

Sparking Joy in the University of North Florida Rare Books Collection: A Case Study in Reappraisal and Deaccessioning

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Introduction

In 2018, the University of North Florida (UNF) hired a new Head of Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA). While prioritizing tasks, the new Head of SCUA realized that several urgent issues needed to be addressed, including the lack of space in the archival storage room. A number of recently donated collections were stacked on the floor throughout the processing area in bins and packing boxes.

The Head of SCUA determined that one of the causes of the storage issue was a bloated rare and non-circulating book collection housed in a premium location in the archival storage room. Of approximately 450 linear feet of books, more than one third were not historic and did not contain local content. Many were faculty publications that would be more accessible to students and faculty in the general circulating collection. Miscellaneous novels and self-published books also competed for shelf space. After discussing the situation with library administration and other library department heads, it was decided that in addition to concentrating on accessioning and rehousing as much of the backlog as possible, the UNF Rare Books Collection would be thoroughly reappraised. Clear collection criteria would also be developed to better focus what books would remain in the collection, as well as to inform the types and scale of donations that would be accepted in the future.

At the same time, the Head of SCUA had been reading Marie Kondo's *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up, the Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing* and was personally inspired to try some of Kondo's ideas at work. One of the book's main theses calls for choosing what to keep when reorganizing, rather than what to discard.¹ An item should only be kept when it "sparks joy."² Although Kondo wrote about weeding through personal objects and the joy they sparked if much loved in a home, the Head of SCUA was interested to see if the same criteria could be used to inform the work of an archivist in a professional setting. It appeared that Kondo's process of stressing what to keep (rather than what to discard) would be a more positive experience in terms of morale and could possibly lead to a clear policy for future book collecting.

¹ Marie Kondo, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing*, trans. Cathy Hirano (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2014), 41.

² Kondo, *Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, 41.

Background

The University of North Florida opened October 2, 1972, as a university serving upper division and graduate students in the Jacksonville/Duval County area, filling the gap for students graduating from local junior colleges.³ From the beginning, UNF's curriculum was "founded on the philosophy that preparation for modern life requires instruction and study grounded in the basic arts and sciences."⁴ In addition to their major studies and contextual studies (a secondary interest to a major), students in the College of Arts and Sciences program were expected to take courses that would broaden their outlook. These "Venture Studies" were "designed especially as non-major courses" and served "to broaden the student's intellectual perspective and background."⁵ They included options from all three colleges: Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, and Education. Leonardo da Vinci was the inspiration for the Venture program, because "no one in the history of mankind exemplifies to a higher degree the achievement of being both generalist and specialist."⁶

This broad approach to education encouraged the new campus library to include a comprehensive collection of resources. More than 100,000 volumes were available to support UNF's academic programs when the library opened in October 1972.⁷ The library started a collection of rare books early in its history. One of its first titles, *Epistolae sancti Hieronymi* (The Letters of St. Jerome), was a 1497 incunabulum gifted by a New York book dealer and collector in celebration of the library's grand opening.⁸ Earlier that year, UNF purchased a two-volume facsimile of a Leonardo da Vinci codex, *Codex Atlanticus*.⁹ As the university grew, the library actively collected rare books that supported the Ventures Studies and other liberal arts curricula.

By the University's fortieth anniversary in 2012, the Rare Books Collection was under the guidance of Special Collections. In an unpublished *Special Collections Policy Manual* for that year, rare books were described as "Rare/Valuable materials consisting primarily of old imprints, limited editions and high-cost items."¹⁰ The selection and acquisitions portion of the policy manual stated that collecting guidelines were based on the Association of College and Research Libraries Guidelines, *Selection of General Collection Materials for Transfer to Special Collections*, and the *Library of Congress Cataloging Manual: Shelf listing* (secs. G810 and 812).¹¹ The library would consider accepting donations or purchase rare materials that fulfilled at least one of the following criteria:

- Imprints older than 1801 (general), older than 1875 (California), older than 1860 (Florida), Confederate states (1861-1865), University of North Florida Press books (1983-1991)
- Editions or facsimiles of limited editions valued over \$300/volume
- Signed volumes
- Selected private press books

³ *University of North Florida, Catalog 1972-3, Part One*. (Jacksonville, FL, 1972), 3, 11.
https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=course_catalogs.

⁴ *University of North Florida, Catalog*, 4.

⁵ *University of North Florida, Catalog*, 34.

⁶ *University of North Florida, Catalog*, 33.

⁷ *University of North Florida, Catalog*, 6.

⁸ "N.Y. Book Dealer Donates Ancient Folio to UNF," *Florida Times-Union*, October 9, 1972.

⁹ Bill Humphrey, "UNF Buys 2-Volume Da Vinci Collection," *Jacksonville Journal*, June 13, 1972.

