

Collection Handling: *Quick Tips*

to extend the life of papers and books



Below are a few things to keep in mind when handling books and papers:

Food and drink in reading rooms can damage collections and attract insects. Be sure to wash your hands after you eat and before handling collections to avoid lil' critters in your stacks.

Use pencils when working with library or archival collections instead of pens, highlighters or markers.

The adhesive on labels and sticky notes is acidic and will transfer onto collection material. You may not see it initially, but these deposits can stain material over time. Instead, consider using acid-free strips of paper as placeholders.

Fasteners such as paper clips and staples can stain and weaken paper. In addition, they create indentations and distortions that are only removal through conservation treatment.

Try not to hook your finger on the top of the spine to remove a book from the shelf. Instead push back the books on either side of the desired one and grasp it by the front and back cover or place a finger on the edge of the textblock and gently pull the book toward you.

The chemical composition of buffered archival enclosures (folders or boxes) can fade blueprints. Instead, opt for unbuffered, all rag (100% cotton) enclosures.

Establish a predetermined space for the use of rare material. Clear of clutter, food and dust.

Support flat material in folders, portfolios or boxes when moving or storing, as damage can easily occur when transporting fragile material.

Proper airflow will keep mold away. If possible, leave space between books and the back of the shelf.

Don't lick your fingers to turn pages: the moisture can set dirt into the paper. You can also transfer dirt and germs from the paper to your mouth (yuck-tastic!).

Don't stack valuable or delicate books as these can be severely disfigured by abrasion or scratching.

Use a book weight or a soft scuba weight (not a typo) to hold open a book or unfolded sections.

Don't allow your books or flat material to slump or lean at an angle on the shelf or inside a box. This can lead to distortions that can only be removed with conservation treatment. Instead, use bookends or spacers for shelves or boxes that are not full.

Store large or heavy books lying flat. Upright storage can result in the detachment or pulling away from the binding.

Never store a book on its fore edge (the edge of the text block), this causes the textblock to separate from the binding.