

Collective Evaluation Assignment: Bronx Community College/C.U.N.Y.

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Collection Snapshot

Bronx Community College's Library is located in Meister Hall, a stone throws away from "New York City's highest natural peak" (Bronx Community College, par.1). The "54 acre" (Bronx Community College, par.1) campus was "established in 1957 after a decade of effort by civic-minded groups in Bronx County" (History of the College, par.1). Meister Hall is named after "Dr. Meister...[B.C.C.'s]...first president" and the former principal of "the Bronx High School of Science" (History of the College, par.1). Bronx Community College has approximately 100, 000 volumes on its shelves (Joann Canales, personal e-mail, May 4, 2009), which is a little meager for an academic library. The library's real strength lies in the volume and variety of items contained in its audio-visual collection.

The Learning Resource Center, which houses the audio-visual collection and serves as a bibliographic instruction hub and computer lab, possesses 3,619 DVDs, 447 VHS tapes, and 139 mediagraphies (Joann Canales, personal e-mail, May 4, 2009). This ancillary department dispenses audio-visual materials to supplement and enlarge the base of knowledge students receive in their classes. For this project, I surveyed the stacks on the bottom floor of Meister Hall and picked a hundred books at random. The books I chose had a range of call numbers from PS 3553. A7894 A17 1998 to PS 3554. O3 C57 2000, and they ran the gamut of American Literature, from the short stories of Raymond Carver (PS 3553. A7894 A17 1998) to the novels of E.L. Doctrow (PS 3554. O3 C57 2000).

Community Analysis

It is no secret that the Bronx contains the poorest congressional district in the city of New York (2004, Gonzalez, pg. 151). District #16 encompasses “the South Bronx, Fordham, and Kingsbridge” (2004, Gonzalez, pg. 151) and Bronx Community College’s 54 acres. But it is equally true that the Bronx has been making ardent strides to improve the lives of its residents, especially in terms of education. Bronx Community College, Hostos Community College, and Lehman College have all played integral parts in improving the educational attainment for Black and Hispanic residents of the Bronx. All three institutions contain a majority of minority students, so progress at these institutions is closely scrutinized and highly polemic.

Bronx Community College’s zip code is 10453. According to the 2000 Census, there were 76,775 residents in 10453. Of those 76, 775 residents, fully 49, 037 were 18 and over, meaning of college-age. In 2000, fully 63% of the population in 10453 were above 18. This means that if the majority of the residents in 10453 are employed, 10453 represents a substantial tax base. Regardless, 10453 is a young zip, as 37% of the residents are 18 years or younger. However you slice it, there is a strong need for an institution like Bronx Community College in zip code 10453 (U.S. Census, 2000).

The Total Undergraduate Enrollment at Bronx College in 2008 was 9, 117. Undergraduate enrollment has steadily been increasing since 2004 when there were 8, 367 Total Undergraduate Enrollees. In four years, Bronx Community College has managed to court the matriculation of 750 more students from in and around the Bronx. Bronx CC is well known for being a jumping-off point for students that come from low-performing Bronx high schools. There is also a substantial immigrant African population

at the school, as well as large numbers of Black, Hispanic, and immigrant Caribbean students (U.S. Census, 2009).

Ground has been broken on the construction of a new library that will integrate the Learning Resource Center and the general collection housed in Meister Hall. The student body is primarily Hispanic; in 2000, there were 46, 041 Hispanic residents in zip code, 10453, or roughly 60% of the residents (U.S. Census, 2000). The campus is in many ways one of the aortas of the Bronx, and will continue to be as matriculation increases and the numbers of adults returning to school also increases. More importantly, B.C.C. is a place of second chances, and a large portion of the student body are non-traditional students, meaning they are not fresh out of high school and yawping their way to a Bachelor's degrees in six years; many of the students at Bronx C.C. have children, full-time jobs, and are extremely focused on obtaining a higher education. Most come to classes on their days off and utilize the library's services on weekends and afternoons.

Methodology

The three most popular criteria for deselecting a title are copyright date, physical condition, and circulation statistics. How the librarian chooses to intertwine these three criteria determines the extent of the intent. It seems only logical then that titles with the most current copyright date automatically get a reprieve, as do books in "working" condition that circulate frequently. Surely, there are valuable books with older copyright dates, and worthless, extremely current books. "There are always exceptions to the weeding guidelines. Local history materials and works by local authors are often unique and difficult to replace. These items should be discarded only after much consideration"

(Dearman & Dumas, 2008, 13). Shortly into any deselection process, most librarians notice that the world inhabited by the collection is a very grey place indeed.

