 HANDLE WITH CARE, the proper way to treat books — by Margit J. Smith

In these times of rising costs and diminishing budgets, of downsized staff and more comprehensive and technologically complex jobs, preservation of books in a library becomes the utmost importance. As a librarian who is concerned with many facets of library work, from technical services to being especially interested in rare and fine books, I have had much opportunity to observe that often the most innocent actions and the most innocuous seeming habits can become real problems as book damage accumulates.

In this article, I will consider the work flow in my library as a model and will concentrate on non-technical steps that can be taken to insure that books are treated properly from the time they come into the library, through being used and checked out, to their return and replacement on the shelves. These remarks do not take into consideration the handling and care of books in special collections; they concern only books in general stacks. Some steps I will describe require outlay of money, but usually not an outlay for materials in addition to, rather an expense for materials to be bought, instead of the ones traditionally used. All of them do, however, depend on the continued training of staff and making users aware of their responsibility.

The time to start being concerned about the well-being of books begins at the point of ordering. When the budget allows, hard cover books, more likely to stand up to repeated handling and use, should be acquired. Some well-bound paperbacks are also very serviceable and able to meet many needs. Barring acquisition of hardbound books, immediate rebinding—requested through the vendor, done at the library's own bindery, or performed at the contract bindery—is an excellent way to ensure a strong book stock.

When unpacking a new shipment from the vendor, remove all packing materials, including the little styrofoam bits that might get stuck between the pages or the dust jacket and the book. Remove all papers such as invoices and other communication possibly attached to the book with paper clips or staples. Of HANDLE WITH CARE — continued on page 2
course no markings with pens should be made in the books.

Care must be taken to place the books correctly on the carts used for transport to the processing area. Unless a whole row can be filled, use heavy duty bookends for support. Very large books that may stick out over the edge of the book truck are especially vulnerable to damage. Very small books that may easily slip behind larger volumes may be stacked on their fore-edge or backs to prevent problems.

The processing area where stamping, tattle taping, book plate and pocket applications are performed is a place fraught with danger. If the covers are not supported properly, the backs of books can easily be broken or binding damaged when the pocket is attached or the book is stamped. To prevent breakage support the cover with an adequate thickness of cardboard.

Tattle taping is another risky operation and needs to be carried out very carefully. Inserting the tattle tape properly into hollow-backed books by using the metal strip to guide it along without digging into the soft paper part of the spine must first be practiced. Attaching the double-sided tattle tape strips in a tight-backed book between the pages also takes training, good judgment, and great care.

Illustrated endsheets are often used to add style, information and beauty to books. Insensitively placed pockets, stamps, and bookplates cover up essential information or decorative parts of the endsheets. Impress upon the staff to choose a more appropriate place for these items to protect the integrity and design of the book. Anything being attached to the book should be done cautiously. Pockets, bookplates and stamps, inside and out, are to be placed squarely and at right angles to the edges of the books. If a mistake occurs, it is better not to try to remove pockets and bookplates since the adhesive used will almost certainly damage the book.

In our library the next step is cataloging the book. Small, flat head pieces covered in plastic that simulate miniature saddle bags are placed across two adjoining pages to keep the book open. These items are sold by library supply companies. If call numbers are written in the book, always use a pencil and be neat, concise and consistent.

Applying the call number label and the barcode on the cover, and the title/author label on the inside of the cover(s) follows the cataloging process. Plastic label protectors are used on the outside to keep labels from falling off, and to prevent the label adhesive from migrating when books are shelved together. The label protector must be pressed tightly into the cover joints, otherwise the plastic will only stretch across the joint and will offer a point where other items can catch, weakening its effectiveness.

For processing a set of books, cotton grip-tights instead of rubber bands are very practical. The grip-tights which adjust to the exact bulk of the books without contracting will not damage the books or dust jackets and are more easily removed than rubber bands which may leave marks.

Staff and student workers need to learn how to correctly shelve books in the stacks. Books are not to be shelved so closely together that it is hard to remove them. If the books are too tight, the general user's preponderance of pulling a book from the shelves by the headband causes damage. It is better to shelve the books with a little give, or even leave excess space at the end of the shelf. Heavy-duty, tall bookends without sharp edges are stronger and less likely to be pushed between the pages of books. Movable bookends which attach to the shelf above by way of a rack should be installed and used in addition to proper sized traditional bookends.

