

**From:** Jackie Leung  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 04, 2019 8:45 PM  
**To:** Amy Johnson <[AJohnson@cityofsalem.net](mailto:AJohnson@cityofsalem.net)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Current library discussions

Hi Amy

Please add this to the April 22 agenda as library items.

Thank you,

Jackie

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

----- Original message -----

**From:** [Dgkosalem@gmail.com](mailto:Dgkosalem@gmail.com)  
**Date:** 4/3/19 5:50 PM (GMT-08:00)  
**To:** Jackie Leung <[JLeung@cityofsalem.net](mailto:JLeung@cityofsalem.net)>  
**Subject:** Current library discussions

Your Name	Dianne Kosboth
Your Email	<a href="mailto:Dgkosalem@gmail.com">Dgkosalem@gmail.com</a>
Message	I am a lover and user of libraries and books. I also respect questions that I have heard regarding present policies at the Salem Library. The disturbing factor that has been repeated in discussions I have been part of, is that management has not been listening to proposals concerning removal of materials or the way to the future. I am asking you, and fellow concil members, to question, review and manage your employees for benefit of all so that citizens do not feel disenfranchised in this arena.

This email was generated by the dynamic web forms contact us form on 4/3/2019.

## SCAN RESOLUTION OPPOSING MASS LIBRARY BOOK REMOVAL

*Adopted by the SCAN Board on March 13, 2019*

WHEREAS, in October, 2018, the management staff at the Salem Public Library ordered librarians to begin a project they called the "Big Weed" to remove many thousands of books from the library collection in advance of the upcoming library renovation project; and,

WHEREAS, before the project was suspended in December, 2018, because of concerns expressed by members of the Salem City Council, over 2,000 books were removed, mostly from the adult nonfiction collection, including many important books of lasting value; and,

WHEREAS, before the book removal project began the collection at the library was already seriously depleted because of aggressive book removal over the past five years that resulted in over 200,000 books removed, an average of about 10% of the collection per year which is twice what professional standards recommend; and,

WHEREAS, our library has a book collection of only 1.6 books per capita as compared to the average for libraries in Eugene, Corvallis, Hillsboro and Beaverton of 2.1 books per capita; and,

WHEREAS, since 1973 our library has been responsible for serving as the major resource library for fifteen smaller community libraries in the Chemeketa Cooperative Regional Library system which serves a combined population of 465,000 people in Marion, Polk, Yamhill, and Linn counties.

WHEREAS, our library's budget for purchasing new and replacement books is deficient — less than half the budget at the Eugene Public Library that serves a population of similar size; and,

WHEREAS, at their meeting on February 13, 2019, the Library Advisory Board voted to recommend to the Salem City Council that the mass book removal project be resumed;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the South Central Neighborhood Association requests that our Councilors support a permanent end to the mass book removal project, and instead support a policy of rebuilding the library book collection to meet the norm for Oregon libraries.

**From:** Jackie Leung  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 27, 2019 6:42 PM  
**To:** Amy Johnson <[AJohnson@cityofsalem.net](mailto:AJohnson@cityofsalem.net)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Concerns about Salem Public Library's "Collection Evaluation"

Hi Amy,

Please add this into April 22 meeting.

Thank you,

Jackie

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

----- Original message -----

**From:** The Romeos <[jeffrey.betsy.romeo@comcast.net](mailto:jeffrey.betsy.romeo@comcast.net)>  
**Date:** 3/8/19 6:12 PM (GMT-08:00)  
**To:** Jackie Leung <[JLeung@cityofsalem.net](mailto:JLeung@cityofsalem.net)>  
**Subject:** Concerns about Salem Public Library's "Collection Evaluation"

Dear Ms. Leung:

I am a constituent of yours and a former employee of the Salem Public Library. I worked at the library for 16+ years as a Senior Librarian in the Adult Services Division, handling a variety of duties during my tenure, including answering reference questions for the public, planning programs, and selecting nonfiction materials for adults. I was also on the Collection Development Committee that provided input for the new Collection Development Policy. I resigned from the library on January 31 of this year due to health issues in my family.

I left the library with a heavy heart, though, as I am very concerned about the direction our new City Librarian is taking. I am writing to you as a former City employee and as the mother of three school-age daughters who will use this library for years to come.

I have several concerns, including the "collection evaluation" project, the numerous unfilled librarian positions, and the removal of the reference desk. The most urgent is the "collection evaluation," so I will address that here. I may contact you in the future about the other issues.

