

Discarding Sets of Medical Books*

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WHEN I was asked to talk on disposing of sets which come to the library by gift, I found the problem of disposal and acceptance to be allied. Shall we keep, or shall we discard the many sets that have come to the library by gift or by purchase? Can we afford to keep material considered obsolete when many libraries are faced with the problem of housing and housekeeping? Many of the large public libraries have found that they cannot continue indefinitely to hold all the material now in their possession.

It has been said, "Let *no* book remain on the shelves unless someone fights to keep it there!"¹ If medical libraries were to take this as a guide in discarding material, I am afraid we would be forced to keep everything. Every gift is of the utmost value to a library, according to the donor. The binding may be very attractive, the set "practically new" (and of great value 50 years ago), and "no library can afford to be without it." All one has to do is look at the set to realize the books were never used by their former owner. The pages need cutting and the dust blown off.

All this being true, we must take the following points into consideration before discarding any set:

1. Does this set contain historical material not found elsewhere in the library?
2. Does this set have historical value as far as your own institution is concerned? Was it edited by a member, or does it contain members' papers not found elsewhere?
3. If you disposed of this set, could you borrow from a nearby library? What is the expense involved?
4. To your knowledge has this set been referred to in the past five years?
5. Are you serving a state-wide area? Do you feel your library should have everything, regardless of present usage? Why?
6. Do you have housing for little-used or never-used material?
7. Do you intend to dispose of this material as the collection grows and you are faced with the problem of insufficient space?
8. If you have storage for sets that are seldom used, can you get them within an hour?

* Read at the 52nd Annual Meeting, Medical Library Association, Salt Lake City, June 18, 1953.

¹ Harding, G. Doctrine of sufferance in the library. *Coll. & research lib.* 8:120-124 (April) 1947.

Before adding or discarding material, we must have an answer to these questions. Each of us knows our own library situation and the type of library we hope to build.

For that reason, I sent out a questionnaire to a number of libraries. From the replies it was found that five of the libraries replying have all editions of every set, four libraries keep one set in each subject field and discard the others, two libraries discard all 31 titles on the list, and two libraries consider all the titles obsolete, and place the sets in dead storage. Several libraries keep the first and last edition of each title. One library keeps everything, regardless of value or condition, as its rules do not permit it to discard anything!

Keen's *Surgery* is still being used for teaching purposes. Volume One of Dennis' *System of Surgery* is considered of value because of its chapter on the history of surgery. Allbutt and Rollston's *System of Medicine by Many Authors*, Johnson's *Surgical Diagnosis*, Reynolds' *System of Medicine*, and Warbasse's *Surgical Treatment* are occasionally used in a few libraries, and as long as this continues they will not be considered for discarding or storage by these libraries. The *Reference Handbook* is used for the lay public in one library. Two titles frequently mentioned as discard material are the *Practical Medicine Series* and the *Sajous's Analytic Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine*. Many librarians indicate that they would never purchase the sets and when time permits or stack space becomes scarce will discard or store the titles they now hold.

The results of the questionnaire indicate that the first and last edition of each title should be kept if you are in a library serving a large area. There seems to be no justification for a small working library to keep sets that will be used only once or twice in five years.

Material to be discarded is first offered to the Medical Library Association Exchange. If not taken, it is offered to students and faculty members, or society members. If no one wants the material, it is then offered to waste paper dealers. Since this last method has proved to be more trouble than it is worth, the incinerator is most frequently the best means of disposal.

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE ON DISCARDING OF "SETS"

If you *keep* the following sets, please check *yes*; if *not*, check *no*.

Discarded Recently	Stored Recently	Yes (Still kept)	No (Discarded earlier)	
6	6	57	55	AMERICAN PRACTICE OF SURGERY, J. D. Bryant and A. H. Buck, 8 vols., Wm. Wood, 1906-1911.
4	6	51	60	ANNUAL OF THE UNIVERSAL MEDICAL SCIENCES, C. E. Sajous, Davis—Philadelphia.
6	2	33	62	APPLETON'S NEW MEDICAL SERIES, various dates and titles.
3	4	78	37	DISEASES OF CHILDREN, von Pfaundler and Schlossmann, 4 vols., 1908.
3	4	30	82	GENERAL MEDICINE, F. Billings and J. H. Salisbury, 15 vols., 1905-1915.

