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# How weeding adds value to library collections: Weighing the cost of weeding and the cost of keeping books

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# How weeding adds value to library collections: Weighing the cost of weeding and the cost of keeping books

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## The Cost of Weeding

### INTRODUCTION

A collection left unassessed is a missed opportunity to add value, and real cost savings, to the collection. Santa Clara University conducted a reference weeding project in 2013/14; library staff reviewed and relocated over 7,800 titles (18,092 volumes). Goals were to make the reference collection more relevant to current research needs and to redesign the library's first floor in order to create more high-demand user space.

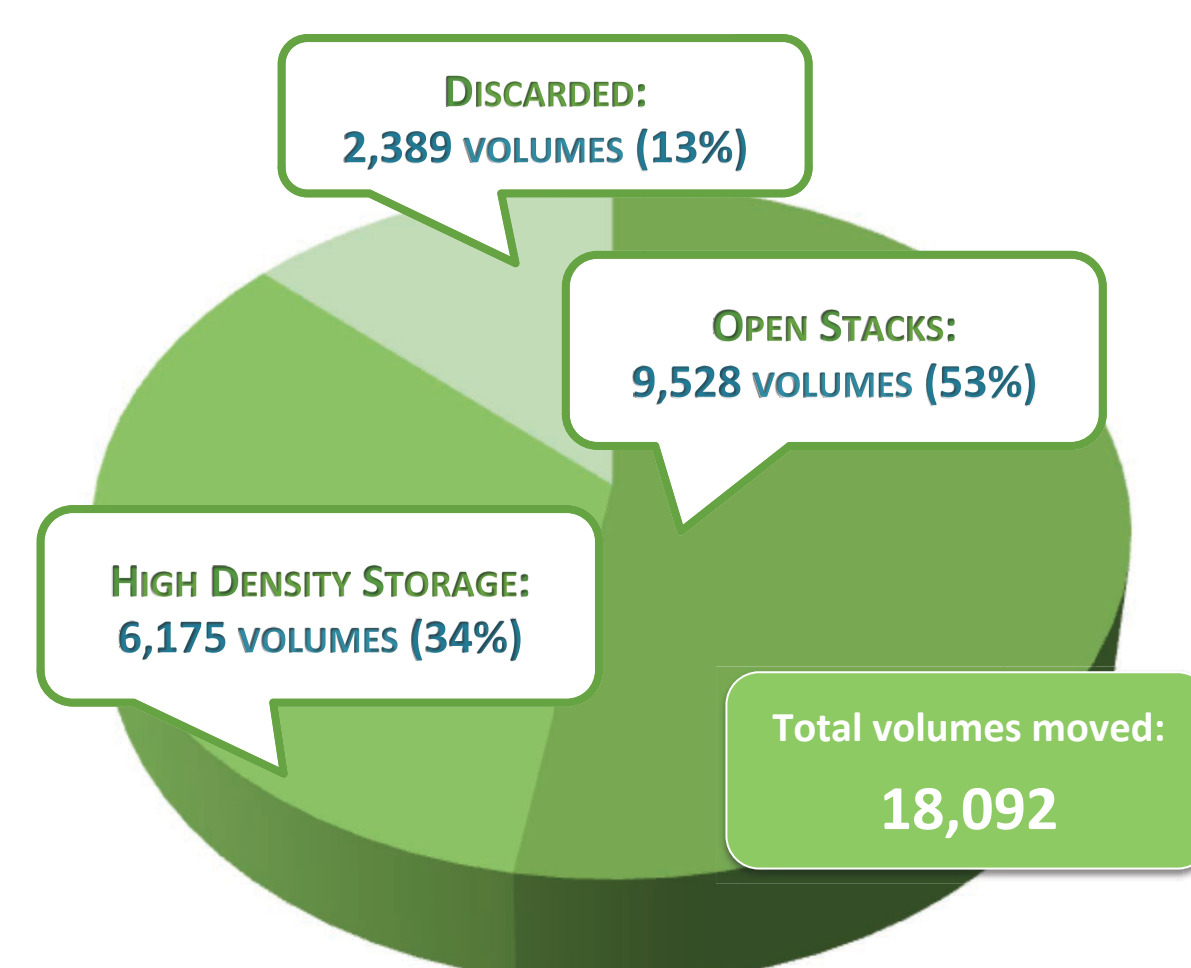
Librarians began the project by reviewing this collection that occupied open shelving in prime, first-floor space. Selectors could choose to: 1) move a reference book to other open shelving, 2) move to high density storage (on site and easily retrievable), or 3) withdraw. No information concerning the cost of these decisions was discussed or presented. No circulation data were available since these books did not circulate; limited "in house" use data were available.

