

Archival Products

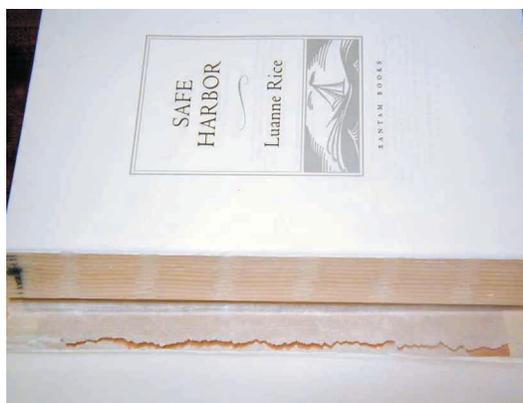
NEWS

Book Quality Liabilities and the Pages of Shame

by Werner Rebsamen

FOR A READER, A BOOK SHOULD BE something he or she can enjoy. A good book should have an interesting content and interesting physical properties. It should be printed on good paper, feature fine typography and, perhaps most important, it should be bound in such a way that it is not only attractive, but usable as well. In other words, a binding must be such that the reader of a book does not need both hands and force to keep it open. Unfortunately, just look around and see for yourself how much effort readers must put into just keeping a book open. If they try to open it flat, most often, the binding splits and the individual sheets may fall out. If you think this is something new, just look at what Randal Heymanson wrote to the New York Times editors, April 15, 1979 under the title, "Shoddy":

"Is it not time that publishers were called to account? A copy of "Wanderings" (Knopf, \$17.95)



Too often a recent library purchase falls apart almost immediately upon release into circulation.

came apart during a first reading and revealed that this heavy and expensive volume was not stitched, but poorly glued. The late Alfred Knopf, who was proud of the quality of his publications, would be appalled by the shoddy product now bearing his imprint. Other publishers may be equally indifferent to their public."

A good book should not only have an interesting content, the physical properties are important as well. It should be printed on good paper, feature fine typography and, perhaps most important, it should be bound in such a way that it is not only attractive, but usable as well.

Binding information

Binding is the first line of defense in library preservation and can be a major part of a library's preservation budget. Developed jointly by NISO and the Library Binding Institute, the ANSI/NISO/LBI standard describes the technical specifications and materials to use for first-time hardcover binding of serials and paper-bound books intended for the rigors of library use. It also covers rebinding of hardcover books and serials. Following this standard will give you volumes that are sturdy, durable and flexible.

At present, American National Standard ANSI/NISO/LBI Z39.78-2000 *Library Binding* is the library binding standard of record. You can purchase or download a free copy (in PDF format) of the Library Binding Standard from http://www.techstreet.com/cgi-bin/detail?product_id=229053 or contact:

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Such comments are very familiar to this writer, a book manufacturing expert and head of the former RIT/LBI book testing laboratory. The ones who suffer the most are librarians. I shall never forget a special meeting during an ALA conference in Philadelphia in the late seventies. For this event, I chaired a distinguished panel on "Book Quality." We invited book manufacturers and publishing production managers. Being a hot topic, this panel attracted over 400 librarians, all of whom had problems with their bindings. During these discussions, a courageous elderly librarian stood up and said, "If I buy a new car, I expect the wheels to stay on. When we buy books, we expect the pages to stay in the binding!" Bingo— that was right to the point, and she got big applause. My colleagues on the panel were stunned! Speechless!

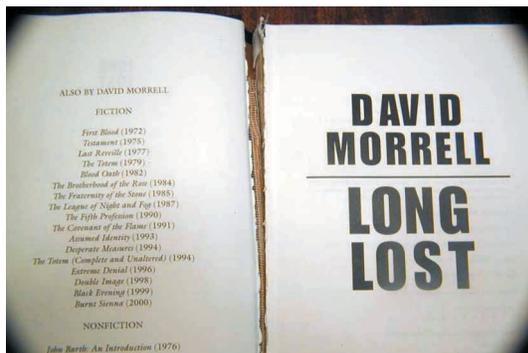
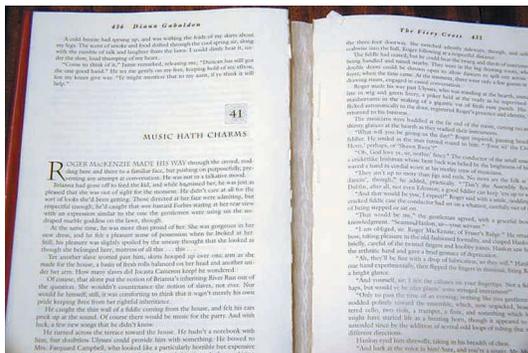
In 1987, librarians under the leadership of Patricia Harris and Carolyn Clark Morrow created a committee to draft a standard for hardcover bindings. Being part of this committee, which consisted of librarians, publishing production managers and book manufacturers, we created a most useful American National Standard Z39.66-1992 for "Durable Hardcover Binding for Books." With this project, which involved endless hours, many meetings and a visit to one of the largest book

manufacturing facilities, librarians assumed that such a standard would enhance book quality. The final copy was published in 1992. Unfortunately, ten years later, I have yet to find a book manufacturer or publishing production manager who is aware of this standard. Even if they are, I already know their answers: "We cannot afford to bind the books in accordance to this standard!"

All such attempts to get the publishers' attention in regard to the binding quality of books were futile. Now, in the age of the Internet, librarians have a new weapon: "The Publisher's Page of Shame." Look it up at: <http://www.powerlink.net/wyvern/shame.htm>

These pages of shame are updated regularly with reports from libraries about books that fall apart almost immediately after purchase. (Included in the latest version is the entire Harry Potter series.)