To prevent placement on their fore-edges, oversized books need to be shelved in areas specially set aside for them. Placing oversized books on the fore-edge leads to the weight of the paper quickly pulling the book block from the binding. If oversized books have to be shelved on standard height shelves, they must be placed on their spines or sides. The same damage occurs when books are not kept straight on the shelves but are allowed to lean; the result of sloppy shelving and the use of insufficiently strong bookends. Placing the books across the top edge of other books causes their weight to shift the books on the bottom. This leads to leaning and falling books, untidy shelves, and loss of books behind the shelf.

Balance the load on both sides of the book trucks. Books that fall off trucks can sustain great damage. Elevator doors, thresholds, corners and other...
Archival Products Focus: Quality Archival Boards

In order to meet the quality demands of the preservation community for archival boards, Archival Products offers four types for preservation projects. When comparing similar boards, various characteristics should be considered: paper standards including pulp content, outer coating, density, caliper, size, abrasion resistance, and color fastness.

Our High Density Acrylic-Coated Pamphlet Board is made from cellulose fibers that are free of groundwood. The manufacturer removes any traces of lignin during manufacturing, and adds a 2% calcium carbonate reserve. No sizing is used in the milling process, but an inert, acrylic coating is applied to our board exclusively to guard against delamination, moisture, abrasion, and soiling. The board is milled to be extremely dense. No other board currently available can match this pamphlet board for stiffness, abrasion resistance, and warp resistance. The dyes used to give the board its color will not mix, run, or fade.

Various tests are conducted to designate pulp content for the board. The board meets ATM D 1090x5 spot stain tests. To demonstrate the adequacy of bleaching or lignin removal, the board gives a negative reading, and has a kappa number of 5 or less when tested according to the Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper, or Tappi T-236. High Density Acrylic-Coated Pamphlet Board is manufactured to a pH of 8.0 to 9.0 according to TAPPI T-509, and no sizing of any kind is used in manufacture.

Friction wheel tests show a total weight loss of less than 2%. Tests for stiffness show at least 1800 Tabor stiffness in the machine direction and 800 in the cross direction. The board is .050 in thickness and measures 37 x 40 inches, grain long.

Archival Products uses the High Density Pamphlet Board exclusively for our SW and QB Pamphlet Binders. Other uses for the board are three-ring binders, protective enclosures, and bindings.

The manufacturing specifications of our Grey/White Archival Board is similar to the High Density Acrylic-Coated Pamphlet Board except it is compressed to a lesser density. This board is .056 thick and measures 38 x 50. Archival Products uses Grey/White Archival Board for our archival folders and hinged board covers. Other uses are phase boxes or other book storage enclosures.

Our Dark Tan Archival Board is available in four thickness and measures 40 x 50 inches. The .010 [10 caliper] tan board is single-ply and the .020 [20 caliper] is a double thickness of the .010 board. The .040 tan board is a three ply board made with a museum quality .020 alpha cellulose core laminated between two pieces of .010 stock. The four-ply .060 point board is constructed in the same manner, using two pieces of .020 alpha cellulose core stock. The lamination process slightly decreases the stiffness and abrasion resistance of the tan board but independent tests show that these boards meet museum and library standards.

Archival Products uses the .060 Dark Tan Archival Board for our outer four-flap enclosure folder, the custom four-flap enclosure folder, the compact disk holder, and the manuscript folder. We use the .040 board for our academy folder. The .020 board is used to make the enclosure pockets for the custom four-flaps and compact disk pockets. The four-flap enclosure pockets and the acid-free file folders are made from .010 board.

Archival Products will cut full sheets of board in half or according to your specifications at a minimal charge. This is to accommodate shipping by UPS and to avoid higher freight shipping charges.