¹⁰ Eileen Brady, "UNF Thomas G. Carpenter Library Special Collections Policy" (unpublished manuscript, July 2012), 3.

¹¹ Brady, "Special Collections Policy," 4.

- Local northeast Florida content including UNF faculty monographs and UNF student theses and dissertations.¹²

Between 2012 and 2018, because the founding Special Collections librarian had retired, several librarians managed Special Collections for short periods. This left much of the Rare Books Collection's development work to long-term staff members and other interested parties. By 2018, the collection had no room to grow. In addition, many rare books no longer supported the current SCUA mission: to collect, preserve, and promote the distinctive history of the Northeast Florida Region through collection access, outreach, exhibits, and programming in support of scholarship, research, and education. Changing budgeting priorities also called into question the costs of maintaining and preserving the existing collection.

The University of North Florida and its library underwent many changes in 2018. A new UNF president was chosen, the library was seeking a new Dean, and a new Head of SCUA was recently hired. After several discussions with the Interim Library Dean in 2018, the new Head of SCUA was given permission to form an ad hoc Rare Books Advisory Committee to study the rare books situation and advise a solution.

Literature Review

To guide the committee, the Head of SCUA sought information about similar projects. Research resulted in very little current information about reappraising and deaccessioning rare or non-circulating books in a special collections or archives context. Articles that did address this scenario described projects from the early 1980s and late 1990s. However, Sidney Berger's 2014 book *Rare Books and Special Collections* included some practical information about the process. A brief overview of the resources consulted by the Head of SCUA is provided below in a short literature review.

In the early 1980s, the Brown University Library and the John Carter Brown Library were in the midst of a deaccessioning program. They hosted a conference on deaccessioning rare books, and a couple of articles from the Brown proceedings were published in the May 1982 *Wilson Library Bulletin*. Samuel Streit described his experiences deaccessioning as the Assistant University Librarian for Special Collections at Brown University's John Hay Library, including conducting a self-appraisal to determine goals, making final decisions, and selling books that were deaccessioned.¹³ In the same issue of *Wilson Library Bulletin*, Daniel Traister described his experiences at Lehigh University, where they chose to sell underused rare books to cover the shortfall for constructing a new library addition.¹⁴

In his 1994 article, Daniel Bradbury discussed issues he encountered at Kansas City Public Library in the late 1980s. He explained how the library's updated mission focused their efforts on building a strong circulating collection rather than using resources to maintain a seldom used collection of rare books. He also detailed some of the public's response to their deaccessioning project.¹⁵

These three case studies all stressed that removing underused rare books would place a new focus on collecting materials more appropriate for their patrons. In all cases, the decision to

¹² Brady, "Special Collections Policy," 5-7.

¹³ Samuel Streit, "Research Library Deaccessioning: Practical Considerations," *Wilson Library Bulletin* 56 (May 1982): 660.

¹⁴ Daniel Traister, "Goodbye to All That: A Case Study in Deaccessioning," *Wilson Library Bulletin* 56 (May 1982): 663-668.

¹⁵ Daniel J. Bradbury, "Barbarians within the Gate: Pillage of a Rare Book Collection?" *Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarianship* 9, no. 1 (1994): 10-11.

sell collections was factored into the decision-making process, either due to the need for additional funds for a construction project or for future purchases that would better meet their needs. Although selling collection materials would not be an option for UNF, the information in these early articles showed the committee that transparency was important in documenting how and why deaccessioning decisions were made.

Sidney Berger's 1987 article discussed the need for rare book librarians to "face the practical and theoretical problems of weeding and disposal."¹⁶ He cited articles published from the 1950s to 1980s that affirm the practical aspects of collecting and maintaining rare books, including ideas that align with current thinking: clear acquisition policies help decide in what areas to concentrate collecting.¹⁷ Berger's article informed the committee on the importance of a comprehensive collection development policy, specifically regarding future acquisitions.

In 1997, several papers were presented at the "1996 Preconference Institute on Getting There from Here" and then published in a special issue of *Rare Books & Manuscripts Librarianship*. Richard Oram's work described a survey which collected responses from sixty academic libraries about their institutions' rare book deaccessioning policies. His study found that deaccessioning was more prevalent and less controversial than fifteen years prior and that a lack of space drove more deaccessioning projects rather than any financial gain.¹⁸ Oram included his questionnaire and the responses as an appendix to his article. Samuel Streit's paper revisited the three deaccessioning projects documented in the 1982 and 1994 articles, reflecting on some of the lessons learned fifteen years later.¹⁹ He included a fourth case study examining a project at Clements Library, which was widely discussed on the EXLIBRIS listserv.²⁰ Weighing in with a different perspective, David Szewczyk, a book dealer specializing in antiquarian books, described how private collectors approach the process of maintaining, analyzing, and deaccessioning their collections.²¹

