



Western Regional Storage Trust

2019 WEST Assessment – Deselection Study

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1 Introduction

One of the major benefits WEST offers its members is access to trusted archives of scholarly print journals, which in turn is used as a reference point to support local deselection projects to reduce the footprint of their on-campus print collections. These projects allow member institutions to reallocate space in their libraries to support new collections and other, non-collection library and campus priorities. The WEST collection model incorporates both the value of persistent electronic availability and the importance of meticulous physical validation, providing members with the opportunity to effectively manage local collections of all risk levels.

WEST asks members to report on their deselection activities each year to help measure the impact of the program and how having access to these reliable archives shapes local collection decisions. All deselection information is self-reported by WEST member libraries. While reporting deselection statistics to the WEST project team is highly encouraged, the reality is that not all institutions participate in this yearly activity. Because of this, all of the data reported below should be considered a low estimate of total deselection activity across WEST and serves to illustrate the ways member institutions are operationalizing WEST's goal to facilitate space reclamation in its member institutions' facilities.¹

2 Participation

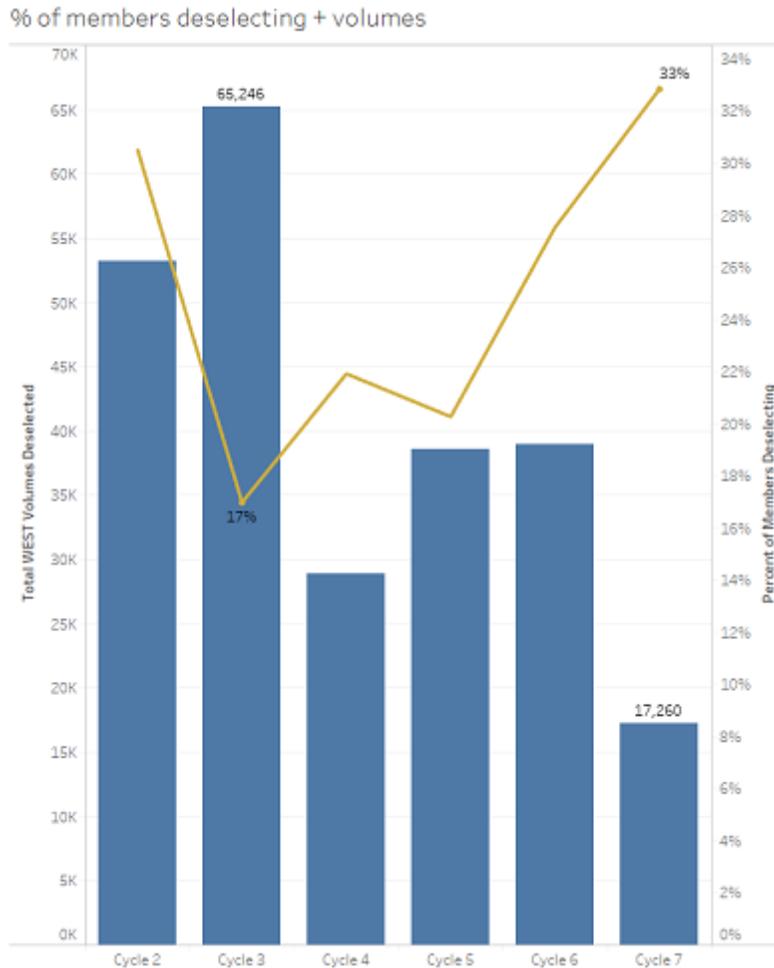
Total WEST membership was relatively stable during Cycles 4-7. During this time the number of institutions reporting deselection projects has risen, with one third of the total WEST reporting membership engaging in at least some deselection activities during Cycle 7 (FY2018). When asked about local deselection projects in the 2019 WEST member survey, nearly 70% of respondents reported that their institution had deselected journals in the last two years (Q30, p 21).²

3 Deselection over time

Several institutions have reported engaging in deselection projects targeting JSTOR titles, with a significant number of JSTOR-related deselection projects occurring in Cycle 2. One institution reported a one-time large-scale deselection project during Cycle 3 (over 2,400 titles representing over 65,000 volumes). Cycles 4-7 show relatively steady rates of deselection, though Cycle 7 has a much lower ratio of volumes to titles, indicating that institutions have potentially completed significant portions of their 'low hanging fruit' with regards to titles with deep backfiles. This bears monitoring as WEST gathers statistics on future Cycles' deselection activities to determine whether this is a trend.