We encourage you to compare our boards to others, invite you to share your comments and discuss your preservation projects with us. To request samples for your viewing, testing, and comparison contact Millie Knee, your Archival Products Customer Service Representative, at 1-800-526-5640.
The Collection

The Special Collections & Archives Division of the Merrill Library at Utah State University [USU] holds a group of over 2,000 cyanotype prints, photographed between about 1899 and 1914. Although the photographer is unknown, he may have been George M. Turpin, Instructor of Poultry Husbandry, one of the few people to possess a camera during that time. Only a handful of the original glass negatives from which the cyanotypes were printed exist; the balance have been marshaled into the construction of a greenhouse in Farmington, Utah.

At the time these images were captured, the institution was known as the Agricultural College of Utah [ACU], a land-grant college that boasted (and does to this day) the Agricultural Experiment Station. The photographs depict every aspect of the college: events, buildings and grounds, classes, classrooms, and various activities of the Experiment Station, particularly irrigation and other facets of farming. Captured in the beautiful blue tones of these prints are: images of men harvesting crops; men sitting atop a canal spillway, the water appearing as ghostly streaks due to the long exposure time; the ACU marching band posing proudly with their instruments; and, in one of my favorite photographs, a simple vase of daisies, incredibly detailed and delicate. The photographs represent an essential record of the school's history, and of farming and irrigation methods in the agriculture of Cache Valley. The collection merits a great deal of both scholarly and preservation attention.

The Dilemma

While the majority of photographic print processes employ a silver-sensitive emulsion to create the image, the final image of cyanotypes is a combination of iron complexes, ferrous ferricyanide and ferric ferrocyanide. The characteristic blue tone or "cyan" is formed by these complexes. Thus the name "cyanotype." Normally quite stable, the complexes fade when exposed to alkalis as they do in light. This is a real leap for us as archivists who are so used to storing everything in alkali-buffered materials.

Regardless, high acidic materials do stain the cyanotype. Unfortunately, the USU cyanotypes were stored in albums with extremely acidic wood-pulp paper. The pre-existing "glue dots," were moistened and the photograph affixed to the paper, on both sides of each page! Prints were overlapped requiring physically lifting one image to view another. This invited mechanical damage to the very thin primary support. The cyanotypes have also suffered severe staining to prints exposed to the acidic paper, and must be removed to secure their continued survival.

Attempts at mechanical removal of the prints proved too risky and caused the thin and brittle primary support to tear easily. Fortunately, we had a number of photographs that did not merit retention and could be used for experimentation. Exposing the front and back of the prints to controlled moisture was unsuccessful. Placing the prints in a humidification chamber to soften the glue also proved ineffective. The delicate prints still would not separate from the acidic paper without mechanical damage. While 4" x 5" copy negatives have been created for some of the images, cost prohibits doing so for every photograph.

The Search for Solutions

After several futile efforts, I shipped a sample of expendable pages to the Image Permanence Institute at the Rochester Institute of Technology. The technicians in Rochester have not yet had a chance to experiment with these items, but I still have hopes of solving this most perplexing conservation problem.

Peter F. Schmid, Surveyor of Pictures, Special Collections & Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah

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potential trouble spots need to be negotiated slowly and carefully to prevent the wheels from catching and the books from shifting and falling. In many instances, book trucks with sloping shelves are safer and protect the books better than with those with straight shelves. Trucks with a divider in the middle are easier to load and unload.

Possibly the most dangerous place for books in any library is the photocopying area. Books are mutilated by having their backs pressed flat until the binding breaks or the sewing splits to facilitate copying text close to the gutter. They are often left open with other volumes stacked on top and with sharp ends of paper clips marking pages. Sometimes when pages cannot be conveniently copied, they are torn out by the user. In general, the photocopy area often looks like a veritable battleground. Not all of this can be prevented, but providing photocopiers that support books with a 90 degree angled book rest is a very good beginning. Supplying enough tables or book trucks to place used materials will modify the need to stack or throw books onto the floor.

Other damaging behaviors should be addressed during mandatory library orientation sessions at a university at the beginning of the semester when students' responsibilities are explained to them. Although for some, cutting pages or plates out of books may seem the only way to get needed information, most students will be sensitive to the need for protecting materials if the consequences of their action are made clear.

