

Archival Products

NEWS

Shelter and Sanctuary: Customizing Protective Enclosures

by Kathryn Leonard

PROTECTIVE ENCLOSURES HAVE long been a mainstay of library collections care recognized as a crucial means of minimizing environmental damage, while allowing for safer handling of materials in use. Types of housing range from the simple archival folder to the elaborate presentation case. Regardless of their format, enclosures for library materials shield their contents from light, pollutants and sudden temperature/humidity changes, offer a means of identification for storage and retrieval, and guide users and staff to safe handling of materials. At best, enclosures convey the stewardship of the owning institution.

The University of Washington Libraries' (UW) conservation unit, known as the Mendery, continues an over 75-year history of in-house repair and binding for the Libraries' book and paper collections. As in most public institutions, the staff is relied upon to apply limited resources to a broad spectrum of needs. The department serves the extensive bound, archival and visual

materials in its Special Collections as well as the circulating materials in the UW Libraries 23 branches. This circumstance affords the staff the challenge of solving varied problems and also encourages us to frequently evaluate how to use our resources effectively.

With these intentions in mind, the UW Libraries conservation staff has recently focused energies on the housing of unusual format materials in its Special Collections. Throughout the library system, a range of commercial options is utilized including pamphlet binders, four-flap and envelope variations, archive boxes, folders and custom-sized corrugated boxes. With high quality and functional commercial enclosures available for standard use, the in-house staff can devote effort to fabricating custom boxes, wrappers and sleeves for items with exceptional dimensions or special needs.

The Mendery began a housing initiative by consulting with Sandra Kroupa, Curator of Book Arts and Rare Books and

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Fig. 1b Enclosure for binding with lace and stick spine detail.

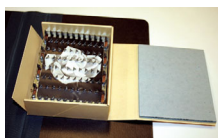


Fig. 1c Enclosure with corrugated flap to cushion metal blades on cover.



Fig. 1a: A variety of enclosures for thin and fragile or irregularly shaped items.

Nicolette Bromberg, Curator of Visual Materials, and also reviewing our own observations of existing collection housing. Examples were drawn from the book arts, rare book and photography collections. Certain themes appeared, such as the need for accommodating small-scale pieces, works of irregular dimension, heavy or large items and combinations of these. Since parts of the collections are used extensively for teaching as well as research, enclosures are key to the protection and presentation of those items in a hands-on setting. We recognized that enclosures should be as easy as possible to use. Most importantly, the use of the enclosure itself should not cause damage to its contents. We proceeded with the following projects being mindful of these requirements.

Variations on a Pam Binder

The first category of enclosures we approached was for relatively small, thin items that need more protection than a four-flap wrapper offers. Because of the fragility of these items or irregular dimen-

sions, a rigid-walled container was specified. (Fig. 1b) For shelving purposes, items of a particularly small size benefit from being in a container that has a larger outer dimension. This provides more stable shelving and reduces the likelihood of a tiny item being pushed out of sight behind other materials.

To address these needs, and keep production time down, standard pamphlet binders are retrofitted with a custom made insert. (Fig. 1a) First, a three-walled tray is constructed from pamphlet board and covered with 10 pt. folder stock. A fourth wall is hinged from the spine side to protect the surface of the piece. The tray and flap are adhered inside the back cover of the binder. A strip of laminated pamphlet board covered in folder stock is mounted inside the front cover and positioned so that when the binder is closed, the strip aligns with the fore-edge of the tray. (Fig. 1c) This serves as a locking mechanism so that the enclosure can be opened and securely closed in a single motion. In tribute to its clamshell origins, we term the enclosure a “half-clam-in-a-pam” which is used for both book art items as well as some rare materials. It has proven to be a remarkably strong, easy to use container.