¹ For additional visualizations of Cycles 2-7 deselection statistics please see: <https://public.tableau.com/profile/western.regional.storage.trust#!/vizhome/WESTDeselectionCycles2-7/Membershipanddeselectionparticipation>

² As of January 2020, WEST is gathering statistics for Cycle 8 activity (FY2019).



4 Deselection by WEST Archive Type

Where specified, members reported performing the bulk of their deselection on titles designated as Bronze, with the majority of deselection activities taking place during Cycle 3 (largely by a single institution). However, this is not necessarily due to a high level of confidence in the WEST Bronze archives, but rather is indicative of the importance of electronic availability as a factor in physical collection management decision making (Bronze titles are digitally preserved in Portico or CLOCKSS, or are available through JSTOR, and are thus considered to be the lowest-risk titles in the collective collections). In the 2019 member survey, respondents indicated that “perpetual access e-availability of the journal” is the most important factor taken into consideration when making deselection decisions and that the title being “archived as WEST Bronze” was of the lowest importance (Q36, p 23). Participants in one of the 2019 assessment general focus groups also discussed deselection, with a participant noting that “We were quite a bit more likely to look at stable electronic access first before we looked at reliable shared print archiving in making deselections decisions because we were concerned about immediate accessibility” (p 39). Silver and Gold archives have traditionally been associated with significantly less deselection activity than Bronze, presumably because of the lack of reliable full-text digital archives, though the proportion of deselection activities that are taking place on titles designated as Silver or Gold has been more significant in recent years than when the WEST program was relatively new and the reliability and trustworthiness of the archives had not yet been proven.

Not all institutions that engage in deselection activities track the WEST archives associated with each title they are removing from their collections. Respondents to the 2019 member survey largely reported that while they do take WEST commitments into consideration when making deselection decisions (Q31, p 21), they do not distinguish between WEST archive types (Q32, p 22). As stated in the 2019 WEST Assessment report, “this bears further investigation to determine whether this indicates a high degree of trust in the integrity of WEST archives of all types, a high degree of trust in the availability of electronic surrogates for Bronze titles, or if this is expediency in the face of short project deadlines” (p 21). Interestingly, even though the majority of survey respondents whose institutions engage in deselection activities indicated that they take WEST commitments into account while reviewing titles, their reported deselection activity does not reflect this, with cumulative deselection rate outstripping WEST deselection rates. One explanation for this discrepancy is that institutions are not consistently tracking which deselection decisions are associated with WEST archives.

Where members have reported their reliance on WEST archives for making these decisions, it is evident that behaviors have shifted over time from a focus on Bronze materials in early Cycles to a larger reliance on Silver and Gold materials in recent Cycles. Bronze materials still account for a plurality of deselected volumes, but in Cycle 7 represented the smallest share of deselected titles, indicating that the pool of Bronze titles has shrunk considerably and institutions may be close to “finishing” Bronze deselection at the same time that WEST is “finishing” Bronze archiving.

