Best Practices for Dealing with Missing Items

What is the difference between missing and lost?
For our purposes, lost items are ones that have been checked out to a patron and never returned. Missing items are ones that the catalog says should be on the shelf, but cannot be located.

As of March, 2017, there are 12,075 items “missing” system-wide that have accumulated for many years. Our goal is to locate any items we can and delete items that are truly missing. Guidelines for dealing with your library’s missing items follow:

1) **Marking Items Missing.** There are two ways for an item to end up called “missing.” The gadget in the circulation field for “mark item missing” checks the item out to the master system-wide “missing” record. Items can also be changed to Missing by changing the home location in the Cataloging Module.
Best Practice for Marking Items Missing: It is best to use the “mark item missing” function because it will then alert you whenever a presumed missing item is scanned, and you can immediately check that item in from the missing record. (When the item is discharged, it returns to its original home location.)

2) **Inventory.** You won’t know what you have in your collection unless you do inventory. You will find items already at missing and more that need to be set to missing during this process. In a perfect world, we would all be able to conduct inventory every year, but all libraries do not have the staffing to accomplish this.
Best Practice for Inventory: Establish a schedule for doing inventory that is manageable for your library, even if it is every other year or every five years, and <u>stick to it.</u>

3) **Missing Reports.** List Bibliography works best for running reports of missing items. (**List Bibliography reports must be scheduled to run overnight to avoid tying up the server, which is used by all CCLINC schools.)** You can set the report up for items set to missing during a specific date range, or just in one collection, or whatever you want. Running the report by collections gives you smaller lists to work with. Once the reports have been run, you can examine them for items that you would want to replace. Sometimes an item is “missing” because it was already weeded and was not deleted during that process. Some items may have already been replaced. Some items may be out of print. You will need to analyze this data to know how to proceed.
Best Practice for Missing Reports: Establish a regular schedule for running missing reports. The more often you do this, the fewer items you will have to deal with at one time. The System Office can help you set up this report if you don’t know how.

4) **Deleting Missing Items.** Once you have reordered a missing item or determined that it is no longer needed for the collection, you will need to remove that item from your missing list. Check the item in from the missing record and then change the home location to Deleteme. (If the item was placed directly in the home location Missing, rather than using the “mark item missing” gadget, you can skip the check-in process.) From time to time you may locate an item after you have removed it. You can decide to either add it back to the catalog or discard it.
Best Practice for Deleting Missing Items: Set a length of time for your library to leave items in Missing before they can be deleted from the catalog. It could be a semester, a year, two years, five years. A good rule of thumb is to have this period adhere to either your inventory schedule or the parameters you use for purging students.

Following these best practices will mean your missing items will no longer be clogging up your catalog and will also reduce the number of records tied up in CCLINC by items not really on our shelves.

Approved by Steering Committee on 5/16/17 Updated 6/3/19