQ to move stock around the community library network - it can highlight what titles could be used elsewhere and which items may be ready for disposal which is useful.” One library though, discussing reports, challenged the wisdom of software prescribed stock levels,

We are also told that we should use reports to reduce our stock to a level that reflects our borrowers usage - this would mean that we wouldn't have a choice of books for casual browsers. We tend to ignore this and keep the shelves well stocked.

Another respondent added that their libraries “are required to run 'dead stock' reports which are determined by certain criteria through our use of V-Insight (V-Eye-Q).” V-eyeQ is a collection management tool from the company Infor and offers performance metrics and even advice on weeding (Infor, 2017). The cost of these systems did have some respondents concerned though, with the thought that ‘it would be nice to have’, but in the current financial climate “library budgets will not support the kind of technology that would make [automation] useful,” technology like RFID tags. Another concern was that the software would not be able to weed accurately or with the nuance of a human.

The idea that software is useful, a valuable tool, and time efficient is echoed throughout the survey responses, e.g. “allows professional input [...] without...the time consuming [handling] of every book”. The prevalence of management systems makes the total avoidance of automation illogical and impractical, even if libraries only update their library management systems without an extra collection management service because of cost. However, there is a firm conviction among library staff that software and automation is only as good as making suggestions for a person to implement, or not. A person’s judgement was held critical to the weeding process, “Staff will know if there is local relevance, whether an item is a hot topic of the day, whether an item is a potential book group title or a classic that should be retained.”

In summary, software systems designed for collection management are in use across Scotland and in few cases, are incompatible, but the role of library staff in deselection decision-making is not to be doubted. Financial concerns remain the largest impediment it seems to weeding through automated means, as long as there is still a human element involved, of course.

#### 4.4.2 Physical vs Electronic

Another aspect of the future library is the digital reading landscape of ebooks. When asked how they felt ebooks and electronic resources would affect the future of weeding in public libraries, some respondents asserted that the two shouldn’t affect each other at all, as they were different formats with different audiences. More called out that physical stock will still be around and need to be weeded, regardless of ebooks. Another commented that most ebooks are bought for a limited time, with less offered on perpetual licenses, and thus are “self-weeding.”

The popularity of ebooks was discussed as well, with several respondents testifying that ebooks were plateauing, on the decline, and that borrowers still liked physical books. Additionally, the barrier of access was brought up, as many library users do not have a device capable of online reading/borrowing and ebooks cannot be interlibrary loaned or even be considered 'owned' by the library since licensing options are restricted. Limited stock options were also a frustration and reason to downplay ebooks trendiness. Yet, a handful of respondents commented that ebooks did have an impact on their physical stock, if not how it's weeded.

We all have to make stock work harder as funds are either cut or are shared with other formats like ebooks. In order to offer ebooks, funds that would normally be spent on physical collections are allocated to ebooks so we need to make our physical stock work harder. This is why we review our stock policies annually and our editing guidelines. But as for weeding stock, ebooks do not affect our decisions to remove a title.

Others chimed in with the acknowledgement that in certain cases ebooks or e-resources would be purchased as a replacement for a physical item. The appeal of ebooks and e-resources is the ability to offer another format and as one respondent says, "I have read books through Project Gutenberg that I would probably not have found browsing shelves in this country. Many of these would not survive weeding due to their being "out-dated"."

#### 4.4.3 Implications of Automation

Without the financial investment in public libraries the future may not be realized. This theme highlighted the steady impact technology has on library services and how library staff are reacting to new tools. While there was a resounding, "No!" to the idea that staff would be replaced by an automated software, the acceptance of software as a tool, a helper, and data resource was equally represented in the survey responses.

Ebooks, equally are a technology of now, and while most respondents indicated that these formats were holding a steady, or slightly declining, popularity, it was felt they did not significantly impact physical books borrowed. Thus, providing little interference with the weeding processes of either. Anderson, noted in the literature review, says, licensing for perpetual use is an option a lot of libraries (academic, in this case) struggle to achieve (2016), with respondents for this survey seeing this in a favourable light when considering weeding, as books then 'self-weed'. The same quality of content as a physically owned copy, though, is the ask from libraries who are moving forward to alternative formats, which underlines any future acquisitions (Anderson, 2016).

The biggest implication taken away was the budgetary restrictions on libraries, which while not a new challenge, is impacting the ability of the library to fulfil its mission to provide accurate, informative, and entertaining materials by impeding weeding and selection processes. Staff understandably speak about the future of the public library service with uncertainty over staffing levels, usable space, and technological advancements.

