State of the Collection
Finite resources and spaces for physical collections are challenges faced by all libraries, especially research libraries whose collections require stewardship of rare and unique materials. In the face of these challenges, all libraries must work to strike a balance between what we and our users want to acquire and maintain, with the realities of space and resource constraints. The UW Libraries’ approach to decision-making around all aspects of the collection is well-documented in the collection management principles and strategies, and collection as a service model in addition to the many other public resources provided in this post. The critical status of UW Libraries storage has also been well-documented in past funding proposals and most recently in FCUL reports outlining the reality that UW Libraries are at or over capacity in many locations.

Funding Advocacy Update
Over the last decade, UW Libraries has been a consistent and vocal advocate for funding to increase essential storage capacity. A modern shelving facility with environmental controls optimized for preservation is a critical need for the UW Libraries. The latest expansion to UW off-site storage does not address perennial space constraints and the need to properly shelve our ever-growing collection.

UW Libraries recently submitted a FY25 Capital Budget Project for Libraries Off-site Storage and Student Space Needs, which is the first step toward developing a Business Case for inclusion in the UW Legislative Agenda (aka State budget request) for a new offsite facility. If funded and built, the path from proposal to approval to implementation is long, and a new facility would not be operational until at least 2029 in a best-case scenario.
The University of Washington Libraries collection is in an ongoing state of growth and renewal. We spend approximately $20 million each year adding to the collection in the form of print and e-books, journal and database subscriptions, streaming media, and other resources for curricular and research support. As we carry forth this multi-year advocacy effort for funding, it is critical to understand that even with additional storage, deselection or “weeding” is an essential and standard practice to ensure there is space for growth and that the collection remains current and relevant.

**Continued access to rare and unique materials**

The 7 million volumes in the UW Libraries print collection include a large number of unique or rarely held works. UW is the only holding library in the State of Washington for approximately 2.6 million items, or 61% of the monograph collection. Additionally, approximately 1.8 million items, or 43% of the monograph collection, are held by fewer than 20 libraries in the U.S.

We are committed to preserving this rich collection and continue to provide access to these unique and rare materials now and into the future.

The libraries will continue to acquire unique and rare material that come to us through gifts and purchases, especially in Special Collections and International Studies.

**Deselection**

Deselection, or “weeding”, is a standard practice among academic libraries of all sizes, including large academic libraries like UW and is necessary to ensure there is space for the approximately 35,000 new books we add to the collection every year. The number of deselected materials can vary from year to year. In 2023, we will need to deselect about ~30,000 monographs starting this summer.

Guided by our collection management principles and strategies, the deselection of monographs thus far has focused on items identified as “widely held” meaning:

- items held in 40 or more other libraries in the U.S.
- items held in 3 or more libraries in Summit (a consortium of Pacific Northwest libraries)

By remaining vigilant stewards of our collections now through adequate deselection and collection management, we will significantly improve our ability to care for and maintain unique and rare collections in the future.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

- Is UW Libraries deselecting materials that are uniquely held by UW Libraries alone? **NO**
- Will I lose access to core curricular teaching materials that are deselected? **NO**
  - Items that are not accessible via alternative access will not be deselected.
• Will UW users still have access to ALL deselected materials through alternative access via shared print programs, or from partners in the Collective Collection around the world? YES

• Will it take an exceptional amount of time to access these materials via these alternatives?
  o Most often, NO Interlibrary Loan & Scanning Services is incredibly efficient with delivery time-- for articles, typically within a few hours, but may take up to two business days. Print books that are unavailable or are not owned by the UW Libraries can be requested through Summit (typically arrive in 3-5 business days) or Interlibrary Loan (typically arrive in 2-3 weeks).

• Are you deselecting thousands of books every year? YES
  o Weeding is part of regular on-going maintenance of library collections to ensure we have space to provide access to newly acquired material. In addition, the Libraries’ shelving is over capacity and will need to de-duplicate or de-select items to create capacity

• Is UW Libraries actively advocating for funding to address the perennial lack of off-site storage? YES (See Funding Advocacy Update above)

• How can I best help support advocacy efforts?
  o Faculty can share their support for UW Libraries Capital request via their FCUL representative.

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Given the finite resources, lack of space and the need to responsibly manage our collections ongoing -- change and flexibility are not only inevitable but required.

As we navigate the current reality, it is important to broaden our understanding of access and how modern libraries provide collections as a service -- be that online, on the shelf, retrieved from another campus, an institution out-of-state, or across the globe.

This diversified notion of access beyond our physical spaces and the strength of our partnerships is not at the expense of preserving our rarest and unique materials, but rather expands our ability to maintain and add to all collections as time goes on. The practice of continuous assessment to maintain access to the greatest number of resources is central to our identity as an R1 research library and our role in supporting discovery and research for the public good.

For more information or questions about UW Libraries collection management, contact SustainableScholarship@uw.edu

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