As shown in the pie chart below, Librarians overwhelmingly chose to keep reference books and relocate them to open shelving, the most expensive

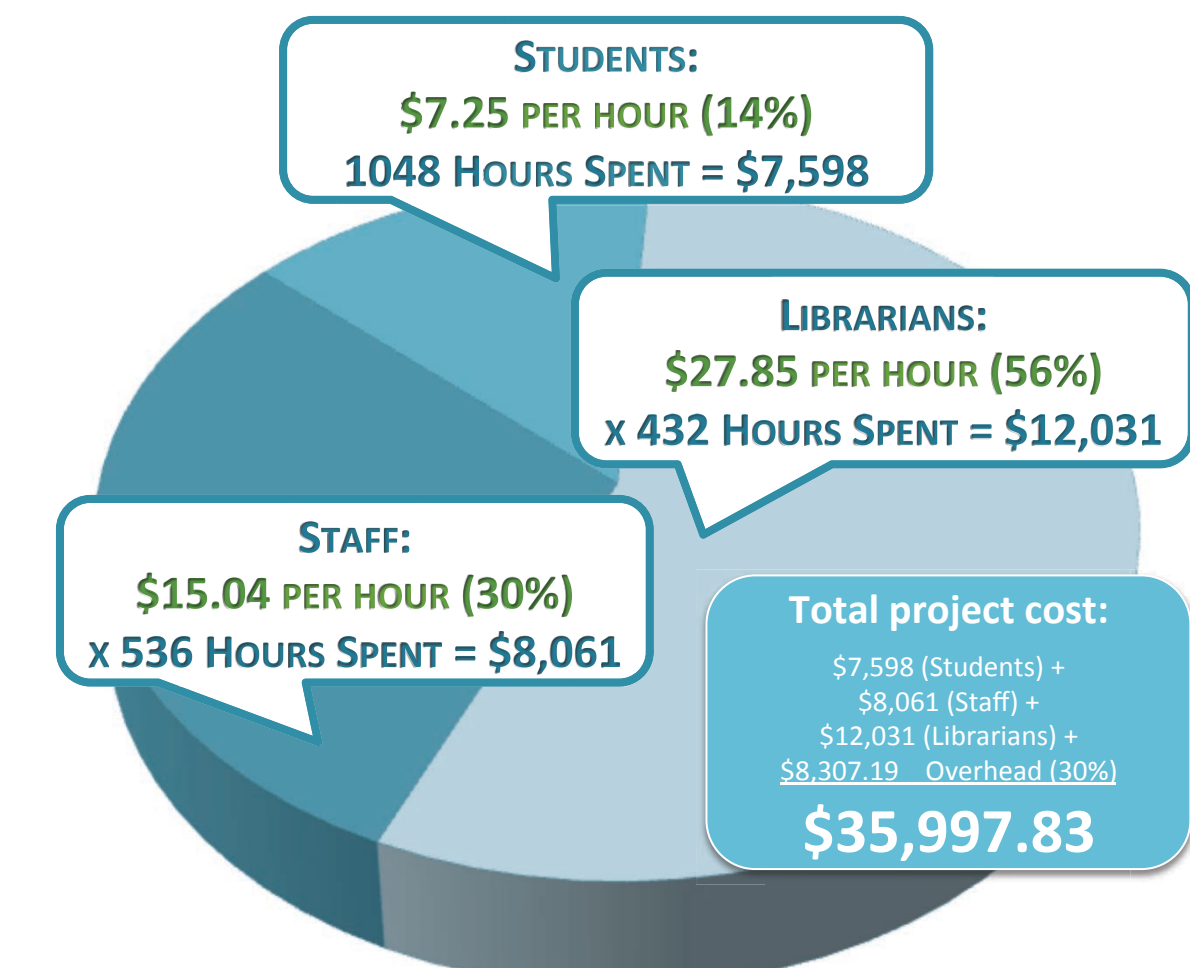
type of access. Just over 50% of all volumes were moved to open stacks. Only 13% of reference books were discarded. The cost of reviewing over 7,800 titles was calculated at approximately \$4.60 per volume, based on national salary averages, multiplied by the amount of time each group spent on this project. As shown in the table, the annual cost of keeping a book in open shelving (in 2009) was approximately \$4.26, while keeping a book in high-density storage was approximately \$0.86 (Courant and Nielsen). If updated to 2014 dollars, these costs would be approximately 2% higher.