## Chapter 5 Recommendations & Conclusion

### 5. 1 Implications of Data

The purpose of this study was to give voice to the public library staff of Scotland in matters of weeding. The literature review showed that this area of research has been neglected, especially in the case of public libraries. Implications from the survey data is reviewed below.

#### 5.1.1 Demographic Summary

For the demographic portion of this survey the results do support a stereotypical image of library staff as an older woman, with 80.56% female and 55.56 % in the 50-69 age range. The low number of library staff in the younger ranges also offered area for speculation. Does this imply the librarian is a dying profession or is the profession not considered a young person's first field?

Distribution of the survey revealed a concentrated area of responses from Northeast Scotland, Orkney, and Shetland. The 12 responses could reveal a strong and highly involved professional network of library staff to be watched when discussing Scotland's public library future. Only one response from the Highlands & Islands, the largest region in Scotland, was telling as well. The rural and spread out nature of the region could account for fewer staff; fewer staff involved in weeding and a more centralized process.

Most surprising are the unsure respondents when asked the number of people served (5) and print materials in the collection (12). A survey does not lend itself to the idea of getting up and seeking out an answer and may not have appeared to allow time for that, but it is still worth noting since knowing your community is a high priority when ascertaining a deselection program (Mandel, 2007; Dixon, 2002). Another finding that was unlooked for was the number of respondents who identified as working at library headquarters (9). This number equalled the number working in main libraries and showed the hierarchical organizational structure of libraries in Scotland, which often placed weeding in-between headquarters and the rest of the libraries.

Also inferred, from the survey results relevant to demographic findings, was the small nature of some libraries, with one respondent mentioning that stock editing at a busy library may take place every 4 months, depending on the specific collection, but may be annually at a small, quiet library. Additionally, weeding could be done by just one person, as several respondents noted that weeding is often dependent on the size of the library with the Scottish Borders named as having "a few 1 Person Libraries [*sic*]". Small libraries also mentioned that software programs designed to manage stock through an evidence-based system, like CollectionHQ, an internet-delivered subscription service that helps libraries select, manage, promote and evaluate their stock—did not work very well for them. This could mean that regions of Scotland that have small, rural libraries far from a headquarters could be passed by technological advances.

### 5.1.2 Weeding's Message

With 77% of Scotland's public viewing libraries as important to the community (Peachey, 2017) it's no wonder that catering to the user is a high priority for public libraries. Using the weeding guidelines of CREW and MUSTIE, the literature review highlighted the practical reasons for weeding: damaged, inaccurate and superseded material. The survey, though, went further to explain that weeding in these public libraries was more about how the library was perceived by the community. Weeding, in this case, was viewed by almost all survey respondents as increasing patron satisfaction and book usage, mirroring the findings from Dilevko and Gottlieb of 86.1% and 91.8% of respondents claiming increased satisfaction, respectively (2003, p. 94). Staff views were backed up by other researchers' findings as well in the case of weeding to improve collection appeal, attractiveness, and remain relevant to the needs of the community (Mandel, 2007; Palmer, 2012; Boon, 2009).

The implications of weeding for reputation is the chance of an imbalance in the collection due to selection bias and customer demand. The role of the Scotland's public libraries management structure in this case can rely on local library staff to identify areas lacking diversity and redress these imbalances, leveraging their use of exchanges and software tools.

### 5.1.3 Role of Policy and Governance

Survey respondents mentioned directly or indirectly a hierarchical structure to weeding, with a headquarters or staff member being the ones making a final decision. The literature review uncovered an excellent source in Goldsmith's crash course on weeding, showing how weeding must be a part of not just local, but all libraries in a system, which is upheld by the survey responses (2016). Weeding appears to be carried out simultaneously at local and regional levels, emphasizing a system wide effort. Survey respondents uniformly agreed that public commentary was not sought in the weeding process, but displays were created to give items a last chance to move. If material did not move, they were either weeded permanently, or circulated through a central pool or through headquarters. With structures of decision-making in place regarding weeding, the survey respondents, while not explicitly, showcase the importance of having a policy in the face of public inquiry or challenge (Metz and Gray, 2005). This policy structure and organizational process implies that libraries are reacting continuously to public demands and using a sharing/floating collection to answer everyone's needs, which in this case requires an "intelligent" approach to weeding (Goldsmith, 2016, p.70). It can be seen from survey responses that this setup benefits libraries on a local level, saving time and moving materials in a responsive manner, making weeding a less daunting and more integrated function. Scotland's libraries can benefit from this structure, but policies and subsequent training of staff needs to be in place to take full advantage of it.