Sidney Berger co-authored essays with Michèle Valerie Cloonan for *Rare Books & Manuscripts Librarianship* (1999) and *Library Trends* (2003), examining current trends in rare book and special collections librarianship. One of the issues discussed was that fewer library schools offered courses in bibliography and rare books librarianship. Instead, the curricular focus of these programs was on providing new librarians with the skills to work in an increasingly digital environment.²² Another issue discussed was the shifting allocation of library funding to electronic resources rather than rare books and manuscript collections. As a result, librarians were rethinking how space was being used, with less space allotted for physical collections.²³ Their essays showed that although the issues had changed since the early 1980s, two main problems in rare books departments remained: lack of resources and insufficient space for collections.²⁴

¹⁶ Sidney E. Berger, "What is So Rare. . . : Issues in Rare Book Librarianship," *Library Trends* 36, no. 1 (Summer 1987): 14.

¹⁷ Berger, "Issues in Rare Book Librarianship," 15.

¹⁸ Richard W. Oram, "Current Professional Thinking on the Deaccessioning of Rare Books in Academic Libraries," *Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarianship* 12, no. 1 (1997): 10, 13.

¹⁹ The three projects occurred at Brown University, Lehigh University and Kansas City Public Library.

²⁰ Samuel Streit, "Going, Going, Gone: Case Studies in Library Deaccessioning," *Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarianship* 12, no. 1 (1997): 21-28.

²¹ David Szewczyk, "Library Deaccessioning: A Dealer's Perspective," *Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarianship* 12, no. 1 (1997): 30-33.

²² Michèle Valerie Cloonan and Sidney E. Berger, "Present and Future Issues for Special Collections," *Rare Books & Manuscripts Librarianship* 13, no. 2 (1999): 89-94.

²³ Michèle Valerie Cloonan and Sidney E. Berger, "The Continuing Development of Special Collections Librarianship," *Library Trends* 52, no. 1 (Summer 2003): 9-13.

²⁴ Cloonan and Berger, "Continuing Development," 9-13.

In 2014, Sidney Berger published *Rare Books and Special Collections*, a 537-page volume to provide librarians with “specific information that will be useful to anyone working with rare books.”²⁵ Berger discussed weeding and deaccessioning in three of the fourteen chapters and included theoretical, legal, and practical knowledge to assist in building/shaping a collection.²⁶ Berger’s book provided some of the most current and comprehensive information about creating an overall collection policy and proved to be a valuable resource for the UNF committee.

Mark Greene, in “I’ve Deaccessioned and Lived to Tell About it: Confessions of an Unrepentant Reappraiser,” offers a rationale about the need to reappraise archival collections, and his conclusions are also suitable for rare books collections.²⁷ He noted that many of the reasons against deaccessioning assume that the original decision to acquire an item is more valid than the decision to deaccession it, that there is a presumed permanence of special collections, and that donors may be alienated.²⁸ Greene stressed the need for institutional mission statements, collection policies, and appraisal standards to guide the process. He also suggested approaching reappraisal and deaccessioning projects in a systematic way.²⁹

Greene’s subsequent article, “A Brief and Opinionated History of Archival Appraisal Theory, to 2005,” outlined resources available for reappraisal and deaccessioning in archival collections. Greene provided a timeline of archival thought on this process.³⁰ Similarly, the Society of American Archivists’ *Annotated Bibliography – Literature Review* provided a selected bibliography that addressed both theoretical and practical issues in reappraisal and accessioning.³¹ Both bibliographies provided the Rare Books Advisory Committee with relevant literature to aid with the reassessment of UNF’s collection.

Laura Uglean Jackson’s more recent book *Reappraisal and Deaccessioning in Archives and Special Collections* provides clear definitions of the terminology for reappraisal and deaccessioning and explains how the latter is different from weeding. Where weeding is the routine removal of unwanted items from a larger collection (such as duplicates), deaccessioning looks at the collection as a whole and involves removing groupings of accessioned (or cataloged) materials from the institution’s overall holdings.³² The book comprises several case studies about how various archival institutions have managed their reappraisal and deaccessioning projects in varying circumstances. The committee utilized these definitions in its work at UNF.

The Society of American Archivists’ *Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning* provides definitions, guiding principles, a step-by-step process, and checklists and forms for reappraising and deaccessioning in archives.³³ Additionally, the *SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics* gives guidance for archival professionals on how to be respectful of materials, donors, patrons, and other collecting institutions while maintaining a position of responsible

²⁵ Sidney E. Berger, *Rare Books and Special Collections* (Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2014), xvii.

²⁶ Berger, *Rare Books*, 332.

