

out to do: create an entry level text for readers interested in learning the basics of planning and assessment. Their conversational writing style and practical examples make the text readable and comprehensible for those new to planning and assessment. This reviewer wishes that this text would have been available years ago. If planning and

assessment vocabulary is unfamiliar and a comprehensive introduction is needed, *Fundamentals of Planning and Assessment for Libraries* is a good place to start.—*Tammie Busch* (tabusch@siue.edu), *Southern Illinois University Edwardsville*

Rightsizing the Academic Library Collection, Second Edition. By Mary E. Miller and Suzanne M. Ward. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2021. 166 p. \$64.99 softcover (ISBN 978-0-8389-4972-6).

Rightsizing the Academic Library Collection, Second Edition, is an update to the first edition published in 2015, which was awarded a starred review in *Library Journal* in 2015.¹ In the first edition, Ward introduced readers to rightsizing, a tool which enables academic librarians to efficiently and effectively cull collections of little used, irrelevant materials, and reduce collection size, while retaining relevant materials to meet the “changing needs of users” (vii). Miller notes that the first edition resonated with her due to problems at her institution like Ward described. Since the first edition was published, there have been developments to support rightsizing, including forming shared print networks to maintain access to at-risk titles, thus prompting a second edition.

The second edition of *Rightsizing the Academic Library Collection* is clearly organized, adaptable to library needs, and gives tips on traditional weeding and rightsizing. The text is composed of five chapters which include: “Background,” “Traditional Solutions for Deselecting Collections,” “Rightsizing Policies and Strategies,” “Project Management,” and “The Future of Rightsizing.” The authors discuss the pros and cons of traditional weeding and rightsizing for academic libraries, providing a strong argument for rightsizing.

Early on, Miller and Ward distinguish rightsizing from weeding. While the authors note that traditional weeding is cumbersome, time consuming, and involves setting criteria and time to pull volumes and update records, rightsizing is comprehensive and “considers the collection as a whole” (48–49). Instead of identifying numerous pitfalls and caveats, rightsizing allows librarians to “develop a holistic approach for shaping their libraries into the optimal size to serve” patrons with materials and services needed to obtain information that is not immediately available (8). Rightsizing allows libraries to systematically weed unused and irrelevant materials while retaining relevant and at-risk materials; however, one library’s approach may not work for all. The authors note that the reasons for rightsizing include space, priority changes, obsolescence, format, and external influences like shared print retention agreements, with keeping an improved user experience at the core.

In chapter 1, Miller and Ward provide readers with

a context of challenges that universities and colleges face, including “influences, expectations, requirements, and opportunities” involving entities, people, collaborations, distance learning, instructional redesign, environment, and priorities, among others (1-2). The authors discuss perspectives, benefits, and changing curriculum and research trends that affect weeding and rightsizing. A key discussion is the current shift from the “ownership” of materials in academic library collections to an access model. However, even with this shifting model, academic libraries still face space issues and crowded bookshelves.

In chapter 2, Miller and Ward discuss several traditional weeding solutions. The authors note that many academic libraries have collected materials for years and some have weeded, but “not always in routine, systematic, ongoing, and system-wide ways” (38). Sporadic weeding does not fix anything, as it only relieves crowding or allows for absorbing collections. In contrast, the authors note that public libraries and smaller academic libraries regularly weed their collections due to no extra shelf space or storage. The authors discuss the plethora of theories and strategies on weeding as well as benefits and drawbacks of each method. These strategies use various valuations, including usage, low- and no-use, and other agreed-on criteria.

A popular yet traditional strategy for dealing with low and no-use books is to move them to storage. Miller and Ward add that on-site storage is most often used because of the need to relocate items quickly. Eventually, on-site and remote storage is not adequate, as storage areas fill up, other demands exist for the space, the areas were not built for library materials, and items circulate less (by some estimates, an annual circulation of 2 percent or less). However, the authors note that storage is not bad, and by rightsizing, libraries can “make the most . . . of . . . storage space by building more intentional collections” (50).

Miller and Ward note that there are several barriers to rightsizing, including librarians who are attached to the books, not wanting to weed them, regardless of their usefulness. The authors emphasize that successful librarians spend as much time preparing a deselection plan as a selection plan. Other barriers include the opportunity cost of keeping low or no-use items, gathering faculty input, and

guessing about future potential use. The costs for rightsizing are likely “included in the cost of routine management of a . . . collection”; in addition, those costs occur once and are not ongoing (46).

In chapter 3, Miller and Ward discuss policy development in which academic libraries manage physical collections. Traditional solutions may be effective for small collections, but there are ways to batch process large collections based on a rightsizing policy or set of policies that includes the use of withdrawal and retention criteria and analytical tools. The librarian can utilize the criteria to analyze the collection for usage, duplicates, collections of local interest, last copies, and availability in shared print networks, among other criteria.

In chapter 4, Miller and Ward discuss project management, specifically the stages of rightsizing projects. They emphasize that all rightsizing plans should be considered as a multi-phased project. Steps of a rightsizing project include (1) project initiation and preliminary planning, (2) action planning and collection analysis, (3) project implementation, and (4) project closure (84–138). Libraries may begin rightsizing efforts individually, as a team with other libraries (such as through a shared print program), based on online access, or several factors together. The rightsizing

project’s success depends on the goals and objectives, creation of criteria, obtaining resources, and determining a timeline. The authors address the future of rightsizing and note that although the future is uncertain for academic libraries, libraries depend on each other. The future must include collaboration.

Mary E. Miller and Suzanne M. Ward’s second edition of *Rightsizing the Academic Library Collection* is a practical, fast-reading text that puts actionable information on rightsizing into the librarians’ hands to enable them to rightsize effectively and efficiently. The authors acknowledge that traditional weeding may work in some situations, but it is not practicable or sustainable. Rightsizing, however, gives academic libraries a new lease on creating and improving collections. This text would be a valuable, practical resource for academic librarians.—*Barbara M. Pope* (*bpope@pittstate.edu*), *Pittsburg State University*

References

1. Linda Frederiksen, review of *Rightsizing the Academic Library Collection*, by Suzanne M. Ward, *Library Journal*, March 1, 2015, <https://libraryjournal.com/review/rightsizing-the-academic-library-collection>.