### 5.1.4 Living in the Future

Automation is here to stay and most survey respondents mentioned Scottish-based CollectionHQ as their go-to system, implementing evidence-based analysis of collections to weed, replace, and



transfer materials. This software is similar to the literature review mentioned POW and GIST Project as a circulation based evaluative tool. Concerns for the future fall into the financial realm, affording a software system, and in the fear of losing qualified and experienced staff through the efficiency of technological advancement. Having print material work harder, as one respondent wrote, in the face of uncertainty is the future that libraries are already dealing with. This focus on budgets means that libraries always have one eye on the bottom line while dealing with material in need to replacement, in need of discarding or storing. Physical materials may face a tightening of funding in this next iteration of the library with ebooks not taking over exactly, but money shrinking all areas. Library's as buildings may be the next funding focus as one respondent noted a refit, but for Scotland the "bigger libraries" argument in this case may not mean more shelving. The future libraries are living in now are ones of communal spaces and providing access, regardless of format, or maybe, in spite of format.

## 5.2 Summary of key findings

At the conclusion of this survey, three main messages have been observed. Deselection in public libraries in Scotland is part of a larger view on how the library is perceived in the community, relies heavily on the governance style of each area, and is not overly concerned about the future of automation and weeding software outside the financial and staffing burdens created by the current economy.

The survey data collected also hit on several points of desired strategy and policy changes for public libraries. The need for more training was highlighted as key to implementing deselection in a positive and effective manner. A suggested solution for a regular weeding practice and increased weeding by staff was policies that have clear, actionable guidelines. Using software for deselection decisions was widely accepted as well, and staff opinion held that in conjunction with professional interpretation it was a valuable tool and time-saver.

As a partial replication of Dilevko and Gottlieb's 2003 study the findings remained largely similar. Following below the findings are broken down by the research questions.

### 5.2.1 How do collection development staff in Scotland view weeding?

Public library staff view weeding as a necessary practice that all libraries should be involved in. Weeding kept libraries relevant, attractive, and responsive to the community. Library staff saved material from weeding occasionally, but mainly as a last-ditch effort to display and pray for increased circulation, or to store for historical/local interest as space permitted.

### 5.2.2 What methods or practices do public libraries in Scotland follow?

Within each library authority according to respondents there is a governance structure that has a large part to play in developing the collection management policies, including deselection. These guidelines are then either implemented at a local level, with final decisions or exchanges taking place at a next level. Management in the form of professional librarians or senior level staff are the ones making the call of whether to discard material and one universally accepted

weeding criteria, damaged or mouldy items, was indicated to be the purview of every staff member to flag and remove from the collection for a final decision.

### 5.2.3 What concerns collection development staff about the future of collection management, i.e. automation and electronic resources?

The concerning elements in library staff responses was of financial means and management structure. Automation, with proper oversight by a qualified library staff member, was not thought to be concerning and instead as a very useful current practice. Ebooks and e-resources, while valued for their format variation for borrowers use, were viewed as not particularly popular or challengers to their physical counterparts. Weeding ebook collections also was thought to be a non-issue as licensing of titles inherently makes them self-weeding, but if weeding does need to happen it would be using similar criteria of circulation data as for physical books.

## 5.3 Reflection

### 5.3.1 Recommendations for Research

Further research in the area of weeding, and for Scotland in particular, could look more closely at the relationship between professional qualifications and deselection decision-making. Library and information studies degree granting institutions would no doubt be interested in the impact of advanced education in the field. This research did not delve into the titles of professional qualifications of respondents, but in retrospect this could have added a valuable element to the analysis.

Another avenue of research could tackle the number of unsure library staff in Scotland as to their local population served or their collections approximate number of volumes. This could be a simply answered limitation of an online survey, but it held across all regions and libraries as an overwhelming uncertainty, calling into question the professionalism, organizational communication and local awareness of Scotland's libraries.

Additionally, a parallel look at how the public view weeding practices or what they find appealing in libraries could be looked at in contrast with how library staff perceive weeding and its impact. In survey responses, it could not be ascertained whether public outcry was a major factor in policy implementation or creation and outside one comment public opinion in regards to weeding was not discussed. The difficulty of capturing public opinion is acknowledged with library users' vs non-users in the target population and the disadvantage of collecting data through clearly biased channels, e.g. in front of the public library.