**Major Concern:**

**The new City Librarian, Sarah Strahl, is undertaking a huge "collection evaluation" project without enough replacement book money. In addition, I believe her philosophy of "new and popular" above all else will lead to a possibly irreversible decline in the library's collection.**

## Background:

Until I left my position on January 31, 2019, I was one of the librarians tasked with weeding the adult nonfiction collection. I began work on one of my subject assignment areas, the psychology and philosophy collections. As materials selectors, we received instructions to follow the CREW (Continuous Review, Evaluation, and Weeding) guidelines (called for in the library's Collection Development Policy).

CREW includes subject-by-subject guidelines for withdrawing books from the collection based on use, age, and condition. I also received verbal instructions that the new City Librarian has higher condition standards for the collection than the previous City Librarian. In addition, I was told that we did not want to store any books during the seismic upgrade that would be outdated when they came out of storage. We were also instructed that if we needed to ask if an item should be withdrawn (if it was on the borderline of criteria), then the item should be withdrawn.

I was told that as a selector, I could use my judgment in what to retain. However, I and other selectors knew that our judgment could be questioned at any time. We also knew our work would be checked by the Collection HQ software, library staff, and managers.

Although I had concerns about the collection evaluation, I followed the guidelines I was given, which were presented as a mandate. This led to my removing approximately **50 percent** of the materials from many of the shelves I evaluated. Most of the materials I removed had checked out in the last 1-3 years, within CREW guidelines, but they were just worn out or a little too "old." When CREW guidelines are combined with the City Librarian's new, higher condition standards and extra scrutiny due to the upcoming move, the result is a clear cut or purge of the collection.

Several factors have exacerbated this problem. First, more and more books are available only in paperback format (not hardback), and thus are more likely to become damaged. The library rarely mends paperbacks. Second, several years ago, the Salem Public Library stopped putting plastic protective covers on paperbacks. While there may have been good reasons to do this at the time, one unintended consequence has been a decreased paperback lifespan in the collection. Third, many classic titles, previously available in paperback and easily replaceable, are either now out of print or available only as e-books.

Other selectors were encountering similar situations, and we became very concerned. The adult nonfiction selectors requested replacement money, because at that point, all we had to spend were our very tight new materials budget allocations and a few restricted funds that covered limited subjects (needle arts, American culture, environmental conservation, Norway, Sweden, and the Vikings).

Management searched the various funds and at the 1/9/19 Library Advisory Board meeting, it was announced that \$15,000 would be available for replacement funds. We learned later that that was allocated for adult nonfiction. **This amount of money will buy only 1,500 replacement books @ \$10 each (a paperback price) or 750 books at \$20 each. The adult nonfiction collection numbered 82,048 volumes as of January 23, 2019. This amount of money is inadequate to replace even a fraction of the worn older books in that collection, especially considering the rapid rate of withdrawal. Public records requests have revealed that between October 1, 2018, and January 31, 2019, there were at least 5,271 books withdrawn from the collection (most of these books were adult nonfiction, but there was some adult fiction). Some of these books were lost books, too, and not all would merit replacement, but that figure, compared to the replacement budget, deeply concerns me.** Less than

\$4,000 of the replacement money has been spent so far (a good portion of it by me), but the weed is only beginning.

Library management does not view this as a problem. They state that library users who don't find what they need can ask the library to buy a missing title (called a purchase request), request a title from another library in the Chemeketa Cooperative Regional Library Service, or submit an interlibrary loan request (borrow from a library outside our system). While these are reasonable suggestions to make up for a few missing items, they are not adequate strategies to address losing thousands of books from the collection. Each of these actions also takes at least a week, and often several weeks in the case of purchase requests and interlibrary loan. In addition, interlibrary loan costs at least a dollar.

I have heard this resource sharing philosophy referred to as "just in time" vs. the "just in case." I would argue, however, that in the age of Amazon Prime memberships and free two-day delivery, one or more weeks is no longer "just in time."

This approach also ignores the fact that Salem Public Library is the largest public library between Eugene and the Portland metro area. We are expected to be a resource to surrounding community libraries—as a net lender, not a net borrower. As the public library in the state's capital city, visitors also expect us to have more, not less.

I want to make clear, however, that I am not advocating for the Salem Public Library to retain moldy, smelly, badly damaged, or dangerously outdated materials. Selectors have been weeding their assigned collections all along, as time allowed, even before this initiative began. Weeding books and other materials is a normal activity in libraries. What is not normal, though, is the removal of thousands of books (and perhaps tens of thousands) in a short time due to condition and/or age without an adequate replacement budget.