²⁷ Mark A. Greene, “I’ve Deaccessioned and Lived to Tell About It: Confessions of an Unrepentant Reappraiser,” *Archival Issues* 30, no. 1 (2006) 7-22.

²⁸ Greene, “Confessions of an Unrepentant Reappraiser,” 9-10.

²⁹ Greene, “Confessions of an Unrepentant Reappraiser,” 12.

³⁰ Mark A. Greene, “A Brief and Opinionated History of Archival Appraisal Theory, to 2005,” Society of American Archivists: Fundamentals of Acquisition and Appraisal Pre-Readings, 2009, <https://www2.archivists.org/prof-education/faa-pre-readings>.

³¹ Society of American Archivists, *Annotated Bibliography-Literature Review*, n.d., <https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/Annotated%20BibliographyFinal.pdf>.

³² Laura Uglean Jackson, ed., *Reappraisal and Deaccessioning in Archives and Special Collections* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 2-4.

³³ Society of American Archivists, Technical Subcommittee on Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning, *Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning*, May 2017, https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/GuidelinesForReappraisalDeaccessioning_2017.pdf.

stewardship. Importantly, the *Code of Ethics* strongly urges transparency in deaccessioning decisions and suggests creating a best practices document to maintain trustworthy relationships with stakeholders.³⁴

The Rare Books Project at UNF

In late fall 2018, the ad hoc Rare Books Advisory Committee was formed within the UNF library to reappraise the rare and non-circulating book collection and to make recommendations for deaccessioning books to the Collection Development Committee (CDC). The Rare Books Advisory Committee was chaired by the Head of Special Collections and University Archives, and its members included the Director of Public Services, the Head of Acquisitions, the Head of Discovery Enhancement, the Resource Description Librarian, and the Library Services Specialist for cataloging. The committee met monthly throughout 2019 with the goal of creating a new collection policy outlining (a) the types of rare and non-circulating books to collect going forward, (b) what would be deaccessioned from the current collection, and (c) what exceptions might need to be made. The new policy's intent was to aid SCUA staff in downsizing the current collection and advise donors about what books would be responsibly accepted in the future.

The committee looked to the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) of the American Library Association for a definition of rare books. Although the *Your Old Books* guide on the RBMS website specifically notes that there are no easy formulas for determining what constitutes a rare book, they provide several FAQs to help identify attributes that make a book rare.³⁵ Early on, it became clear that the committee was not reappraising books that were rare in an antiquarian sense nor had any special financial value. To complicate matters, non-circulating books at UNF were noted as "rare" in the library catalog as a locational term rather than a descriptive term. For the purposes of this project, the committee determined that older books with financial value which had been collected to support the Ventures Studies program at UNF would be considered "rare" and were not reviewed by the committee as part of this project.

The committee agreed to set criteria for building a curated collection of non-circulating books that would be valuable to UNF researchers. The Resource Description Librarian started the process by surveying the Rare Books Collection. Using the existing catalog records, she spent several weeks comparing catalog entries with books on the shelves in SCUA. She then created a list of book categories for the committee to consider as criteria for reappraisal and possible deaccessioning. The categories developed were as follows:

Faculty publications

- Topics not related to UNF, Jacksonville, or Florida.
- Publications by faculty from other universities, not about UNF, Jacksonville, or Florida.
- Theses/dissertations by non-UNF students.

³⁴ "SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics," Society of American Archivists, updated August 6, 2020), <https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics>.

³⁵ Association of College & Research Libraries, Rare Books and Manuscripts Publications Committee, *Your Old Books*, (Chicago, 2011), <https://rbms.info/yob>.

Non-fiction

- Self-published personal memoirs by Jacksonville residents not locally known and not about the Jacksonville area.
- Autobiographies of famous people who currently reside in northeast Florida, but the books are not about UNF, Jacksonville, or Florida.
- Books by local authors not about UNF, Jacksonville, or Florida.
- Books about Florida or local Jacksonville topics with no bibliographic references, often self-published.
- Donated nonfiction not supporting SCUA collections.

Fiction/poetry

- Recently published books autographed or inscribed by the authors that are not about UNF, Jacksonville, or Florida.
- Books by local authors, often self-published.

Older, possibly historic books

- Books published in the eighteenth, nineteenth, or early twentieth centuries that may not be rare and are not about Florida.

Because it would have been a time-consuming task to review the entire collection of non-circulating books, the committee focused on reviewing the four categories chosen. They agreed that they would choose one of the above categories for reappraisal and then work through all the books within that category before proceeding to the next. Prior to each meeting, the Resource Description Librarian would create a list of books for that meeting's category and pull them from the shelves. The Resource Description Librarian and the Head of SCUA sorted the books into subcategories to streamline the decision process. Some examples of subcategories included teaching manuals or texts created for specific UNF courses (listed under Faculty Publications), self-published books without Jacksonville or Florida content (listed under Non-fiction), and bestselling fiction without Jacksonville or Florida content (listed under Fiction/Poetry). In general, it took two meetings (or two months) to review each category.