### 5.3.2 Research Methods and Questions

The literature review showed a preoccupation in the library and information field for public opinion on weeding practices and no shortage of anecdotal evidence. Scotland and the UK also had a dearth of weeding related research in public libraries. Further tangentially related reading may have resulted in more insight into library management structures.

The online survey method was complementary to the envisioned goal of collecting descriptive qualitative data and the software platform, Qualtrics, allowed for insightful graphical representations to be developed. Respondents were of diverse region and library system, which could not have been captured if another method, like interview, had been chosen.

Survey response rate was above expectations, as the population of library staff dealing in deselection in Scotland was an unknown. The researcher credits the help of CILIPS and SLIC in dissemination and subsequent word of mouth for the 36-respondent data set. Unfortunately, the survey was rather long and is thought to be a discouraging factor with 16 respondents failing to sufficiently complete the survey. Future surveys in this area are, in the view of the researcher, best kept to a more quantifiable nature with open text limited to round out findings and improve invested time.

The research questions chosen were adequate, but the survey questions used to expand upon the original intent could have been tweaked to discover a richer, more-nuanced well of library staff opinion. In light of survey responses, it is clear that some respondents were frustrated with question wording and had other comments to make that could've used different questions to fully explore.

### 5.3.3 Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The objectives of this study to determine Scottish public library staff opinions and thoughts on weeding were successful and the research bore out the idea that staff are valued immensely in their role as evaluators when weeding.

The learning outcomes of software familiarity and survey development were realized, with NVivo and Qualtrics valuable assets in survey analysis. Survey development was greatly enhanced by pilot testing and iterative reading for clarity. An unexpected benefit was the value of physically reading and hand-marking survey responses for organization within NVivo. Following the Braun and Clarke thematic analysis methodology kept the analysis methods on track and informed report formation.

In conclusion, this dissertation underscored the importance of weeding in Scotland's public libraries and how staff view and implement this crucial process. In combination with implications of findings, final suggestions for further research and governance were offered.

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## Appendix A

### Survey Questions and Response Choices

Question	Answer Choice
Consent Form	Yes/No
Are you a Scottish public library staff member with a role in collection development and deselection (referred to in this questionnaire as 'weeding')?	Yes/No
Please select your age group	18-24 25-34 35-49 50-69 70+
Please select your gender.	Male Female Other Prefer not to say
Please select your region.	Edinburgh, Fife, & East Scotland Glasgow & West Scotland Highlands & Islands Northeast Scotland, Orkney & Shetland South Scotland Tayside & Central Scotland Other, please specify
Please select the population range your library serves.	less than 10,000 10,001-50,000 50,001-100,000 100,001-500,000 more than 500,000 Unsure
How many print materials does your public library currently have?	fewer than 10,000 10,001-50,000 50,001-100,000 100,001-500,000 500,001-1,000,000 more than 1,000,000 Unsure