Customizing Corrugated Boxes

It now seems hard to recall a time when the UW Libraries Mendeny did not rely heavily on the use of archival corrugated board for many enclosures. Although traditionally constructed and covered rare book boxes still have their role. The department has favored the archival corrugated clamshell construction for a decade. The lower cost and higher production possible with corrugated boxes justify the choice for housing non-circulating or low-use materials. Additionally, the corrugated board is a gentle, forgiving material for housing aging or delicate materials. For average-sized items, commercially made custom corru-

gated enclosures are used extensively; in-house construction of corrugated boxes is primarily for heavy or oversized materials.

Heavy material is difficult to safely remove from a box and damage to the spine can occur when forcing a hand beneath the book to grasp it. In this context, the Mendery defines a book as “heavy” if one would normally use two hands to pick it up. The box design is based on that first published by Andrea Krupp¹, which is hand scored, cut, folded and adhered. For heavy items three board thicknesses with recesses for hand holds cut at the spine and foredge walls is added to the bottom tray. (Fig. 2a-b) This “lift” creates a space beneath the book so that it can be grasped with both hands for retrieval. It also adds dimensional stability to the box. Further adaptations of the corrugated box are illustrated in Figs. 2c-e. The boxes have been very well received by curatorial staff.

Housing for Flat Materials

This project was to facilitate use of a collection of individual manuscript fragments for teaching. The goal was to package the items individually in such a way that they could be viewable from both sides, han-

Fig. 3a Katie Dodsley showing a mat/sleeve housing for flat materials.

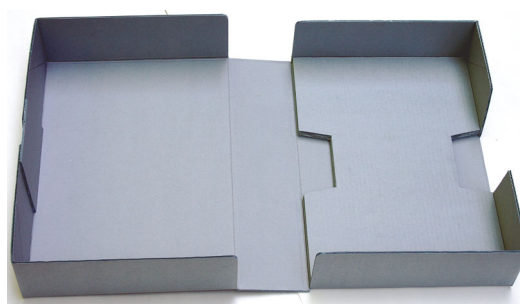


Fig. 2a Corrugated clamshell box with “lift” in the base tray. The board cut from the base foredge wall is adhered inside the lid foredge to reinforce the box when it is closed.



Fig. 2b The “lift” creates a space beneath the book so that it can be grasped with both hands for retrieval.

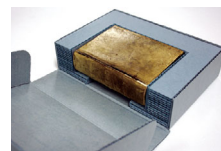


Fig. 2c Box with filler for smaller item, and lift to minimize handling of fragile binding.



Fig. 2d Box with filler at foredge for shaped, off-set covers with insert in lid to accommodate raised embellishment on binding.



Fig. 2e This volume with silver clasps has an inner wrapper with fabric and batting-covered panels to cushion the metal. When closed, the wrapper allows the book to be safely placed in its corrugated box, without putting strain on the binding.



Fig. 3c Archival corrugated and acrylic sheeting are sandwiched to house this medieval deed with seal.

dled safely in class and uniformly sized for storage. Each fragment is placed in a double mat of map folder stock that is slipped inside of a polyester sleeve. (Fig. 3a) To “float” the fragment within the mat, it is placed within a secondary sleeve and held in place with additional strips of polyester laced through the corners. The combination of mat and sleeves results in a resilient housing, which also improves the presentation of these pieces.

A related variation was developed for housing manuscript deeds with wax seals, which are much more dimensional. (Fig. 3b) For these, 60 pt. acrylic sheeting is sandwiched with sheets of corrugated board cut to mat the seal. Multiple sheets of corrugated create adequate space to

Fig. 3b To “float” the fragment, it is placed within a polyester sleeve and held in place with strips of polyester laced through the corners.



Communicating reasoning helps to enact varied roles in the preservation of the collections.

enclose the seal and additional board creates the front and back of the housing. The resulting structure can be easily stored and handled without endangering the artifact.