In her book, Marie Kondo gives her own criteria for how to sort and organize books.³⁶ She describes having a client remove all the books from her bookshelf and handle each one to see if it gave a “thrill of pleasure.” In other words, did the book spark joy? Kondo’s reasoning behind removing and handling each book is that when books are undisturbed on a shelf for extended periods of time, they become “invisible.”³⁷ By reviewing each book individually, you are reawakening your interest (or lack of) in the book, which then determines if it is kept in your collection. To follow Kondo’s advice, every time the committee met, they physically looked at each book that had been pulled for review to determine if it should (a) remain in SCUA, (b) be transferred into the general library (circulating) collection, or (c) be deaccessioned from the collection. By handling individual books, the committee determined whether it “sparked joy” for the collection in an archival sense.

³⁶ Kondo, *Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, 86-89.

³⁷ Kondo, *Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, 87.

Reappraisal

UNF faculty publications were the largest portion of non-circulating books addressed and were the first group of texts reviewed by the Rare Books Advisory Committee. Almost half of the 470 faculty publications considered were multiple editions of the same book, foreign translations of a book that had an English edition in the collection, books in which only the introduction or one chapter was authored by a UNF faculty member, or dated textbooks and manuals. The majority of all the UNF faculty publications were not rare, nor were they about UNF or the Jacksonville area, but were instead related to individual fields of study.

The committee decided not to keep a separate set of non-circulating faculty publications in SCUA. Transferring faculty publications to the circulating collection would be more beneficial to UNF students, as it makes the texts more accessible; few people wanted to read a scholarly text in the SCUA Reading Room. In many cases, the non-circulating copy was the only one in the library, so this decision also expanded the number of unique circulating titles. Initially, there was some concern about potential theft of the faculty publications from the general collection; however, further investigation showed that only a very small percent of non-fiction had disappeared from the collection in the past ten years, and the committee decided that it was worth the risk to make the faculty publications more available to the UNF community. A local note was placed in the bibliographic record, reading “UNF Faculty Publications,” which makes it easy to search for them in the library catalog.

In an effort to maintain transparency, the CDC and the library department liaisons were invited to review the books selected for transfer before any books were moved from the Rare Books Collection. However, very little feedback was received by the committee. Any requests to retain UNF faculty publications in SCUA as non-circulating were handled on a case-by-case basis. In all, 371 faculty publications were transferred into the circulating collection, fifty-three were deaccessioned, and forty-six were kept in SCUA.

The next category of books reappraised by the committee was local author non-fiction, which included biographies and autobiographies that were self-published, independently published, and mass market published. The committee recommended keeping local author non-fiction in the Rare Books Collection if it met the following criteria:

- Focused on NE Florida/SE Georgia region (St. Johns River Basin, as far west as Ocala/Gainesville, First Coast, as far south as St. Augustine, as far north as Jekyll Island in coastal Georgia), with significant Jacksonville content.
- Locally authored books with significant Jacksonville context and content.
- Books supporting a Special Collection at UNF (examples: Civil Rights and Women’s History).

The committee determined that the author must have subject authority to remain in the non-circulating books collection, and the book must be veracious, accurate, credible, and generally useful to UNF researchers. They deemed that the book’s content could be textual or visual, and that “folksy,” quirky, or non-scholarly books might contain information of a folkloric nature and would be considered for retention in some instances. In general, no juvenile or young adult non-fiction was maintained in the collection, except for books about and published by UNF. Only one copy of most books was kept in the Rare Books Collection. Extra copies were transferred to the circulating collection or deaccessioned entirely.

As was the case with faculty publications, the CDC and library liaisons were invited to review all non-fiction books slated for transfer or disposal. The Rare Books Advisory Committee reviewed and discussed any books that the CDC or library liaisons recommended keeping in the collection. Of the 194 local author non-fiction books reviewed, eighty were kept in SCUA, eighty-five were deaccessioned, and twenty-nine were transferred to the circulating collection.

The Rare Books Advisory Committee found that reappraisal of fiction and poetry was more subjective than non-fiction, particularly when it came to subject authority of local authors. As a result, the Committee requested assistance from a member of the UNF English Department, a professor who had worked with a former Dean of the Library to establish the Northeast Florida Literary Heritage Collection as part of the SCUA Rare Books Collection. Unfortunately, minimal collecting criteria had been established and books had been purchased or acquired by several staff members without consulting the Head of SCUA.³⁸ Donations made to the library from local authors and book collectors had been automatically accepted and funneled to SCUA, particularly if the work was signed. This led to bloated fiction and poetry holdings, which needed to be thoroughly re-examined in the context of a rare books collection.