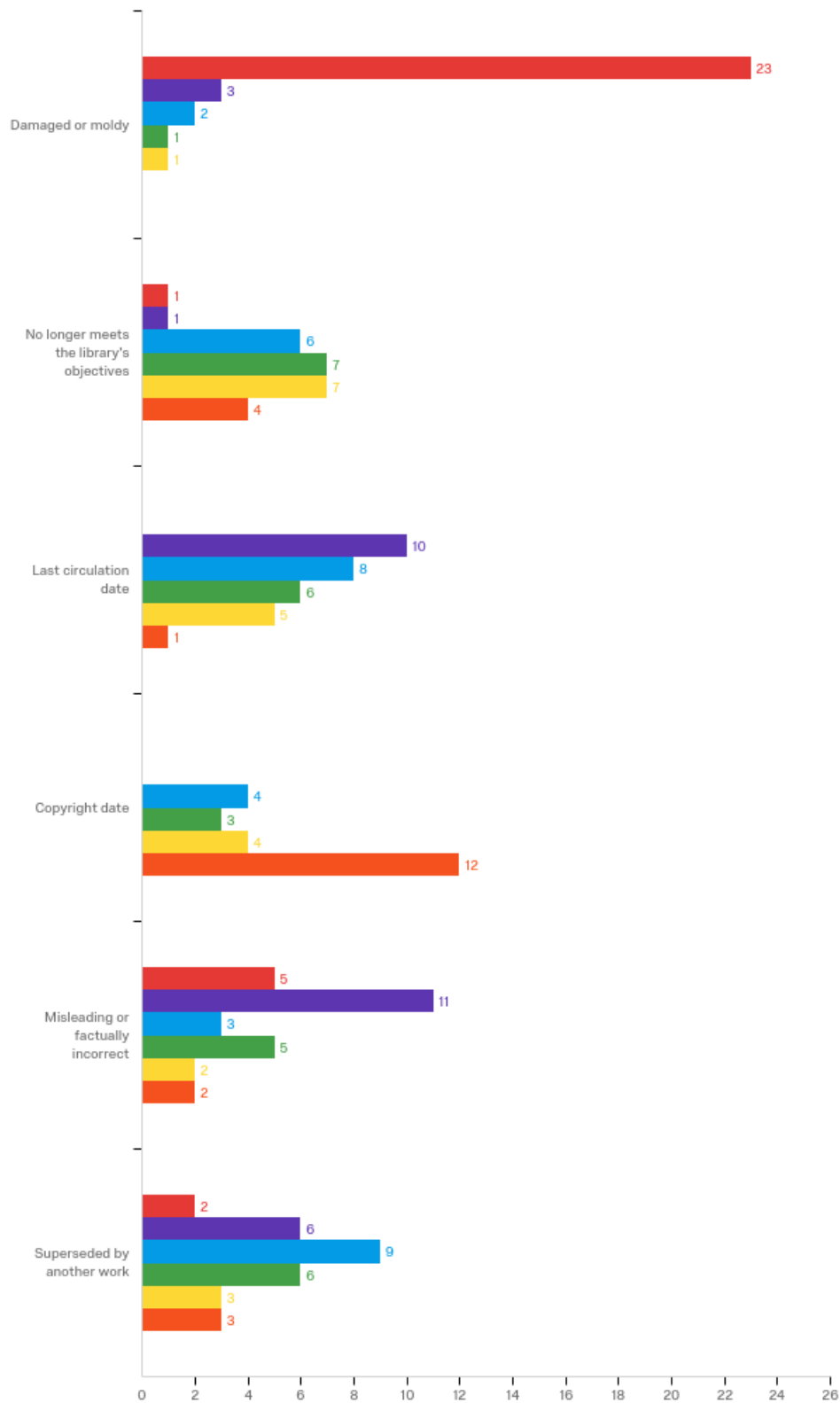
What are the reasons that you weed the current print material contained in your library's collection? Please select all that apply.	Damaged or mouldy No longer meets the library's objectives Low circulation of item Age/Copyright date Misleading or factually incorrect Superseded by another work Space considerations Other:
Rank the criteria that you use to weed the print material in the collection of your library from most important to least important (1 = most important, 6= least important).	Damaged or mouldy No longer meets the library's objectives Last circulation date Copyright date Misleading or factually incorrect Superseded by another work
Please use this space if you have additional criteria or comments.	Open Text
Where do you work?	Branch library Main library Between several branch libraries Between the main library and branch libraries Other, please elaborate:
Do you do weeding for more than one library?	No, I weed at the same library where I work Yes, I weed between several branch libraries Yes, I weed between a branch and a main library Other, please elaborate:
How often do you weed the print material collection of your library? Is it on a regular basis, or irregular?	Open Text
If regular, what is the usual frequency of weeding? If irregular, when was the last time that the collection of your library was weeded?	Open Text

Does your library follow any written guidelines for weeding the print material collection of your library?	Yes No Unsure
If yes, what are these guidelines? If no or unsure, what practices or methods does your library follow?	Open Text
Who participates in the weeding process? For example, is it generally one person or a collective team effort? How does this process work? Give as much detail as possible.	Open Text
Is there a chance for other members of the library staff or members of the community to review material that has been designated as “to be weeded” before it actually is finally weeded? How does this review process work? For example, is there one level of review or multiple review levels?	Open Text
What are your personal attitudes, opinions, thoughts on weeding?	Open Text
Have you ever personally saved a book or books that should have been weeded? If so, why did you save this book or books?	Open Text
Do you personally believe that weeding increases book usage and/or patron satisfaction? If yes, what is your reason for thinking this? If no, why not?	Open Text
If you could personally make changes in your procedures for weeding books in your collection, what aspects of your weeding procedure would you like to change and why?	Open Text
How do you personally think ebooks and electronic resources affect the future of weeding in public libraries?	Open Text
Do you think the future of weeding is automation, i.e. a computer program will decide which books to weed based on pre-selected data like last circulation date?	Open Text
Is this concerning for you or not? If yes, what are you concerned about? If not, why not?	Open Text

Would you like to receive the results of this study or be notified if this research will be published?	Yes/No
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## Appendix B

**Figure 6**



## Appendix C

### Participant Information Sheet for Public Library Deselection Survey Respondents

**Name of department:** Computer and Information Sciences

**Title of the study:** Public Libraries: Thoughts on Weeding

#### Introduction

Hello, my name is Katie Rowley, a postgraduate Information and Library Studies student at the University of Strathclyde.