Seeing the Big Pictures

The Photography Collection includes dozens of panoramic photographs, an unusual resource for providing better housing, storage and access. After humidification, flattening or other stabilization, most of the prints were moved into folder storage in flat files. The exceptions were those very long prints, which exceed the 51" width of a standard map file. Although oversized flat storage is available, it is costly, for the relatively few very long panoramic prints. Vertical storage was the alternative that seemed to make the best use of limited space. This led to the idea of a closet with each print hanging in a protective polyester sleeve.

The first step was to encapsulate the long prints. Since the UW Libraries conservation lab does not have a welder, machine sewing (zig-zag) with polyester thread is used as a practical means to construct the sleeves. An extra length of polyester at the top of the sleeve is formed into an open loop. This provides a means of hanging the sleeve by slipping over an open hanger as used for slacks. Because of the length and fragility of the prints, special care has to be taken when inserting them into the sleeve. Drawing ideas again

from clothing utensils, a piece of smooth, acrylic coated pamphlet board, the "panorama shoe horn" is used to guide the print into the sleeve. An additional concern is that the sleeve be stiff enough to prevent flexing or folding of the oversized print in handling. This was accomplished by inserting a length of 1/8" acrylic rod into pockets sewn on either side of the sleeve. Once the sleeve has its stiffeners, it can be easily retrieved and carried for service to clients. (Fig. 4a) The panoramic print is protected from direct handling at all times.

Lessons Learned Thus Far

Housing of library materials offers plenty of opportunities for innovation. As exploration of protective enclosures is continued, benefits from experience are gained. First is the value of collaboration between conservation and curatorial staff, both in identifying needs and devising solutions. When looking at the way materials are to be organized, stored and used in research and teaching, housing can be tailored to better address the full life cycle of the collections. By considering the physical characteristics of individual items, the construction can be customized to best suit the needs. Generally, there are low-tech answers that rely more on skill than funding. By having colleagues review the work at the design stage, problems that may exist from the user's point of view are identified. Communicating reasoning helps to enact varied roles in the preservation of the collections.



Fig. 4b An enameled metal storage cabinet serves well for panoramic photo storage.

Fig. 4a Judith Johnson showing a newly housed panoramic photo.

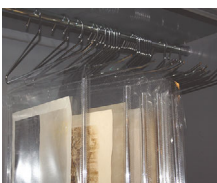


Fig. 4c Stainless steel clothing rod and pants hangers are used for the closet hardware.



FOOTNOTE

1. Krupp, Andrea 1991. "The library Company's Corrugated Clamshell Box," *Abbey Newsletter*, Vol.15, No. 6, pp. 97-98.

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Preservation Surveys By the Book

by Patricia K. Turpening

HAVE YOU IDENTIFIED THE potential risks to your collections? Have you prioritized your collections for preservation actions? Have you surveyed your building, inside and out, to determine anything that could cause problems? This is an account of seven law librarians who had not undertaken these vital albeit time-consuming and labor-intensive duties. By working as a team, the onerous job became less onerous since we supported each other along the way.

The entity to address preservation in the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) is the Preservation Committee in its Technical Services Special Interest Section. Members of the Committee have been continuously active and working to educate all AALL members about preservation issues for nearly 25 years. Over the years, committee members have coordinated and presented more than fifteen programs and three full day workshops on all aspects of preservation.

The seven law librarians who took part in this project were all members of the Preservation Committee. The idea for the project took shape in July 2004 at the AALL Annual Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts. *Assessing Preservation Needs: A Self-Survey Guide* by Beth Patkus (NEDCC: 2003) was fairly new. As Chair of the Preservation Committee it occurred to me to propose a collaborative project in which committee members would assess their own collections by using the book. Knowing the project would require hundreds of hours of intense work, the response of the Committee members to my proposal was uncertain. My uncertainty was unfounded, however, since, within 24 hours of the meeting, six other

librarians volunteered their own time and that of their fellow staff members. I knew we were off to an auspicious start!

This book has already become an imperative in the toolbox of every preservation administrator. *Assessing Preservation Needs* is the equivalent of an instruction manual and a detailed guide to nearly every aspect of libraries that pertains to preservation. Through the use of 26 one- and two-page worksheets, any library and archive is capable of determining its own deficiencies, unique problems and areas of concern.

