LawMatters
A Courthouse Libraries BC Program

Retention & Weeding Guidelines

A healthy and reliable legal collection is one that is kept current. Weeding is critical to ensure patrons access accurate legal information when they need it.

Our *Retention and Weeding List* covers all the titles we have recommended. However, there may be materials in your collection purchased independent of our Law Books for Libraries lists. These guidelines will help you to identify those materials and determine which to keep and which to discard.

General Guidelines for Legal Collections

When you are assessing titles, consider these factors as a series of steps in reaching a decision, but remember there is some overlap and give and take.

1. Jurisdiction: Because laws differ across jurisdiction (Ontario vs. BC; USA vs Canada), any titles related specifically to laws/legislation, legal procedure, court process, or court forms must be written for a British Columbian or Canadian context.

2. Currency: Generally, keep things current to within 5 years. However, that timeline can change in either direction depending on the other guidelines on this list as well as availability of materials.

3. Treatment of topic/resource type: Titles that cover topics in a general or theoretical way can be kept longer, as can dictionaries or foundational texts. Texts that provide practical guidance on court processes or procedures need to be kept more current.

4. Topic: Some legal topics see more frequent change than others. Common topics that should be kept current to within 2-3 years include criminal, immigration, family, and those under the jurisdiction of the Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT). Sub-topics include:

Immigration	immigrating to Canada, permanent residency, citizenship, work and study permits, refugee protection, sponsorship and/or sponsorship breakdown.
Family	divorce & separation, child custody, child & spousal support, property division, child & youth protection, common-law relationships.
Criminal	Policing, criminal procedure, evidence, anything covered by the criminal code (e.g. assault, money-laundering, theft, etc).
CRT	Business & not-for-profits (societies), Strata issues, motor vehicle accidents, small claims, related process, procedure & forms.

5. Your library and surrounding community: space limitations, community needs, proximity to a Courthouse Library, etc.

These guidelines are summarized in the following table.

WEEDING GUIDELINES	KEEP	DISCRETION NEEDED	WEED
Jurisdiction	Focus on BC and/or Canada.	Older, unique items with a BC focus.	Procedural material from outside of Canada.
Currency	Published within the last 5 years.	Foundational or theoretical law topics. Specifics of topic do not change.	A new edition has been published, or a new title on a law topic is available.
Resource Type and Treatment of Topic	Dictionaries and theoretical text providing systemic overview. Survey material that provides a topic overview.	Dictionaries and theoretical text that were published more than 5 years ago. Older material that provides social, historical or political perspective.	Non-current procedural material that provides practical guidance on legal process.
Topic	Published within the last 2 - 3 years: Criminal, Family and Immigration Law, Civil Resolution Tribunal	Theoretical material in Criminal, Family or Immigration may not reflect recent changes in the law.	Wills, Estates and Personal Planning published before 2014. Probate Forms published before 2021.
Your Local Community	What you have space for and what your community wants.	You can't get it elsewhere.	Material your community doesn't use.

A Note About Primary Legal Sources

Primary sources in a legal context refer to materials such as legislation and caselaw. If you have primary legal sources at your library and are wondering if you should retain or weed them, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- BC and Canada legislation is available online.
    - BC Laws
    - Justice Laws
- Caselaw can also be found online at https://www.canlii.org/en/
- CLBC has a robust collection of primary law sources in our print and digital collections. If you or a patron needs access to a primary law source, please feel free to contact our reference services at librarian@courthouselibrary.ca.

Need Help?

If you are unsure whether a title in your collection should be weeded, please contact Rachel or Megan at lawmatters@courthouselibrary.ca with the title (or a list of titles) and we will make recommendations on a case-by-case basis.