Our relocation data demonstrate the value associated with weeding AND high density storage. The total cost of the review and relocation project, estimated at nearly \$36,000, will be recouped in less than three years based on savings garnered by weeded books; additional savings come from putting books in high-density storage. By acknowledging the cost associated with keeping a book, libraries can make evidenced-based decisions that may incentivize the weeding process and, where available, highlight the value associated with high-density storage.

### Where did our books go? (Decided by librarians)



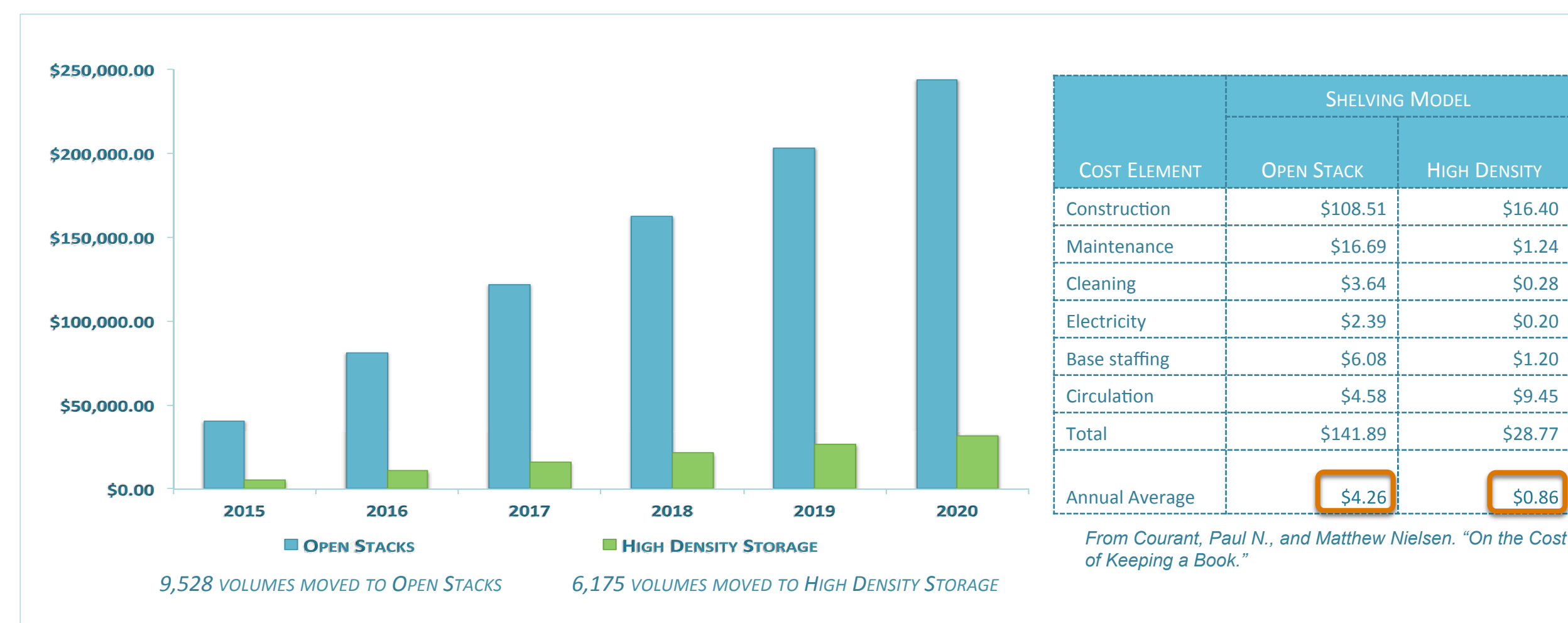
### What did it cost? (Based on national salary averages and staff time spent)