The time period we gave ourselves was the 2004-2005 academic year, starting in August and ending the following May. Our group of seven decided on six deadlines for the worksheets. Each ran behind at one time or another and some significantly so. However, that was to be expected since the project was extremely time-consuming, done in conjunction with other work duties and lasted an entire academic year. Nevertheless, all did an amazing job given the number of obstacles.

Each participant purchased the hard-cover, spiral book although it is also downloadable at the web site of the Northeast Document Conservation Center (<http://www.nedcc.org/selfsurvey/survman.htm>). Even before deadlines were made, a Yahoo! Groups web page was set up. Experienced with several other Yahoo! Groups sites, I knew that implementing one would ease communications and produce one place of record. We each just had to establish a Yahoo! account and then sign in each time. The most useful aspect of the web page was the ease with which we could post our completed worksheets.

Our first deadline was to complete worksheets one through three by the end

By working as a team, the onerous job became less onerous since we supported each other along the way.

Poor maintenance, faulty equipment, and aging buildings can and do cause fires, water leaks and other emergency situations.

of September. Those three are the building blocks on which the others stand. Before a thorough preservation survey can be conducted, it is necessary to pull together as much information about the library as possible. The Institutional Overview Worksheet requires the mission statement, budget, and the long-range strategic plan, if one exists. In the second worksheet, Collections, each type of print, nonprint, and archival material is quantified. Written collection development policies are to be appended. The growth rate of the collection also needs to be determined.

Worksheet No. 3 deals with Preservation Management functions. It is necessary to define your own goals for completing the survey as a whole. Each library should have its own unique reasons for deciding to take the time to assess its collection and those reasons need to be determined and to be recorded. Ann Nez, University of Washington Gallagher Law Library, said that question was difficult to answer since she had volunteered for the project rather than it being assigned by her director. A written disaster plan and a better knowledge of the environmental conditions in her library were her immediate goals.

The fourth and fifth worksheets, General Building and Building Environment, were perhaps the most problematic for each of us. The reason was that we had to depend on others outside our libraries to provide the answers. That alone wasn't the problem, but determining the person with the answers was. Eventually, we did complete them, with help from building facilities managers, building coordinators and university facility departments, among others. Poor maintenance, faulty equipment, and aging buildings can and do cause fires, water leaks and other emergency situations. Although most librarians have little or no knowledge of the structure of their buildings, the materials used in the construction

or details about their roofs, it is important that they take time to gain knowledge needed to avert problems that will affect collections. Persistence is the key in tracking down the people who know the most about the buildings.

Although everyone involved in preserving library collections should be aware of the importance of maintaining stable temperature and relative humidity within the correct ranges, fewer know specifically what machinery controls the functions or the age, condition and maintenance schedule of the machinery. Communicating the validity of librarians' concerns with the environmental controls throughout the library building is essential in order to enlist the backing of facilities managers to protect collections.

The sixth through ninth worksheets have the same theme: Protecting Collections from Loss. We were asked to determine our risks from fires, water and security breaches. One group member, Joe Thomas, University of Notre Dame Kresge Law Library, identified his library's greatest preservation weakness as its security deficiencies. Incredibly, there are 17 non-emergency doors connecting his library to other parts of the building. Although this is enough of a concern, only five of them are alarmed. Not surprisingly, an ongoing inventory has revealed a loss rate of 15 percent.

The Worksheet for Individual Storage/Exhibition Areas, No. 10, provides an opportunity for surveyors to answer questions pertaining to the temperature and relative humidity, pollution, housekeeping/pests/mold, lighting, water and fire hazards, and security in one or more specific areas of their collections. The seven members chose to assess archives, special collections, historical collections and exhibit areas. Simply asking a question can be enough to set off alarms, so to speak. For

instance, if the answer to the question, “What is the house-keeping schedule for the space?” is “There is none but there should be,” a follow-up action should be to make appropriate calls to add the space to the schedule. With lax rules on food and drink consumption in libraries lately, it is more important than ever to remove discarded food and beverage containers as soon as possible. Evidence of pests likely will follow if that is not addressed regularly.