According to Marvene Dearman and Elizabeth Dumas writing in the fall 2008 issue of *Louisiana Libraries* “Louisiana state guidelines for school libraries [K-12] states that collections with an average age of 25 or more years old should be weeded heavily over several years until the average age is closer to fifteen years” (2008, pg. 12). However, what if the collection you are weeding is characterized by its anachronistic nature? Couldn’t zealous weeding inadvertently knock the legs out from under a young collection? The average and mode of the 100 titles selected established whether copyright date became the overarching criteria of deselection, or just one of many.

The average of the copyright date of the hundred books selected was 1965. In terms of the most occurrences, 1972 was the most popular copyright year and the mode: of the 100 titles, 8 had 1972 as their copyright date. The average and mode of the copyright date for the 100 books selected fell well below even the standards that K-12 schools use in Louisiana, a largely agricultural state. Academic libraries have an obligation to offer students the most current resources, but there are bound to be books which get reprieves from weeding because either their pedigree is evident, or the strength of their ideas is essential to currently held beliefs. For example, you wouldn’t necessarily weed a Gutenberg Bible simply because it was printed in the 15th century. Conversely, just because *Kato Kaelin: The Whole Truth* (1995) by Marc Eliot was published pretty recently doesn’t mean it shouldn’t be considered for deselection.

Possibly, it might prove useful to discuss several scenarios for weeding the 100 titles selected; the idea being to determine which scenario is the least invasive to the life

of the collection. For example, if you choose 1994 as the cut-off date that will effectively deselect 65 titles, regardless of their intellectual merit or academic worth. The number runs to 97 if 2004 is used as the cut-off date. It does not seem in the best interest of Bronx Community College to rely too heavily on year as a criteria for deselection because the collection is no spring chicken!

If 1972 was the mode of the hundred books selected, then it would seem that at the least you could justify weeding books before that date. In effect, there are only 17 books which were copyrighted before 1972. Of these 18 titles, the only ones which it would be prudent to keep are, *The Book of Daniel* (1971) by E.L. Doctrow, *Deliverance* (1970) by James Dickey, *The Andromeda Strain* (1969) by Micheal Crichton and *Snaps* (1969) by Victor Hernandez Cruz. Circulation records show that *Deliverance* (1970) was circulated four times. *Snaps* (1969) should not deaccessioned because it is an integral book of U.S. Latino Poetry; *The Andromeda Strain* (1969) was turned into a successful movie and there may be substantial interest at a later date. Moreover, Michael Crichton is a popular contemporary novelist and his books are usually best sellers, etc. *The Book of Daniel* (1971) is a novel which touches on various subjects in American history, especially the execution of the Rosenbergs and McCarthyism.

Table 1: Five Most Popular Copyright Dates, PS 3553-PS 3554

Rank	Year	Occurrences
1	1972	8
2	2002	7
3	1998	5
4	1986	5

5	1969	5
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Access to circulation statistics was granted through ALEPH, the C.U.N.Y.-wide integrated software that powers the OPAC. It provided a window into the usage of the hundred titles selected, and a possible criteria for deselection. Of the hundred titles selected, 46 titles had never been checked out before. Now, this is alarming because in a randomly selected swath of a hundred books at Bronx Community College, almost half of the books have been circulated zero times. This piece of data alone should provide enough justification for an aggressive weeding of the entire collection because “Student achievement as measured by scores on standardized reading and English tests is impacted by a quality school library program. [In fact,] One of the factors of a quality program is the availability of current print resources” (Dearman & Dumas, 2008, 11). The students of Bronx C.C. are just not using the print resources. Taken together, all one hundred titles were circulated 124 times, which is not deplorable for a collection that has more than 100, 000 volumes, but is not anything to celebrate either.

Ultimately, though, a librarian would be hard pressed to deaccession all of the titles that have never been circulated. Doing so would kick to the curb popular titles of sundry persuasions like *The Prince of Tides* (1986) by Pat Conroy, *The Selected Poems of James Dickey* (1998) by James Dickey, *Nine Horses* (2002) by Billy Collins, *The Cardinal of the Kremlin* (1988) by Tom Clancy, and *An Ordinary Woman* (1974) by Lucille Clifton. However, in terms of circulation, it most certainly seems like Bronx Community College could shed at least half of the hundred books selected. The titles mentioned above would probably be retained by any library, but there definitely are some

novels of less repute and cultural currency that could be deaccessioned. For example, *Shogun* (1975) by James Clavell is a two-volume saga written about feudal Japan; but, in terms of cultural currency, it has little brokerage. The same could be said for outdated novels of Cold-War intrigue from Tom Clancy like *Patriot Games* (1987), *The Cardinal of the Kremlin* (1988), and *Hunt for Red October* (1984).