With the assistance of the English professor, the following criteria were created for the Northeast Florida Literary Heritage Collection and local author poetry. The committee determined that to be kept in the non-circulating collection, a work of fiction or poetry must be:

- Published by a major publisher or small (independent) press, not self-published.³⁹
- Reviewed (preferably); however, a review was not required for inclusion.
- A text wherein a major portion of the book takes place in NE Florida/SE Georgia region (as described above).
- Support a UNF Special Collection (such as Civil Rights).
- Support the curriculum of the UNF English Department (regarding local subject matter).

The committee also determined that Northeast Florida Literary Heritage books may be collected in the general circulating collection and need not have a copy in the Rare Books Collection. These books included titles by local authors, published by a major publisher or small/independent press, that do not contain greater Jacksonville content. Notes were made in the bibliographic record so that a virtual collection could be compiled of fiction by local authors from both the rare book and general collections. In total, 131 local author fiction and poetry books were reviewed by the committee and, of those, 105 were deaccessioned, twenty-one were transferred to the circulating collection, and five were kept in SCUA.

The final category of reappraised titles were older books published in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, including classic works of literature or general Florida histories. This group also included imprints of classic poetry, fiction, and non-fiction, as well as multi-volume sets such as the 1910 *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Before deaccessioning any books from this group, the committee checked the UNF catalog for the same or similar titles and viewed entries in WorldCat to see how many copies were available in Florida. They also consulted Hathi-Trust to see what might be freely and digitally available.

³⁸ Originally the criteria for books in the Northeast Florida Literary Heritage Collection were that the author was from Jacksonville, the author lives in Jacksonville, or the book was about Jacksonville.

³⁹ Only a few exceptions were made for self-published biographies with rare local information or by poets with works previously published by small presses.

The major question with this final category became how to deal with books of some financial value that were not within the scope of collecting priorities, as determined in previous meetings. In UNF’s early years, many classics were acquired to start the Rare Books Collection; most of them were old, some being first editions. With space, or lack thereof, being a major consideration in reappraising the collection, the Rare Books Advisory Committee had a long discussion on the value of keeping books simply because they were old. They decided that the original books acquired for the Venture Studies program were part of the history of the institution and would be kept. Donations and purchases made since the 1990s were carefully reviewed for deaccessioning.

Again, the CDC and library liaisons were invited to participate in the decision-making process so there could be a consensus about which titles would be retained, transferred into the general collection, or deaccessioned. After 354 books were reviewed in this category, 268 were retained in SCUA, forty-four were deaccessioned, and forty-two were transferred to the circulating collection.

In all, the committee reviewed 1149 books from the non-circulating collection. Of those, 399 titles (34.7 %) were retained in SCUA, 463 (40.3%) were transferred to the circulating collection, and 287 (25.0%) were deaccessioned (See Figure 1).

