

## Handling Books in General Collections

Library collections are directly affected by the way staff and users handle them. Damage to books is cumulative. Repeated poor handling can quickly transform a new book into a worn one, and a worn book into an unusable book that requires costly repair, rebinding, or replacement. By following the guidelines presented here, the library can make significant strides toward preservation of the collection.

### General Handling Guidelines

- Keep hands clean.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke in proximity to library books.
- Avoid forcing books to lie open further than they easily do.
- Support the covers when the volume is open.
- Do not use paper clips in the text.
- Avoid the use of book drops; instead, return volumes to the circulation desk.

### Shelving Books of Ordinary Size

- Use smooth, solid metal shelves without jagged edges or protruding screws. Avoid wooden shelves.
- Ensure that there is air circulation around the volumes. Do not store books against a wall or in an enclosed cabinet.
- Shelf volumes a minimum of four inches off the floor to reduce the risk of damage from flooding or passers-by.
- When possible, use shelving units that have a "canopy" on top, as this will deflect water, dust, and some damaging light.
- Stand all volumes upright, resting on their base (or "tail").
- If a book is slightly too tall for the shelving space, do not shelve it on its fore edge (i.e., in the "spine-up" position). Instead, shelve it with the spine down.
- Do not leave shelves too loosely or too tightly packed. In general, shelves should be about 60% full.
- Support the volumes on each shelf with an appropriate bookend \* one that is tall enough to provide good support and that has a wide profile.
- To remove a volume from the shelf, ease back the books on either side of the desired volume. Grasp the volume by the sides with the hand, remove it, and readjust the bookend.
- To replace a volume, loosen the bookend and move the existing volumes to create a space. Reinsert the book in its place, then readjust the bookend so that shelving is snug.

### Shelving Oversize Volumes

- Use broad fixed or roller shelves.
- Do not let the volumes protrude into the aisle.
- To remove a volume if the books are stored flat and stacked, transfer the upper volumes to a free shelf or adjacent book truck. Remove the desired volume, using both hands, then replace the upper volumes on the stack.

- To replace a volume if the books are stored flat and stacked, transfer the upper volumes to a free shelf or adjacent book truck. Then put the book back in place using both hands, and transfer the upper volumes back on top of the book.
- Shelf oversized books flat, if possible, with no more than three volumes in each stack.

### **Book Trucks**

- Use a book truck that
  - Is easily maneuverable. Those with large wheels are usually more stable and maneuverable.
  - Has wide shelves or protective rails to secure the items in transit
  - Has bumpers on corners to minimize damage from inadvertent bumps

### **Processing and Shelf Preparation**

- Upon receipt, open boxes carefully to avoid cutting volumes inside.
- Avoid stuffing bulky card packets or other enclosures between the endpaper and the cover. Instead, place them in the center of the volume.
- Use caution when applying security strips, and do not force them into the spine if there is not enough space to do so safely.
- Use alkaline paper products for pockets, due slips, book plates, and so on.
- Place bookplates and "date due" slips on the flyleaf, so that the weight of the text block will bear the weight when these are stamped or pressed.
- Use high-quality adhesives (such as polyvinyl acetates) to attach bookplates, pockets, and loose art plates.

### **Photocopying**

- Support the covers and pages while in the process of photocopying.
- Never force a volume flat on the copy surface.
- Learn to recognize, and do not attempt to copy books whose size or structure prevent them from being copied easily or well.

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