

We have too many books or not enough book shelves. The overflow line a bench by the south window, some shelves in a cupboard above the desk, and space in a cupboard over the raised oven. I have been determined to weed out the books we do not use or need, but this goal has been undermined by the other quality we attribute to our books—"want." So, volumes that I neither need or use often remain due to that third criterion.

There are some solutions that do not involve destruction of books. I could give them away, offer them to the library sales, or at least, recycle them. But, it is so hard to do.

I have college textbooks lining one shelf. I should get rid of them, but once in a while, I look up some event in history and appreciate sitting down with a volume that I once read through and through during a college class and now, discovering that I still find it useful. I suppose, though, I could just Google my question instead. But, there is something meaningful about opening a heavy old book, going to the index in the back, and searching for the topic I wish to research. For this reason, too, I have never been much interested in Kindles or e-books. Part of the joy of reading is actually holding the book in one's hands, smelling the paper and ink of this physical copy, dog-earing a page now and then--as long it is a book that belongs on our shelves, not someone else's. I would miss that reading from a screen.

There are lots of books on our shelves that will never be read by us again. So, why is it hard to get rid of them? I think if I could just give them away, it would be okay. Because, then I could borrow them back if I decided that, for some obscure reason, I wanted to read them again. Most people, though, have no interest in acquiring books that have overrun our space.

I hope I soon develop the courage to conduct a thorough weeding out of the least used of our books. But, I am not holding my breath. Stay tuned for developments.