Help, we're drowning in clothes!
Managing a space crisis in a fashion archive

The Archive

lululemon is a Canadian apparel company based in Vancouver. Its archive contains over 17,000 garments and accessories.

- The archive's mission is to preserve lululemon's design history and intellectual property, and make it accessible to current employees.
- The archive is operated by a very small team.

The Problem

A small archive faces many challenges, but our most pressing issue is that we are literally running out of shelf space!

- Every year, our growing company makes a larger assortment of products—and this takes up more space.
- Our users want us to retain more garments than the archive has room for.
- The company plans to move to a new building, but we will run out of space before the move.

Temporary Solutions

Some of these solutions worked... and some exposed more problems to fix.

- **Solution: Weeding.** I created retention guidelines that would reduce the overall number of garments while retaining the diversity of the collection. Results: this works well, but it's slow.
- **Solution: Storage.** I started sending older, less-used garments to storage—but chose to catalogue garments before storing them. Results: worked well until cataloguing revealed significant issues with our collection data!
- **Solution: negotiating with users.** We are working with power users to create their own collections when the archive can't keep everything they want. Results TBD!

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