**What is the purpose of this survey?**

To discover the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes of public library collection management staff, engaged particularly in deselection (weeding) activities in Scotland. Deselection can be defined for this questionnaire as removing printed material from library circulation for a variety of reasons, but with the express purpose of not returning them. Activities to this affect include reviewing circulation statistics, evaluating collection items for damage/age/relevance, and physically removing books from shelves.

Current opinion revolves around the essential need to weed collections and the best ways to go about deselection. As guardians and guides, libraries are uniquely positioned to evaluate collections provided for public consumption, while remaining servants of the public's needs. A collective look at their voices is missing from the dialogue around collection management as it pertains to deselection.

The objectives of this investigation are to:

- Discover collection management staff thoughts and feelings about deselection of their current print collection
- Determine present public library deselection methods and practices in Scotland
- Identify collection management staff concerns about the future of deselection (i.e., electronic resources)

**Is this survey for you?**

I am looking for individuals who fit the following criteria:

- Are employed at a public library in Scotland
- As part of your role at the public library you are involved in the collection management of your library's collection

**Do you have to take part?**

Your participation is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from this survey without giving a reason and without consequence.

**What will you do in the project?**

This is an online survey that will take 15-20 minutes of your time to complete.

**What happens to the information in the project?**

Information collected as part of this questionnaire will be completely anonymous. Information shared will not be traced back to individuals and no identifying information will be collected. General demographic data (e.g., gender, age range, region, etc.) will be collected for general study purposes, but will not make responses identifiable. From this, aggregated data and direct quotes, anonymized as necessary, will be presented in research and professional publications/presentations. Please note that once anonymized information has been collected (i.e. once the submit button has been clicked) it cannot be removed from the study. Participants can request the aggregate results or publication information be shared after the study is complete via email at the end of the survey.

The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the Data Protection Act 1998. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. Responses will be collected securely through the survey software and stored securely on the University of Strathclyde servers with password protected access restricted to the researcher. All raw data will be destroyed one year after dissertation or publication.

**What are the potential risks to you in taking part?**

This survey has no identified risks.

**What happens next?**

If you are happy to be included in this questionnaire, please select **yes** on the survey consent form below to confirm this.

If you do not want to be involved with this questionnaire, I thank you for your attention and ask you to please select no below.

*I would ask that if you know someone who fits the criteria and would like to be a part of this study, to please pass this on. The survey's success rests on sharing this survey far and wide across Scotland.*

The deadline for participants to submit this survey is **1 July 2017**.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

<b>Researcher</b>	<b>contact</b>	<b>details:</b>
Katie		Rowley
Postgraduate,	University	of Strathclyde
<a href="mailto:katie.rowley.2016@uni.strath.ac.uk">katie.rowley.2016@uni.strath.ac.uk</a>		



<b>Supervisor</b>	<b>contact</b>	<b>details:</b>
Dr Lecturer in Information +44 (0)141	Rebekah Science, University of 548	Willson Strathclyde 3524
<a href="mailto:rebekah.willson@strath.ac.uk">rebekah.willson@strath.ac.uk</a>		

This investigation was granted ethical approval by the Department of Computer and Information Sciences Ethics Committee. If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact:

Departmental Ethics Committee, Computer and Information Sciences  
University of Strathclyde  
Livingstone Tower, 26 Richmond Street, Glasgow G1 1XH

Telephone: 0141 548 3189  
Email: [enquiries@cis.strath.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@cis.strath.ac.uk)

### **Consent Form for Survey Respondents**

**Name of department: Computer and Information Sciences**

**Title of the study: Public Libraries: Thoughts on Weeding**

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information on the study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, up to the point of clicking the submit button, without having to give a reason and without consequence. If I exercise my right to withdraw and I don't want my data to be used, any data which have been collected from me will be destroyed.
- I understand that anonymised data (i.e. data which do not identify me personally) cannot be withdrawn once the submit button has been clicked at the end of the survey.
- I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available. Only aggregated data and anonymized quotes will be used in dissertations, reports, and/or any publications.
- I consent to being a participant in the survey.