**Additional Information:**

Here are some links to web pages, articles, and recordings about this issue:

1. *Save Our Books* Facebook Page  
Many concerned citizens are posting on this page, administered by former State Librarian Jim Schepke.  
<https://www.facebook.com/putthemback>
2. *Statesman Journal* Article  
<https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/2018/12/15/salem-public-library-removal-underused-books-halted-january/2209821002/>
3. *Salem Reporter* Articles  
<https://www.salemreporter.com/posts/220/residents-fear-salem-public-librarys-new-policy-could-purge-books>  
<https://www.salemreporter.com/posts/385/salem-library-to-pause-review-another-month-following-lengthy-public-hearing>
4. OPB *Think Out Loud* Radio Interview

Note: Sarah Strahl mentions crowded shelves a few times in this interview. While overcrowding is a valid reason for withdrawing books, Salem Public Library's shelves have plenty of space.

<https://www.opb.org/radio/programs/thinkoutloud/segment/child-workers-homeless-liaison-officer-library-management/>

5. Sarah Strahl's Presentation to Salem City Council Meeting - December 3, 2018  
Her talk starts at about the 5:20 mark. She mentioned replacing materials seven times in her presentation. At the time she gave this presentation, the only money allocated for replacements was in limited subject areas.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQcQ4GhJa3g&list=PLSUQ1gg6M78VKOuqulugWwZJ2MERL1ul8&index=7>
6. Salem Public Library's New Collection Development Policy  
<https://www.cityofsalem.net/Pages/library-use-policies.aspx>
7. CREW Guidelines for Weeding  
<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/sites/default/files/public/tslac/ld/ld/pubs/crew/crewmeth12.pdf>

#### Action Suggestions:

1. Currently, the "collection evaluation" is in pause mode, due to community outcry, and only worn materials are being withdrawn. However, the Library Advisory Board (LAB) has voted to resume the previous practices that led to the heavy withdrawals of books. Please reject the LAB recommendation to resume implementation of the Collection Development Policy when it comes to the City Council, likely at the meeting on **Monday, April 8**.
2. Please also make and/or vote for a Council motion to amend the Collection Development Policy to explicitly state that Salem Public Library's book collection be sized to meet the norm for other Oregon libraries (currently about 2 books per capita — ours is now 1.6), and that book removals be in line with the CREW manual guideline of no more than 5% of the collection per year.
3. Please allocate more money for the library's materials replacement budget to prevent a "clear cutting" of the collection and to ensure that the collection still serves its purpose as stated in the Collection Development Policy's "Scope of the Collection" section:

*The primary responsibility of the Salem Public Library is to serve the Salem community by providing a **broad choice** of materials to meet informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs. [Emphasis added.]*

4. Most importantly, please hold City Librarian Sarah Strahl accountable for her words and actions and ask the tough questions. I have heard "I don't know" too many times in her presentations and testimony. I was always taught, as a reference librarian, that "I don't know" is an unacceptable answer. The correct answer is "I don't know, but I will find out and get back to you with that answer." Please ensure that she does.

I apologize for the length of this letter, but I wanted you to have full information about these issues. The future of our library is at stake. If the percentage of books pulled from the entire library is

similar to what I pulled from my subject assignment areas (without replacement), this library collection may never bounce back.

Thank you for your time and for all you do to represent the citizens of Salem. I would be happy to speak over the phone or buy you a cup of coffee if further discussion would be helpful.

Sincerely,

Betsy Romeo

5962 Dewpointe Street SE

Salem, OR 97306

Cell: 503-871-6632, Home: 503-588-2899

## Ruth Stellmacher

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**From:** Katy Bayless <madisonw@q.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 15, 2019 5:23 PM  
**To:** CityRecorder  
**Subject:** City Council Meeting Discussion of ridding the library of even more books!

Dear Council Members:

I am alarmed to hear that the Salem Public Library has shrunk the number of books in the library by 10% each year for the last 5 years and is now only holding 1.6 books per capita in the library. I am very saddened to hear that the poetry section was eliminated. I am a regular user of the libraries books and prefer to hold a book in my hand rather than read it on a device. As a reader and supporter of the library and its great programs for youth, I urge you not to deplete the library collection any further and in fact I urge you to increase it to the level of other top libraries in the State. I think the collection should be doubled.

Thank you for your consideration,

Katy Bayless  
Salem resident