

***The Weeding Handbook: A Shelf-by-Shelf Guide, Second Edition.*** By Rebecca Vnuk. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2022. 240 p. \$49.99 softcover (ISBN 978-0-8389-3717-4).

Rebecca Vnuk's new and updated edition of *The Weeding Handbook* is a thoughtfully written book that can spark a lot of creative thinking as well as assist with careful planning of weeding projects, large and small. Weeding a library's collection can often cause tension and sometimes high anxiety for many who work in and manage libraries. Vnuk's experience managing public library collections and extensive background in book reviewing, consulting, and training makes her a librarian with considerable understanding of the difficult issues that surround weeding of collections. Vnuk's second edition of *The Weeding Handbook* is a very useful book to read for building confidence around the decision-making involved in weeding collections. Vnuk writes, "A library is an ever-changing organism. Weeding helps a library thrive" (XV). This statement drives the narrative of the book, and it is something that is always important to remember when one is stuck in the weeding trenches and feeling indecisive and anxious on the decision processes. While Vnuk's new edition of the handbook may in part resemble her first edition, published in 2015, this book feels refreshed, with recently authored suggested readings. Many sections of the book include short and original weeding thoughts and ruminations from librarians across many parts of the country from an assortment of library types and sizes.

*The Weeding Handbook* is organized for a Dewey Library, offering chapters on each area of the collection, shelf by shelf, as Vnuk explains it. The book includes a chapter on other areas of the collection, with discussions on formats besides print books—such as DVDs and audiobooks—and a much-needed discussion on weeding e-books. The section on e-books is one area of the book that could have been more extensive in this second edition. Vnuk offers the suggestion that "libraries should strive to have their electronic collections meet the same standards as the print collections" (85), but this is still an area that could use its own chapter. The chapters on various areas of the collection—the 900 call numbers, for instance—each offer basic concepts to consider as one makes their way down the aisles of the library, looking for the books in poor condition and outdated material. Vnuk frequently mentions the free CREW manual (from the Texas State Library and Archives) and its concepts early in the book (XX),<sup>1</sup> as she explains that it is a work that will assist someone beginning to weed with formulas and a methodology. Vnuk describes her approach as "intended to give library staff the knowledge and confidence needed to effectively weed any collection, of any size" (XXI).

And it is in building library staff confidence to weed, as well as communication about weeding efforts, where Vnuk makes her book an important one for libraries to have on hand. Vnuk talks frequently about good communication, where she considers the importance of internal communication as well as with the public perception of collection weeding. Both internal

and external communication around weeding is necessary, and much of the book is dedicated to this important concept. In addition to engaging discussions such as chapter 11, "Weeding Gone Wrong," the book includes many detailed sample collection development plans, from a good sampling of library types. Sharing collection development plans with the public helps users understand the methodology and timing of planned weeding so there are less surprises and no horror stories. Vnuk relates an interesting story early on in the book about an incident that she was personally involved in, at a Chicago Public Library regional branch, where staff were not consulted fully. To top it off, a local alderman heard that the library collection was being decimated, with the story ending up in the pages of the *Chicago Tribune* (XVI). Collection development plans can also provide a good basis for library staff discussions on weeding, including weeding approaches to take and how frequent to take them. The "Weeding Gone Wrong" chapter particularly provides useful tips for libraries that may sometimes face an unfriendly trustee, budget manager, or public. Vnuk's book offers no hard-and-fast rules, and she frequently discusses the various kinds of reports that libraries can now run through their integrated library systems, to work from. While her intention is that the book should serve a variety of library sizes and types, she states, "you will still have to come up with the magic number that works for your library to apply to that data" (XXVIII).

*The Weeding Handbook* includes several important short chapters to make note of, especially for sparking internal library staff discussions. One such noteworthy chapter is on building and weeding a collection around agreed-upon principles of diversity and inclusion. Again, Vnuk quotes the CREW principles, which advise that "material that contains biased, racist, or sexist terminology or views" should be weeded (106). Her suggested readings in this area are both very current and relevant here, including the concept of the diversity audit, which may be new for many in libraries.

Vnuk's second and updated edition of *The Weeding Handbook* has much to offer in managing collections and is written with a sense of grace as well as a sense of humor. It is a book that should be by your side when planning and managing a weeding project in any kind of library.—Amy Lewontin (*a.lewontin@northeastern.edu*), *Northeastern University*

## Reference

1. Jeanette Larson, *CREW: A Weeding Manual for Modern Libraries* (Austin: Texas State Library and Archives Division, 2012), <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ld/pubs/crew/index.html>.