

# Retentions and Withdrawals

Guidelines for the University Library, University of Michigan  
2007

The following guidelines describe principles and procedures relating to decisions to retain or to withdraw materials currently held in the University Library's collections. The guidelines apply to both monographs and serials, in all formats.

Different policies and practices apply to materials held in any of the Library's special collections.

## **General Principles**

The University Library is committed to providing an enduring collection serving the research and teaching needs of the University and supporting scholarship in the state, regional, national, and international scholarly community. The Library not only assembles information resources for current instruction and research but also maintains materials that will support scholarship in the future.

The decision to retain an item in the Library's collection makes a commitment of funds and resources just as there are costs for acquiring new materials. Appropriate stewardship of the Library's resources requires that equally careful thought is applied to the decision to retain materials, especially when a publication is held in multiple copies or multiple formats or is material that falls outside the Library's collecting scope.

In most cases, it is the Library's preference to retain one archive copy of any publication it has acquired and owns. This copy may be in print, microfilm, digital, or any other enduring format. Subject specialists, in consultation with the area collection manager, make decisions to retain or to withdraw materials.

Multiple copies of the same publication are sometimes acquired to serve an immediate need of the University, usually to accommodate high demand for instructional purposes. Once the immediate need for multiple copies has passed, one last copy should be selected to archive for future research and duplicates withdrawn from the collection. The Buhr Storage Facility does not accept duplicate copies for storage. Duplication across formats should be avoided except where it is determined that one format offers significant content or functionality not available in the other.

Increasingly, publications in print format are duplicated by electronic copies which the Library owns and maintains itself or for which the Library has negotiated access with a third party that maintains the electronic versions. This electronic copy, where it adequately meets present and projected needs of the University community, may be selected as the Library's last copy.

Occasionally the Library purchases certain materials, or certain classes of materials, to serve an immediate need without the intention or obligation to retain it in perpetuity.

Examples of such materials may include current newspapers, annual directories, style guides, college guides, and some computer manuals.

Finally, some materials have made their way into the Library collections in the past that fall outside the collecting scope of the Library. They do not serve either the present or expected future needs of the University. Such materials may be withdrawn from the collections even if they are the last copy. Such copies may be scanned for retention in digital format before being withdrawn.

### **Retention Decision Guide**

The following are areas for consideration in decisions to retain or withdraw materials in the University Library's collections and especially for deciding whether a digital text reformatted from a print original is acceptable as the Library's permanent "last copy." It is the subject specialist's responsibility to gather appropriate information and make a decision based on the criteria below. The Associate University Librarian for Collections and Scholarly Communication is given the final decision-making authority and may choose to override decisions that s/he deems do not contribute to system-wide efficiencies or values. Depending on the collection, some decisions can be made for groups of materials. In some cases decisions may have to be made on a title-by-title basis.

1. *Duplication*. Does this print copy duplicate other print (or other format) copies in the University Library without providing significant content lacking in the other?  
Duplicate copies still actively needed for instruction are not withdrawn. Note that a separate, revised edition of a publication is a distinct publication; earlier editions are not necessarily withdrawn when superseded by new ones.
2. *Content*. Does the electronic (or microform, or other) copy completely capture the content of the print original?
3. *Access*. Will the community the Library serves have enduring and adequate access to the copy that remains? Do copyright or technological limitations restrict access or usability?
4. *Quality*. Is the quality of the digital scan sufficient to meet the needs of research and classroom use? Definition of quality may vary by discipline or by the nature of the publication.
5. *Functionality*. Does the print copy function in ways that the electronic copy cannot adequately reproduce? Is the electronic copy delivered to the user in a format that is convenient for use?
6. *Physical features*. Does the print original have significant physical features that are not captured adequately by the electronic version? Examples of such features include but are not limited to qualities of the paper, print, binding, illustrations, or associated non-print media.

7. *Permanence.* Are trusted mechanisms in place - here or elsewhere- to ensure the Library will continue to own or have access to the material over the length of time it is needed to support the current and future research and instructional needs of the University?
8. *Primary collecting responsibility.* Where possible or appropriate, a print copy, even when the content is available in an electronic copy, should remain as part of the Library's collection of record for areas defined as a primary collecting responsibility.
9. *Scarcity.* Where possible or appropriate, materials that are held in no or few other research libraries should be retained in print for research purposes, and as source documents for some future reformatting technology or to correct errors in an existing digital copy.
10. *Primary source materials.* Primary research materials include unique items such as manuscript texts or graphics, materials that may have been published in multiple copies but are now scarcely held in research libraries, and materials that directly support the study of collections of primary source material held at the University of Michigan. Primary source materials should be considered for transfer to the Special Collections Library. Refer to Special Collections all publications dating before 1701; Western Hemisphere publications dating before 1821; and Ann Arbor area publications dating before 1861.
11. *Bookplates.* Books with the following bookplates have special significance in the development of the library at the University of Michigan. They should be offered for transfer to the Special Collections Library. Plates: Asa Gray, Philo Parsons, William Herbert Hobbs, Ellen Van Volkenburg and Maurice Browne, and Henry Vignard.
12. *Condition.* Books in extremely poor physical condition, that do not have enduring value for reasons cited above, may be withdrawn from the collection after scanning. Extremely poor physical condition includes books with paper so brittle or weak that the book can not be rebound or repaired, extensive mold, insect, or fire damage, or extensive losses of content due to vandalism or other causes.

### **Process and Disposition of Withdrawn Material**

The Transfers and Withdrawals unit in Technical Services does not check or make decisions about last copies. The decision to withdraw an item rests solely with the selectors or subject specialists, in consultation with their collection manager.