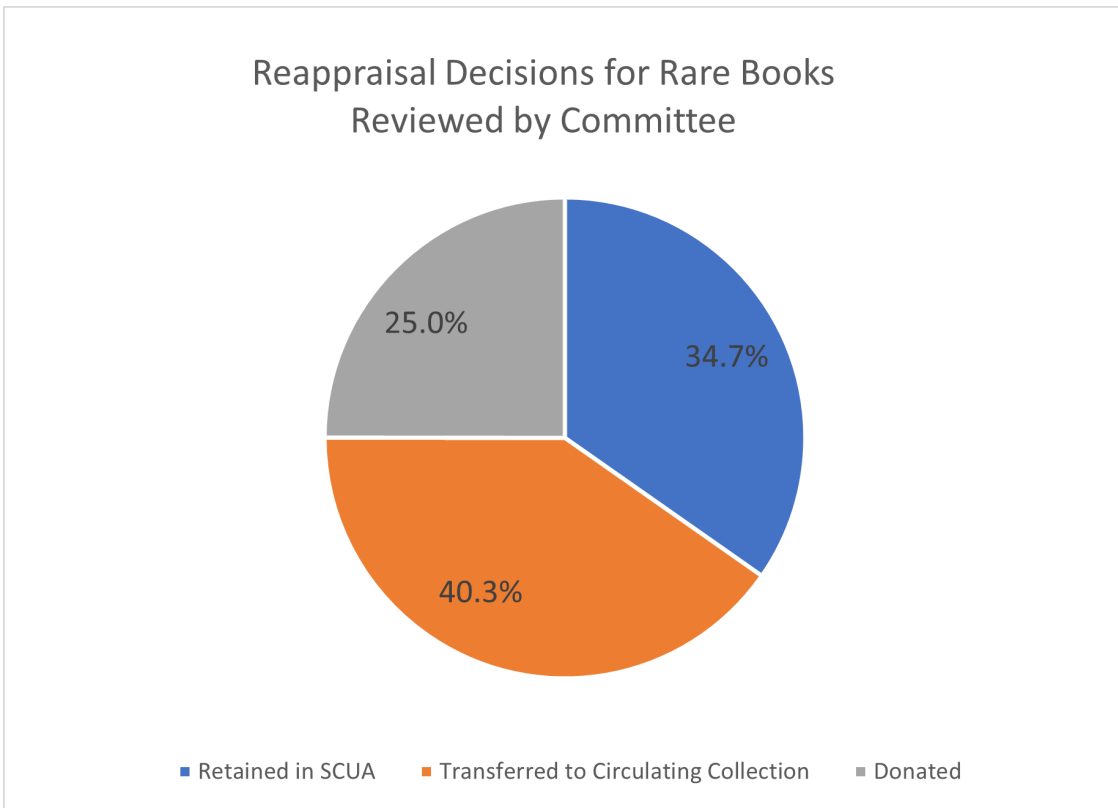


Figure 1. Reappraisal decisions of the UNF Rare Books Collection as determined by the Rare Books Advisory Committee, represented as percentages.

Disposition

After the committee determined which books would be kept by SCUA or transferred into the circulating collection, the rest were deaccessioned, or permanently removed from the library's catalog. The Head of SCUA's next decision was disposition of the materials, which refers to their final destruction or transfer to another institution.⁴⁰ UNF follows specific guidelines for disposal of property as a state institution, and three options were available for books that were deaccessioned from the Rare Books Collection and not transferred into the general collection: (a) determining if they had enough value to auction them, (b) offering them to local non-profit institutions, or (c) disposing of/recycling the books. The Head of SCUA chose to offer duplicated Florida histories and more recently donated or purchased literature classics to local historical societies and libraries, as the books did not have much auction value. Any remaining books were donated to the Friends of the Jacksonville Public Library.

Using the criteria developed by the Rare Books Advisory Committee over the course of its collective work, the Head of SCUA created a flow chart (Figure 2) to assist in the decision-making process, current and future, for review and reappraisal of all books within the Rare Books Collection.

Retrospection

The disruption of workflow during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the larger, library-wide implementation of a new catalog, has slowed the work on the rare book reappraisal project for now.⁴¹ However, the reappraisal and deaccessioning project has left a lasting impression, most notably in the relationship developed between the Resource Description Librarian and the non-circulating collection. She is more comfortable with the collection's contents and nuances and has a better understanding of what SCUA collects and why. In addition, the project gave her a real sense of ownership and participation because it was an inclusive and rigorous process with many hands.

There are still odds and ends in the collection that missed the scrutiny of the Rare Books Committee. However, with their new criteria, decisions to keep or deaccession are now much more easily made and, more importantly, far better justified. The Resource Description Librarian and Head of SCUA plan to move ahead with further reappraisal and deaccessioning projects by performing a complete inventory of the Rare Books Collection, in the hopes of continuing to deaccession materials that do not meet the needed criteria and, therefore, creating further space for future materials.

This is an exciting outcome of the project: collecting new materials is now eminently more possible. In the last year, one very large donation of rare books has been offered to SCUA. By utilizing the flow chart and citing the established collecting criteria, any question of what UNF should accept has been eliminated. These valuable tools also streamlined the process of working with prospective donors and made the experience easier for all involved, including administrators and librarian liaisons.

⁴⁰ Society of American Archivists, *Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning*, 4.

⁴¹ State colleges and universities in Florida transferred their ILS from ALEPH to ALMA/PRIMO in July 2021.