The General Storage and General Handling Worksheets ask questions such as “What kinds of storage furniture are in use?”, “What types of enclosures are used for collections?”, “Who is allowed to photocopy historical collection materials?” and “Are labels or other adhesives used to attach call numbers to historical books?”

The Worksheet for Mixed Collections, the thirteenth, was one used to assess the archives of the University of Cincinnati Law Library. The variety of materials in the room, papers and memorabilia in archival boxes, scrapbooks from 1918-1960s, photographs, architectural drawings, books, newspapers and a clay bust of William Howard Taft, presents a few challenges, especially in regards to environmental controls. Obviously, it is not possible to achieve optimum conditions for every one of the kinds of objects. Conditions for mixed collections, furniture, lighting and enclosures should be of optimum quality and

should protect items to the greatest extent possible.

The next seven worksheets pertain to specific formats or collections: bound volumes and periodicals, documents and manuscripts, photographs and negatives, oversized and framed materials, newsprint, scrapbooks and ephemera, and audiovisual materials. As with all of the other worksheets in the book, the author concisely but thoroughly explains the reasons behind the questions. For instance, the worksheet on photographs and negatives asks if prints and negatives are individually enclosed as well as filed or boxed in archival-quality enclosures. The accompanying explanation describes why individual enclosures are necessary and the appropriate (and inappropriate) materials for them. “Tips for Taking Action” boxes emphasize three or four quick points for every topic in the book.

Issues in reformatting collections by microfilm, photocopy and digitization are addressed in three separate worksheets. The author provides a number of resources to aid librarians in their digital imaging projects.

The final two worksheets have to do with what are perhaps the most fundamental of library preservation operations: library binding and book repair. Although every library makes use of a commercial bindery, each one does not have a written contract. Some libraries trust their binderies completely, letting them make decisions about leaf

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Priorities need to be set for action, taking into consideration the chronic, acute and urgent needs of the collection that have been identified.

attachment and performing no quality control, however, the library must direct how their materials are bound. Quality control can be performed quickly. If this step is bypassed, errors will not be caught in time for a speedy remedy.

The discussion on book repair stresses that the procedures used for general circulating collections should never be used on historical volumes. The group interpreted “historical collections” to be rare books and special collections. None in the group is qualified to attempt repairs on those valuable materials. For the most part, preservation actions are limited to proper enclosures, environmental conditions, careful handling and the best security possible.

The book’s author spends a few pages on preservation planning which occur after the completion of the survey. Highlighting deficiencies on the worksheet produces a bright prominence on the page (printed or virtual) that simplifies the process of determining where to expend energies in the follow-up stages. A listing of all of the weaknesses, previously overlooked areas and the well-known problems is the starting point for a critical assessment of the current state of the library’s preservation program. Priorities need to be set for

action, taking into consideration the chronic, acute and urgent needs of the collection that have been identified.

Law librarians who participated in the survey have been able to jump-start their preservation programs or to give extra energy to their efforts. Dee Wood, University of Kentucky Law Library, knows that her library staff will be able to plan for a new building in a few years “with an awareness that would otherwise be missing.” Kathryn Fitzhugh, University of Arkansas at Little Rock Law Library, worked on a long-range preservation plan and was ready to provide information for her director “on a moment’s notice [concerning] a renovation project.” These testimonials attest to the value of assessing a library’s preservation efforts.

Group members:

Curt Conklin *Brigham Young University
Hunter Law Library*

Kathryn Fitzhugh *University of Arkansas
at Little Rock Law Library*

Ann Nez *University of Washington
Gallagher Law Library*

Joe Thomas *University of Notre Dame
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