Discarded Recently	Stored Recently	Yes (Still kept)	No (Discarded earlier)	
3	3	50	63	GOULD & PYLE'S CYCLOPEDIA OF PRACTICAL MEDICINE & SURGERY, 2 vols., 1916.
5	4	66	46	THE INTERNAL SECRETIONS AND THE PRINCIPLES OF MEDICINE, Sajous, Davis—Phila., 1903-1907.
6	4	54	59	INTERNATIONAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SURGERY, Ashhurst, 7 vols., 1888-1895.
4	4	53	59	A MANUAL OF SURGICAL TREATMENT, Sir W. W. Cheyne and F. F. Burghard, 5 vols., new ed., London, 1912-1913.
5	4	55	57	OPERATIVE THERAPEUSIS, A. B. JOHNSON, Appleton, 1915, 5 vols.
4	3	47	65	PEDIATRICS, THE HYGIENIC AND MEDICAL TREATMENT OF CHILDREN, C. H. DUNN, Southworth Pub. Co., 3 vols., 1917.
5	5	56	52	PRACTICAL MEDICINE SERIES, 1903-1928.
4	3	48	65	PRINCIPLES & PRACTICE OF SURGERY, Agnew, Lippincott, 3 vols., 1878-83.
4	5	49	66	REFERENCE HANDBOOK OF THE MEDICAL SCIENCES, various editors, new edition, 9 vols., 1886-1893.
6	8	75	35	SAJOUS'S ANALYTIC CYCLOPEDIA OF PRACTICAL MEDICINE, various editions, 1912-1918.
6	2	46	64	SAUNDERS MEDICAL HAND-ATLASES, various authors, 1898.
6	3	81	32	SURGERY, ITS PRINCIPLES & PRACTICE, W. W. Keen, Saunders, 6 vols., 1906-1921.
7	4	65	49	SURGICAL DIAGNOSIS, A. B. JOHNSON, Appleton, 3 vols., 1909-1910.
6	4	55	59	SURGICAL DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT, A. J. Ochsner, Lea & Febiger, 1920-1921, 4 vols.
7	5	66	46	SURGICAL TREATMENT, J. P. Warbasse, Saunders, 3 vols., 1918-1919.
4	4	42	70	SYSTEM OF MEDICINE, Russell Reynolds, ed., Lea, 3 vols., 1880.
4	3	24	87	SYSTEM OF MEDICINE BASED UPON THE LAW OF HOMEOPATHY, H. R. Arndt, ed., 3 vols. Phila., 1885-1886.
6	5	63	50	SYSTEM OF MEDICINE BY MANY WRITERS, T. C. Allbutt and H. D. Rollston, eds., 8 vols., 1896-1898.
5	5	52	60	SYSTEM OF PRACTICAL MEDICINE, Wm. Pepper, Lea Bros., 5 vols., 1885-1886.
4	4	48	65	SYSTEM OF PRACTICAL MEDICINE BY AMERICAN AUTHORS, A. L. Loomis and W. G. Thompson, eds., Lea Bros., 4 vols., 1897-1898.
6	4	57	55	SYSTEM OF PRACTICAL SURGERY, von Bergmann et al., Lea Bros., 5 vols., 1904.
5	5	59	53	SYSTEM OF SURGERY, F. S. Dennis, Lea Bros., 4 vols., 1895-96.

Discarded Recently	Stored Recently	Yes (Still kept)	No (Discarded earlier)	
5	3	37	71	A SYSTEM OF SURGERY, C. C. Choyce, ed., Cassell—London, 3 vols., 1912–1915.
7	4	58	54	SYSTEM OF PRACTICAL THERAPEUTICS, H. A. Hare, Lea Bros., 4 vols., 1897.
5	5	49	63	TWENTIETH CENTURY PRACTICE. INTERNATIONAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MODERN MEDICAL SCIENCE, Stedman, ed., 20 v., 1895–1900.
4	2	51	60	WOOD'S LIBRARY OF STANDARD MEDICAL AUTHORS, various dates and titles, 1882–

DISTRIBUTION OF SETS AMONG THESE LIBRARIES

17 Libraries (14.2%) have no sets.
 21 Libraries (17.5%) have 1–5 sets.
 11 Libraries (9.2%) have 6–10 sets.
 10 Libraries (8.3%) have 11–15 sets.
 15 Libraries (12.5%) have 16–20 sets.
 18 Libraries (15%) have 21–25 sets.
 16 Libraries (13.3%) have 26–30 sets.
 12 Libraries (10%) have 31 sets.

OTHER TITLES SUGGESTED FOR INCLUSION

CLINICAL DIAGNOSIS AND SYMPTOMS, A. Martinet, Davis, 1923, ed. 3, 2 vols.
 CLINICAL THERAPEUTICS, A. Martinet, Davis, 1927, ed. 2, 2 vols.
 COLLECTED PAPERS OF THE MAYO CLINIC.
 CYCLOPAEDIA OF PRACTICAL MEDICINE, John Forbes, ed., 1847, 4 vols.
 DISEASES OF KIDNEYS, URETERS & BLADDER, Kelly & Burnham, Appleton, 1914, 2 vols.
 ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PRACTICAL MEDICINE, Nothnagel, Am. Ed., 1902, 11 vols.
 ENDOCRINOLOGY AND METABOLISM, Lewellys Barker, Appleton, 1922, 5 vols.
 HANDBOOK OF PRACTICAL TREATMENT, Musser-Kelley, Saunders, 1917, 4 vols.
 HANDBUCH DER KINDERHEILKUNDE, 4 vols., 1931. (Trans. DISEASES OF CHILDREN, 5 vols., 1935).
 INTERNATIONAL ABSTRACTS OF MEDICINE (Prior).
 INTERNATIONAL ABSTRACTS OF SURGERY (Prior).
 INTERNATIONAL CLINICS, Catell & Mayo.
 LEHRBUCH D. ALLG. PATH. U. PATH. ANATOMIE, Ziegler, Fischer, 1895.
 LEHRBUCH INNERER KRANKHEITEN, Adolph Strumpell, Vogel, 1914, 4 vols.
 LEHRBUCH D. INNER. MED., V. G. Bergmann, et al., Springer, 1934, 2 vols.
 MEDICAL CLINICS OF CHICAGO.
 MODERN MEDICINE, Wm. Osler, Lea & Febiger, 1907, 1913, 1925 ed.
 PEDIATRICS BY VARIOUS AUTHORS, I. A. ABT., 8 vols., 1923.
 PROGRESSIVE MEDICINE, Hare and Appleman, Lea & Febiger.
 SURGICAL CLINICS OF CHICAGO.
 SURGICAL DIAGNOSIS, E. A. Graham, 1930, 3 vols.
 SYSTEM OF PRACTICAL MEDICINE, A. Tweedie, 1840–41, 5 vols.
 SYSTEM OF SURGERY, Timothy Holmes, ed., 1860–64, 4 vols.
 SYSTEM OF SURGERY, F. Treves, ed., 1895–96, 2 vols.
 THERAPEUSIS OF INTERNAL MEDICINE, Forschheimer, Appleton, 1916, ed. 3, 6 vols.