Hello and thank you for stopping by my poster presentation about our Reference Collection reorganization. My name is Elizabeth Davidson, and I am the Associate Director and Head of Public Services for Hoover Library at McDaniel College. For those who are not familiar with us, McDaniel College is located in beautiful Westminster, Maryland, about 40 minutes west of Baltimore.

As part of my duties as Head of Public Services, I oversee the Reference Collection at the library. The collection is located in one of the heavily used seating areas on our first floor. Prior to my arrival at McDaniel, the collection had not been assigned standards for purchasing or weeding, and consisted of a combination of traditional reference texts such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, citation style guides, and so on; books that should have been in the circulating collection due to their particular subject focus and specificity; and large encyclopedic and index sets that absorbed a large amount of shelf space.

By 2021, it had long been one of my goals to reduce the size of the reference collection. The reasons for this goal were twofold: first, to improve student engagement with books that should have been circulating, as they would be most beneficial if they were checked out for slow perusal, and second, to reduce the footprint of the reference collection itself. Our first floor is often our busiest and most social floor; the seating consists of both soft seating and open tables where groups tend to gather for work. Because reference stacks extended into the seating area, the area for traveling between chairs and tables was narrow, and not easily navigable for students using walking support devices such as crutches, walkers, or wheelchairs.

Once we decided to move forward with the project, there were three stages of preparation before we could begin deciding how to address the collection itself:

1. First, we assessed the in-house usage statistics of the collection to ensure that books that saw significant traffic were preserved in the reference stacks, as the community was already demonstrably engaging with them. This was largely limited to our citation guides and copies of the DSM-5.
2. Second, we developed a set of standards for how the collection should be assessed on a book-by-book basis. This included:
   1. Single books that were not ‘pure’ reference (pure reference being volumes such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, style guides) were to be moved into Circulation for more expanded student use.
   2. Multiple volume sets of four or more were to go to compact shelving as in-house use only, unless they were to be weeded or kept in the Reference section for an extenuating circumstance. This significantly reduced the area absorbed by the collection and moved lower use texts to a floor where they would not impact student space use.
   3. Editions which had already been replaced by newer volumes were to be weeded.
   4. Editions with outdated information were weeded and replaced as needed.
   5. Books which were both pure reference and had limited runs of volumes (e.g. not 4 or more) remained in the reference section.

From these standards we created a weeding/relocation slip that would be inserted in different volumes to indicate each text’s future location. Each librarian was provided with slips in a different color, and then assigned to assess subject areas for which they were the liaison. For example, our STEM librarian received red slips and she was responsible for works in the collection that related to math and the sciences; as the liaison for gender studies, international cultures, and military sciences, I was responsible for assessing texts in those areas, and used purple slips to indicate my assessment decisions; and so on. The different color slips meant that if there was a question about why a certain volume was being moved, withdrawn, or retained in the reference collection, we knew which librarian to ask about the decision.

1. Third, we developed a timeline by which the library staff were to finish tagging their assigned reference sections for retention, relocation, or withdrawal, so that our Technical Services team could take over the process and begin cataloging, moving, withdrawing, or sending volumes for repair.

By the end of our work, we were able to remove an entire range of shelves and shift our DVD collection a full two ranges back from the seating area. We were also able to transfer our popular section, formerly relegated to a single bay against a wall further back on the first floor, to the four outward facing bays that faced the newly expanded seating area.

The transition of the popular section to this space has allowed us to place the books and their bright cover designs face-out to draw student attention. In the past several years we have worked toward expanding the collection in ways that support student recreational reading as well as academic research. We have also focused on books relevant to current challenges in their lives: mental health, dealing with the current events of the world, and practical resources like cookbooks for cooking on a student budget, applying for jobs, and managing their money.

We were also able to use the additional space to increase the seating next to the remaining reference collection, and to spread the furniture out further to encourage improved ADA navigability.

In numbers, our results were:

* A 12% increase in seating area for communal workspace
* Approximately 600 volumes made available for circulation
* Approximately 250 volumes withdrawn due to outdated information, resulting in a refreshed collection
* 1329 volumes (approximately 55% of the collection) moved to compact shelving for more efficient storage
* 400% increase in shelf space for the Popular collection

While it has not been a year since the project was completed, we have anecdotal evidence that the space is increasingly used by our student body. We hope to see a statistically significant increase in circulation of our Popular collection once we have had more time to accrue additional data.

Overall, the reference collection has become more navigable with the removal of less used, outdated, and relocated texts, and the space itself has become more accessible to our community!