Books are to be handled carefully at the circulation desk when they are checked out, passed through the de-sensitizer and given to the student. In this age of on-line check-out procedures, usually only a date-due flag has to be inserted into the pocket which has reduced problems significantly. On a rainy day, the easy availability and use of plastic bags will keep books dry between the library and the car.

Books returned through the book-drop easily get damaged on the corners, or split the binding when they land open. Often rubber bands are made available at book drops and patrons are urged to secure the book covers across the width and height of the book. Circulation personnel immediately remove the rubber bands when books are removed from the book drop. Any damage to the returned materials is noted and then brought to the attention of the person responsible for repair and rebinding of books.

Food and drink must be kept away from books and other library materials. Clean hands will ensure that the book is not soiled and use of small paper flags or bookmarks will prevent dog-earred pages to mark a place in the book. Pens, highlighters, and colored pencils are not to be used.

Many other common sense precautions can be used to ensure the continued enjoyment of books. Leaving them in the sun or close to a source of heat such as on top of a radiator, using them as saucers or food trays, exposing them to dampness and dirt, to animal, insect and rodent damage will shorten their lives and will quickly render them unsightly and unusable. In a library setting students, staff and librarians need to be updated regularly on procedures and practices to ensure that everyone understands what needs to be done, and how to do it safely.

Heightened awareness of the history and importance of the printed word, appreciation of the well-designed and well-printed book, the pleasure of passing on the physical object as the repository of a tremendous amount of usable information, and a great source of fun and inspiration will, it is hoped, contribute to appropriate treatment of the book. The book is really extraordinarily resilient and will endure a very long time with proper care and handling.

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Articles are needed for the fall and winter issues of Archival Products News.

We are interested in sharing your conservation and preservation projects with the library community. Please contact us to reserve space for your article.

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Improved Staff Training Enhances Preservation of Collections — by Gary Menges

The University of Washington [UW] Libraries is providing conservation training to eleven staff members from ten Pacific Northwest libraries. The training is funded by a National Endowment for the Humanities [NEH] grant as part of a national plan to improve staff training in library collections conservation and enable participating libraries to enhance the preservation of their collections.

The training program is based on a pilot project conducted at the University of California [UC], Berkeley in 1989-1991. This program was refined and further developed at an NEH-funded conference at UC Berkeley in 1992, which was attended by 42 preservation administrators and collection conservators from some of the country’s major preservation programs. The training employed a combination of week-long sessions at the training site with intervals of practice at the home institution. The model encourages regional networking for conservation training and preservation programs.

The UW Libraries participated in that conference and developed a grant proposal to provide conservation technician training for the Pacific Northwest region. The grant proposal was funded and training began on October 31, 1994. Similar NEH grant proposals were funded at Emory University, UC Berkeley, and the University of Utah. NEH grants for the four university libraries total $282,423. The four universities will train 43 staff members in 42 different libraries in their regions.

In the Southwest a shorter self-supporting training program was developed by Amigos, Book Lab, and the University of Texas at Austin. Training proposals are being developed for other regions.

Trainees in the UW program are from the Gonzaga University, King County Library System, Mt. Angel Abbey, Portland State University, University of Alaska (Fairbanks), University of Oregon, University of Puget Sound, Washington State Library, Washington State University, and Western Washington University. The libraries were selected based on responses to a December 1992 survey. The training cycle comprises three one-week sessions in Seattle separated by four weeks during which the trainees return to their libraries to practice the techniques taught. The trainees receive basic tools and supplies. Training costs including travel expenses for the trainees are paid by the NEH grant. Kathryn Leonard and Mark Anderson of the UW Libraries Special Collections and Preservation Division are the instructors. Gary Menges, Head, Special Collections and Preservation Division is the project director. For further information contact Gary at 206-543-1929 or menges@u.washington.edu.

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Products List:

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Pamphlet Binders
Manuscript Folder
Four-Flap Enclosure
Custom Four-Flap Enclosure
Hinged Board Cover

Academy Folder
Archival Folder
Archival Album
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Archival File Folders
Drop-Spine Box
Compact Disk Holder

If you do not have an Archival Products catalog of Quality Preservation Products & Services please call, fax, or e-mail your request to us.