

Prioritize Collections Without Losing Your Mind!

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The Dilemma

Your institution has an emergency plan – great! But you have 14 million collection items spread out over multiple buildings and departments. How do you prioritize collections in case of an emergency?

What Librarians Say to You:

- “My collections are too big to prioritize!”
- “Everything is the highest priority!”
- “I can’t choose one thing over another!”
- “My collections are the most important in the Library!”
- “It’ll take too long to finish!”

The Conservator / Preservation Librarian/ Administrator Needs A Tool That Is...

- Simple to conduct
- Unbiased and impartial for all parties
- Quantitative (numbers not feelings)
- Simple to compute
- Something that is “map-able” (create map location(s) of collection)

What I Came Up With

Series of Yes and No Questions

- Y=0 / N=1
- “Maybe/It Depends” = 0.5

Add Additional Collections Score

- Overall rating scaled 1-3, with 1 being the HIGHEST priority

Total Each Collections’ Overall Score

- The LOWER the score, the HIGHER the priority
- Color code each score and map the locations on collections map

How I Did It

Step 1

Ask your librarian/ collection manager to group collections by call number/ shelf/ range.

Step 2

Have them fill out the Priority Worksheet; each line in the Worksheet should have one collection group (see Worksheet sample below).

Step 3

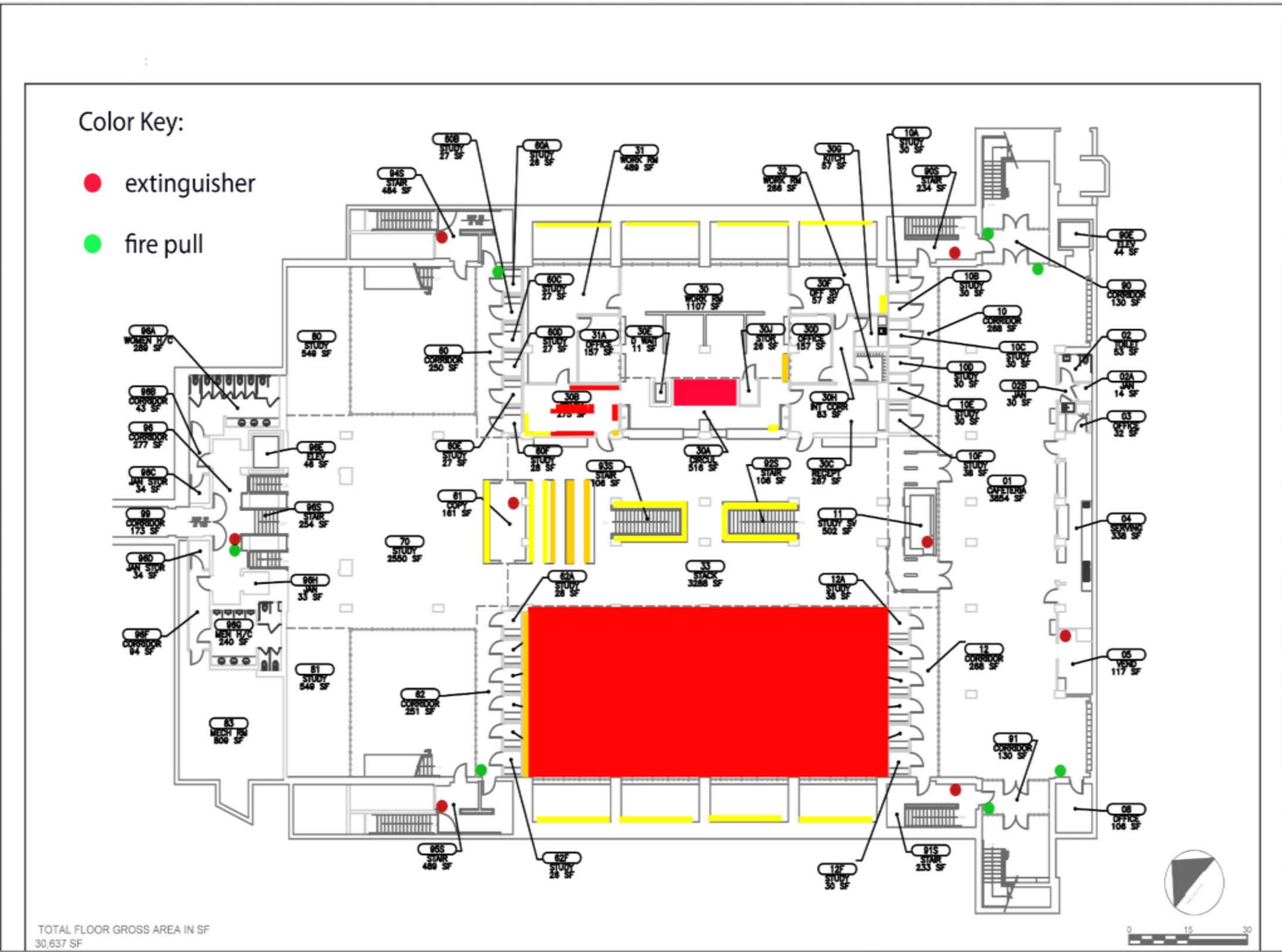
Go through the questions with the librarian/ collection manager and score their answers.

Step 4

Tabulate the scores and sort by total score, lowest to highest. The result will look similar to the Worksheet example below.

Collection/ Item	Vital Records?	High Importance to Readers? Collection?	Replacements Difficult to Get?	Is Salvaging Preferable to Replacing?	Lack of Inventory Intellectual Control?	High Monetary Value?	High Scholarly Value?	Related to Bibliographic Control?	Organizational Information?	High Artistic/ Intrinsic Value?	Format Difficult to Salvage?	Materials Not Owned by Yale Library?	Priority Level (1,2,3)	Priority Score
PK1-6821 South Asia	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.5	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	6.0
PL2501-3518 Southeast Asia (3 sections)	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.5	8.5
PL3521-3518 Sino-Tibetan and Burma	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.5	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.3	8.8
DS 520-689 Southeast Asia	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	9.0
Law-Indonesia-KNW1-4990 +KN* KNW, KNS	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	9.0
Law-Vietnamese +KP* KP, KPW	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	9.0
JQ1 South and Southeast Asia	1.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.0	9.5
BL 1000-2370 Asian Religions	1.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.5	10.0
BP Islam, Bahism, and Theosophy	1.0	0.0	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.5	10.5
BQ Buddhism	1.0	0.0	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.5	10.5
DS1-35.2 Asian History	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.0	10.5
DS 221-498.8 South Asia	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.0	10.5
PL4601-4890 Dravidian	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.5	11.5
Law-India-KNS1-4999	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0	13.5
JV 8490-8759 Asian em/immigration	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0	14.5
Law (LC - K) - KBP (Islamic Law)	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0	15.0
Education (LC - L)	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0	15.0

What it Looks Like When You’re Done



Want to talk to me at AIC about the Prioritization Worksheet?



You Can Use It Too! Check it out!
Scan the QR code below to download the tool and directions. Feedback welcome!