Table 2: Top Five Circulated Books, PS 3553-PS 3554

Rank	Title	# of times circulated
1	<i>Chickencoop Chinaman & Year of the Dragon</i> (1981) by Frank Chin	14
2	<i>House on Mango Street</i> (2000) by Sandra Cisneros	10
3	<i>Drown</i> (1997) by Junot Diaz	7
4	<i>House on Mango Street: Student Packet, 9-12</i> (2000) by Phyllis A. Green	7
5	<i>The Farming of Bones</i> (1998) by Edwidge Danticat	6

From circulation statistics it seemed like writers of color had extreme leverage with the students of Bronx Community College. As stated before, PS 3553-PS 3554 covers American authors but it doesn't seem like a coincidence that the 5 most circulated books were penned by authors of color: Sandra Cisneros, Junot Diaz, and Edwidge Danticat. In fact, the ethnicities of the authors who wrote the five most circulated books are almost identical to the prevalent ethnicities at Bronx Community College (Sandra Cisneros is Puerto Rican, Junot Diaz is Dominican-American, and Edwidge Danticat is Haitian-American). However, Malachi Martin and Nashaat Sayed believe that "weeding policies should not exist to accommodate any one group at the expense of another" (2004, pg. 37) The authors of "Good Grooming: Basic Issues in Weeding and Weeding Policy in Library Collections" write that weeding "is expressly a professional endeavor, borne of the necessities of conserving physical space for additional materials, and the desire to maximize library usage by removing unused items" (Martin & Sayed, 2004, pg. 36)

For many, what's most important in this province of Grey that we call Deselection is the process. First, you must ensure that your criteria are in order; then, and only then, should you take action based on the data associated with that criteria. For this project, copyright date seems to be the criteria which most needed attention, so I based my deselection on getting rid of outdated books which had been clogging the shelves at Bronx Community College for some time now. There are 17 titles published before 1972, but I would only choose to deselect 13 of those leaving four titles which have already been mentioned. My next thought was to deselect titles which had never been checked out before and purging the stacks of their dead weight, but that might blow a gaping hole

in the collection because that would remove another 30 titles. However, many of the titles that had never been checked out before and had a copyright date after 1971 were popular titles, and were “saved” because of their literary merit. For example, Lucille Clifton’s Good New from Earth and Don DeLillo’s White Noise were among the books given a reprieve because of their merit, but many others were not as lucky.

Table 3: Deselected Titles According to Copyright Date

Title	Copyright Year	# of Times Circulated
The Tragedy of Z	1933	0
The Sheltering Sky	1949	0
Marcus: Novel of the Young Apostle	1965	0
Watchboy, What of the Night?	1966	0
New/Selected Poems: Joseph Mason Andrew Cox	1966	2
The Man Who Grew Younger	1967	0
Spring in the this World of Poor Mutts	1968	0
Nova	1968	0
One to Count Cadence	1969	0
The eye-beaters, blood, victory, madness, buckhead, and mercy	1970	0
Self Interviews	1970	0
Life of Touching Mouths	1971	0
Sorties	1971	0
	Total	13

All in all, I would select to deselect 33 titles in total. The books deselected both had a copyright date that was almost criminal and had zero circulation rates; therefore, I am confident of my preliminary assessment in deselecting 33 titles. By deselecting titles that have a copyright date previous to 1972 the average and mode of the copyright date for titles at Bronx Community College will become more current; the titles before 1972 really are just a lot of dead pulp. Following the same mode of utility, I chose to deselect 20 titles which had never been checked out before. I had slight pangs of conscious for

some titles, like *The New Selected Poems of Joseph Mason Andrew Cox (1966)* and two James Dickey titles, especially in lieu of his untimely death. But, progress is painful and streamlining this collection proved more difficult than I thought it would prove. However, this is a process and my choices for deselection sought to trim the fat, sort of speak. In conclusion, even though I made a substantial dent in terms of weeding the Bronx Community College collection, much work needs to be done still. The Resource Learning Center could use a might weeding because many of their titles find themselves in a similar position as the books in Meister Hall.

Table 4: Deselected Titles According to Zero Circulation

Title	Author
The Rivers of Eros	Cyrus Colter
A Teleological Position	Robert Coover
The Terminal Man	Michael Chrichton
Coming Home	George Davis
East of Moonlight	Julia Fields
West of the American Dream	Neil Claremon
Marcella	Marilyn Coffey
Points for a Compass Rose	Evan Connell, Jr.
James Dickey : the expansive imagination, A collection of critical essays	Richard James Calhoun
From Memphis to Peking	Barbara Chase-Riboud
Shogun	James Clavell
The Shadow Box	Michael Cristofer
Whirlwind	James Clavell
Cardinal of the Kremlin	Tom Clancy
Thoughts of an Everyday Woman	Brenda Connor-Bey
Cause of Death	Patricia Cornwell
Seven from Heaven	John Anthony Collins
Kitchen Priveleges	Mary Higgins Clark
The Mulberry Tree	Jude Deveraux
The Narrows	Micheal Connelly
Total	20

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