## The Cost of Keeping

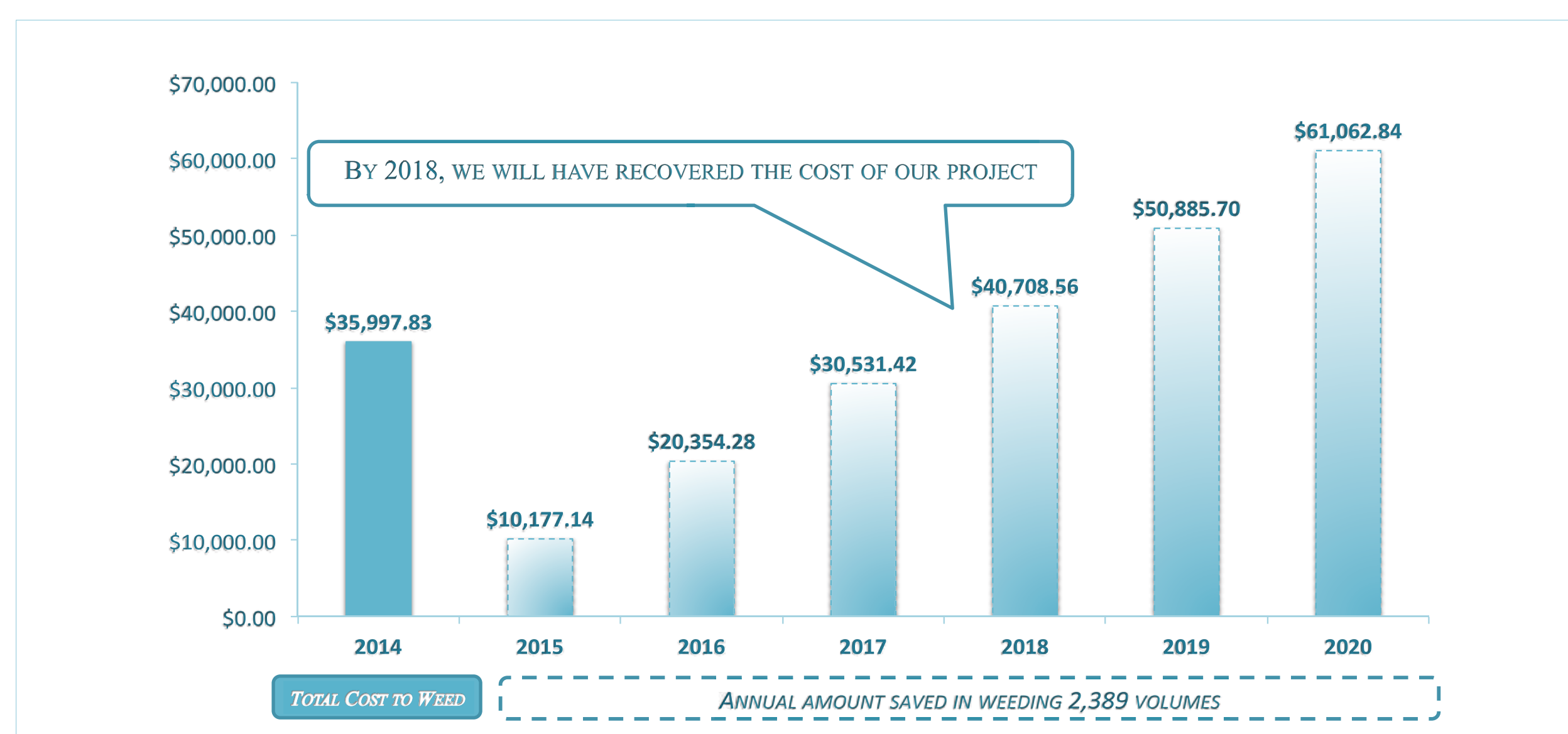
### OVER THE NEXT SIX YEARS, HOW MUCH WILL IT COST US TO KEEP THESE VOLUMES?

Because librarians chose to move 35% more books to open stacks than high density storage, and since the cost of storage types differs by approximately 4:1, there is significantly more cost over time for books moved to open stacks.



## What We Saved

These savings are calculated only using the cost of weeded books. Additional savings come from putting volumes into high-density storage. No savings come from keeping volumes in open stacks.



## The Results



### CONCLUSIONS

✧ This research overwhelmingly demonstrates the value of collection weeding AND high density storage. The SCU Library needs to capitalize much more on the value of our high density storage, the "ARS" (Automated Retrieval System).

See the ARS in action:



- ✧ While reviewing collections incurs costs, that investment can be recouped over time when the review project results in weeding materials or moving them to high density storage.
- ✧ In the future, it is recommended that librarians be provided with collection data that includes the cost of storage, which could influence their decisions concerning the disposition and relocation of materials.
- ✧ Employee costs are another important factor to consider when planning a weeding project. Using student workers to do much of the processing, relocating, and discarding of material was the most cost-effective use of our budget.
- ✧ All library personnel, but especially those making collection decisions, need to be made aware of the cost of keeping a book, not just the cost of buying or using a book. Every facet of the library has costs associated with it. By working together, we can maximize space, accessibility to library materials, and our budget.
- ✧ As Courant and Nielsen note, "The storage costs of a pbook over time may exceed the purchase price by about 50 percent" (page 85). Which books are worth that investment?

### LITERATURE CITED

Average library wages were computed to provide a national look at costs representative of any library in the United States.  
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