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## THE HALF-LIFE AND OBSOLESCENCE OF LITERATURE: AN EFFECTIVE JUDGEMENT TOOL FOR WEEDING-OUT LIBRARY COLLECTION

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**Abstract:** *This paper develops a bibliometric analysis of journal Literature in the subject of Education in order to determinate the Half-Life and Obsolescence of this field of knowledge. Generally for weeding, libraries follow the criteria like use or circulation, physical condition and accuracy of information. But apart from the above criteria's one another scientific criteria is useful for weeding and i.e. Half-Life and Obsolescence of Literature, which is reflected in this study. Total 12132 journal citations from 256 doctoral dissertations belongs to various Indian universities are consulted under study to derive the half-life of journals in the subject education. It is concluded that the researchers use more of current periodical literature as compare to previous one. The half-life calculated through this study is a base for librarians to manage their collection.*

**Keywords:** *Weeding out strategy, Half-life and Obsolescence, Education, Journal Literature.*

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### **Introduction:**

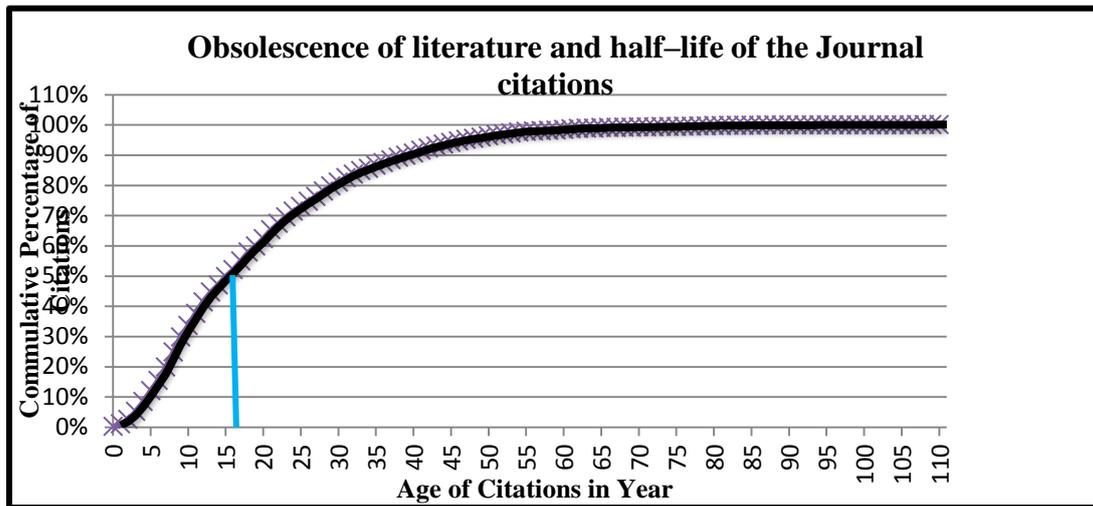
Collection development is a continuous and an important process found in each types of libraries. Though term collection development includes systematic selection and procurement of useful documents but apart from this Weedingout an appropriate collection is also necessary part of collection development activity. Through this important activity libraries can maintain their collection up to date by discarding obsolete, damaged, and unused books from the stacks. Weeding not only survive the space but also keep the collection lively and healthy for its users. Weeding saves the time of the users by providing greater accessibility to the collection. The weeding has the implications to both the fourth and fifth law of library science formulated by Dr. S.R. Ranganathan. It is not mandatory for libraries to weed out its collection after fix period but as per the convenience libraries can perform this task to provide better library services to its users. There are so many terms which can be identified as synonymous term for Weeding and those are Deselection, Collection, renewal, Collection, re-evaluation. Harrod's Librarian Glossary and Reference Book edited by Prytherch defines weeding as, "discarding from stock, books which are considered to be of no further use (Prytherch, 2009).

### **Criteria for Weeding Library Material:**

The most important part of weeding out policy is to draw the criteria for weeding library material. The criteria for weeding the documents could be varied from library to library but after evaluating in terms of its significance, use and current nature of content libraries makes the decisions about weeding or not. The weeding decisions becomes more easier with the criteria's like relevance of the content; its currency; physical condition to decide for weeding or a replacement; whether it is the single copy for reference and the circulation history etc. Apart from these things libraries should identify the "core collection" to exclude them from weeding which accounts for permanent use by their students, research scholars and faculty and also the special or exclusive collection, rare books those brings identity to the library. Some times curriculum is changed, in such circumstances the relevant documents may discard from the library. The earlier editions of reference books when the latest editions are replaced, back volumes of journals and newspapers, unless otherwise they are recommended for retaining in the collection for reference purpose or historical data. Superseded editions whose contents are no longer relevant; duplicate copies of less used titles; materials that contain outdated information; and single copies of materials that have not circulated within last five years should be discarded from the library. The above practices of weeding out documents are also supported by other criteria i.e. to calculate the half-life or obsolescence of literature. This scientific technique helps to take the decisions about weeding out documents.

### **Obsolescence of Literature:**

The term obsolescence frequently founds in the research related to bibliometrics and citation analysis studies. The term Obsolescence has been defined as the 'decline over a period of time in validity or utility of information'. In other words, it is also defined as 'decreasing value of functional and physical assets from technological change rather than deterioration'. (Gunjal&Sangam, 2010). Obsolescence studies helps to librarians to identify the use of periodical and other literature. Citation analysis by the age of the cited documents denotes the useful life of documents. This period of citations of the journal articles is referred to as 'half-life' of periodicals or often quoted as 'obsolescence of the literature'. The half-life of literature used for any study in a particular discipline depends on the number of years respectively needed to satisfy one half of all the literature cited on the subject; or one half of all the citations made to the literature in the current year. Following table which is a part of result concerned to doctoral research in library and Information Science. This data set derived from the 12132 journal citations appeared in the 256 doctoral dissertations of subject Education. These theses were belonging to 38 Indian universities and the data is retrieved through Shodhganga Repository of Inlibnet. Following table indicates how scientifically obsolescence of literature can be derive .



**Fig.No. 01. Obsolence of Literature and Half Life of Journal Citations**

Table No.01 denotes that the entire journal citations are arranged by descending order of journal publication years and the half of the citations are calculated in the Table No. 01. Year **1997 found as half-life** year of the journal citations under study. Cumulative 6314 journal citations (52.08%) were calculated concerned to half-life year out of total 12132 journal citations. It helps to conclude that 16 year is half-life of the journal literature.

The above data set found helpful for taking decisions of weeding out library journals. Though scientific journals are not weeded out from the library but with the help of obsolescence or half-life year those journals published before half-life year can be systematically replaced with other place. The stacks can be kept open for those recent journals which are published after half-life year. Within the above data set of subject Education, journals published in or before year 1997 can be systematically kept behind the curtains to give easy access for the recent journals to the users.

**Conclusion:**

Weeding of library collection is an arduous task for the library community but to make collection healthy for the users, weeding is an indispensable activity. Though the situation of space constraints in the library often pressing for weeding the library materials, many libraries are not coming forward to perform this important task of the library management due to various reasons. No uniform criteria found for the weeding out library material and the libraries do this task as per the circumstances demand. Along with routine adopted criteria's of weeding out library material the obsolescence criteria should also take into consideration by the libraries for systematic weeding of library collection.

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