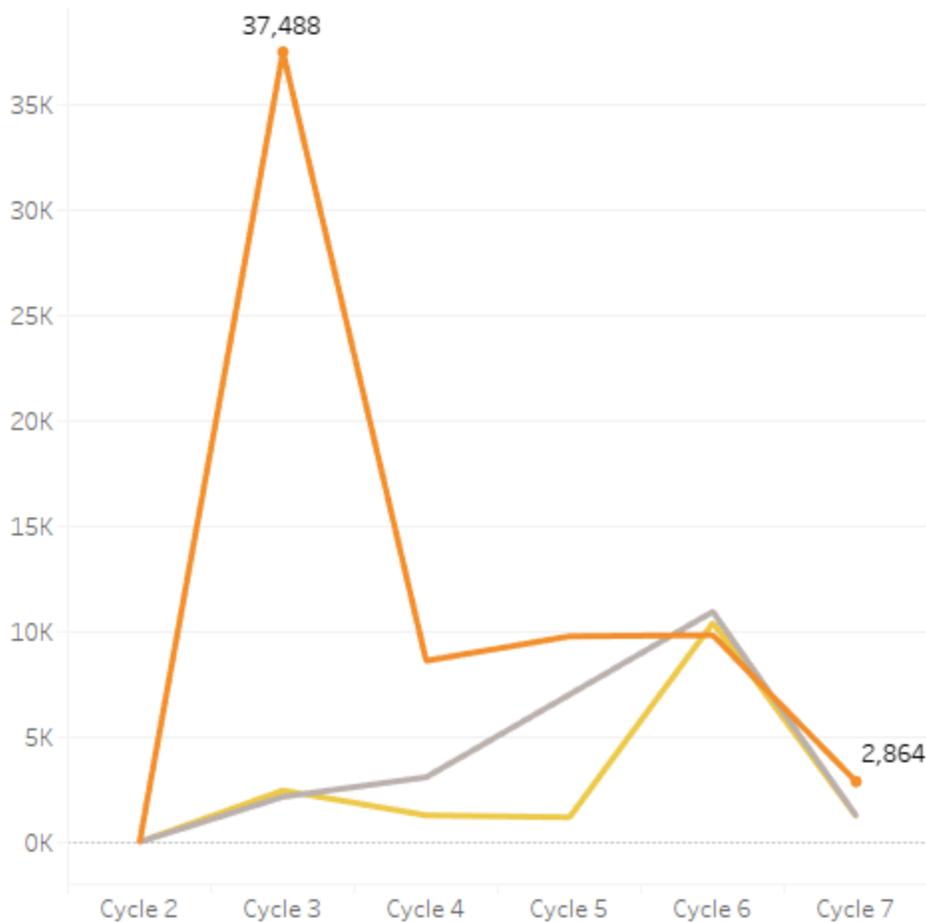
5 Space reclamation

Members report deselecting over 800,000 volumes in Cycles 2-7, 242,000 of which are reported to be associated with WEST archived materials. The space savings these totals represent are significant: over 64,000 assignable square feet (ASF), with over 19,000 ASF associated with deselections made against WEST-archived materials (equivalent to the space needed for 542 seats for users). As of 2016 WEST had archived 500,000 volumes, equivalent to 40,000 ASF, or 1,143 seats for users. This is a decidedly conservative estimate of potential space savings across WEST, as it does not take into account the level of duplication for these volumes.

6 Non-archive holder case study

One member institution has consistently reported their deselection activities each year, and can be used as an exemplar for this activity. This institution executed a large scale deselection project during Cycle 3, deselecting over 37,000 volumes that had been archived elsewhere in WEST. Cycle 6 saw a sizeable increase in this institution’s deselection of Silver- and Gold-archived materials: again, the data do not indicate the reasoning behind the decision to focus on Silver- and Gold-archived materials, so further investigation is needed in order to determine if these deselections were made on the strength of the validation efforts of the WEST Archive Builders. This shift in focus could also reflect the broader picture of unarchived materials in WEST: analysis shows that there is a rapidly diminishing number of titles that could be archived as Bronze, and WEST could complete Bronze archiving in Cycles 10 & 11. WEST has successfully targeted the “low-hanging fruit,” the titles which are broadly available and have trusted digital surrogates, and will need to pivot to focusing on higher-risk titles that have little or no electronic availability in the coming years.

WEST volumes by archive type



In total, including both WEST and non-WEST materials, this institution has deselected nearly 110,000 volumes from Cycle 3 through Cycle 7. This represents early 8,800 ASF, or 251 seats.³

7 Conclusion

While there are a variety of factors WEST members take into account when making deselection decisions, it is clear that there are significant space savings being achieved in local libraries through these activities. Responses to questions in the 2019 WEST member survey about local deselection activities indicate that this is an activity that a large number of members engage in, even if they are not necessarily reporting yearly statistics, and one they plan on continuing for the next several years. From the statistics that are reported, a trend has emerged that indicates that deselection of materials archived as Bronze has slowed in recent years while at the same time deselection of materials archived as Silver and Gold is increasing. It may bear further investigation to identify the many different factors that support deselection decisions, and what role WEST archiving practices play in these projects.

³ For additional visualizations related to this case study please see: <https://public.tableau.com/profile/western.regional.storage.trust#!/vizhome/Non-archiveholderdeselection-Cycles2-7casestudy/Titles>