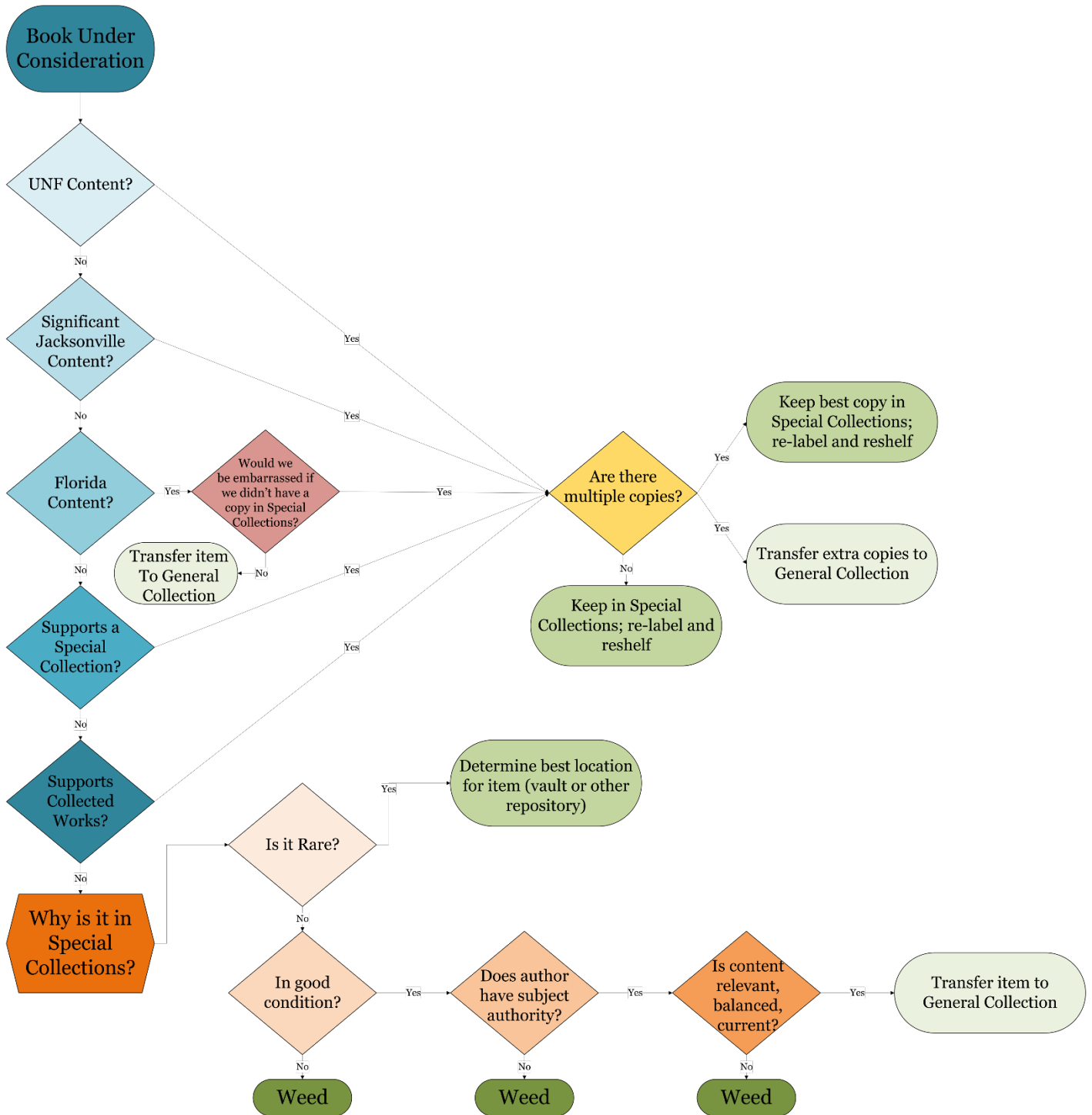


Figure 2. Special Collections and University Archives flowchart for rare book reappraisal.

Finally, on a personal level, the Head of SCUA enjoyed this complex project. It provided her, as a new employee at UNF, the opportunity to interact with heads of departments in the library, while at the same time learning how to work within established library and university policies (such as property disposition). It also was a lesson in how to break down a multi-faceted task into manageable units. This skill set is invaluable to any archives professional. After mastering this type of project management work, the Head of SCUA developed the confidence to move forward with other complicated projects, such as submitting an application for the National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assessment Grant in 2021 (through which UNF was awarded 15,000 dollars) and creating a new online Library Guide for SCUA.

Some of the library administration questioned the wisdom behind basing SCUA's reappraisal project on Marie Kondo's book, at least in theory. However, many of its concepts worked well in the reappraisal and deaccessioning process for UNF's Rare Books Collection. Kondo's logic about treating each book as its own decision point is clearly reflected in the new decision-making flow chart (Figure 2). And personal feelings about these objects are not absent from said chart; for example, one decision point references possible embarrassment, and another requires the decision maker to make more subjective decisions about overall quality.

Furthermore, Kondo's ideas about "looking more closely at what is there" and "choosing what we want to keep, not what we want to get rid of" allowed the committee to focus on the positive aspects of the rare book collection when conducting the reappraisal, and this made a potentially painful deaccessioning process much easier.⁴² When discussing sorting books, Kondo recommended removing all books from the shelves and only putting back what is meaningful.⁴³ In the case of the SCUA Rare Books Collection, this method gave the committee and the Head of SCUA a chance to examine the physical books, become more intimate with the collection by reviewing each title in person, and redistribute the books properly on the shelves with an eye for sustainability. It also provided the opportunity to give the books and shelves a good dusting—a basic preservation measure.

⁴² Kondo, *Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, 41.

⁴³ Kondo, *Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, 87.

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