As a former quality control manager of a major book manufacturing facility, I have my doubts if such "Pages of Shame" are fair. For example, how many books are evaluated? Is it just an isolated case or does it involve several libraries who comment on a specific title? Monday morning lemons are no exceptions in book manufacturing. For example, if a book is adhesive bound the binder may stop momentarily. Due to an unfortunate stop,



Unfortunately, just look around and see for yourself how much effort readers must put into just keeping a book open. If they try to open it flat, most often, the binding splits and the individual sheets may fall out.

the hot melt applied may cure prematurely, yet on most of these books, the lining material may still adhere. Book manufacturers try to catch such partially defective bindings, but some bound book blocks may slip though. If such a book, or a few, reach a customer or a library, is it justified to place the entire title onto this web page? You can be your own judge.

An article published in the New York Times on December 16, 2001, “Some Book Buyers Read the Price and Decide Not to Read the Rest” deals with the prices charged for books. However, the in-depth article also stated that publishers’ profit margins remain among the lowest in the media industry. It is stiff competition, yet despite some hardcover prices hovering around \$35 a book, a hardcover book costs a publisher little

more than \$2 a copy and a high-end paperback less than \$1 — to produce. Special feature and color photograph reproductions cost more (New York Times). It is indeed shocking to hear my colleagues in book manufacturing quote prices. It’s unbelievable how little money they use to produce a book!

What can be done to improve the situation? Customers and librarians feel that they are not getting a fair deal, especially if the book quality of a particular title is less than desirable. One solution is to use better material and reinforcing components, such as those offered by LBS.

Needless to say, high quality materials do cost more. This is where publishers and book manufacturers have a chance. For example, they can absorb the slightly higher cost per book (maybe less than a penny) with clever marketing. Every book jacket contains the price. Perhaps a small statement underneath: “This quality book is fabricated with superior materials using advanced technologies, etc.” How would you feel as a customer? For the assurance of a superior product, we would gladly pay a little more; we do it all the time, for food, clothing, cars and many other items. Why not books?

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Thanks to Jesup Library in Bar Harbor for providing broken books for John Clark to photograph!

Customers and librarians feel that they are not getting a fair deal, especially if the book quality of a particular title is less than desirable. One solution is to use better material and reinforcing components, such as those offered by LBS.

Helpful Hints for the Safe Transport of Library Materials

by Oliver Cutshaw, Binding Librarian, Harvard College Library

Introduction

AS BINDING LIBRARIAN FOR THE Widener Library collection in the Harvard College Library, Harvard University, I have responsibility for managing a large commercial binding program. Our work involves the usual amount of packing and unpacking, shipping, and receiving library materials that travel between our commercial binding vendor and Widener Library. In addition, there is a good deal of loading and unloading book trucks as would be expected in a binding and shelf preparation program that handles 90,000 items per year. In recent years new developments in collection management, technical services, and enhanced network capabilities have led to a dramatic increase in the volume of inter-office and off-site shipment of materials.

Major parts of Harvard College Library Technical Services no longer reside in Widener Library but have moved to an office building located several blocks away. Advances in computer technology have made the relocation of library service operations possible; the limits on space and the need for more user service sites has made relocation inevitable. Like many library systems throughout the country, the Harvard University library system is both seeking and being forced to adapt to the modern university reality of limited space and evolving computer functionality.

Another trend in university libraries is the use of off-site storage facilities that provide optimal storage environments for

low use, brittle, and rare books, papers and non-print media. They also provide a much-needed facility to handle new acquisitions and older holdings for which space simply is not available in the library stacks. Harvard University is fortunate to have the Harvard Depository, just 40 minutes away, to house and protect Widener Library materials off-site.

Both of these trends have led the Harvard College Library Preservation and Imaging Department to develop procedures and guidelines for the proper care and handling of materials in transit. This article will highlight some procedures and will offer insights from my experience with the work of integrating shipping into a preservation program.

There's No Place Like Foam

Approximately 45,000 books were shipped last year from the Harvard College Library Technical Service (HCL TS) office to Widener Library in Harvard Yard. These included processed hardcover acquisitions, commercially bound periodicals, and candidates for conservation treatment. In addition, an equal number of items were shipped directly from HCL TS to the Harvard Depository. When we first began our operations in HCL TS, it was not clear how we could manage this huge workflow and still ensure proper care and handling for all materials. Fortunately, the Weissman Preservation Center, Harvard University Library, had already developed procedures for its NEH-supported microfilming project. The answer: sturdy plastic bins, foam padding, proper

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packing, and clear labels.

To your right are excerpts from the guidelines that have evolved. Collaboration between preservation librarians and collections conservators, combined with illustrations by a graphic artist, resulted in guidelines now used for transportation of materials. These guidelines are available on the Harvard Preservation web site cited at the end of this article.

The illustration that follows shows that bins provide a safe storage environment for library materials, whether they are travelling a few blocks or many miles. It may seem like a great deal of effort and expense to ship books, but considering the time and money that has gone into selecting, acquiring, and cataloging library materials, an investment in careful shipping is staff time and money well spent.

Fit to be Tied

Materials, especially older materials, destined for off-site storage often need some treatment to stabilize them prior to shipment. Types of damage may include powdery leather, detached boards, and loose pages. The Harvard Preservation web site also includes *Guidelines for Transfer of Library Materials to Harvard Depository*, which addresses these problems.

These guidelines are the result of four years of

collaboration between librarians and collections conservators, working in conjunction with staff at the Harvard Depository (HD) and the HD Transfer Team in Widener Library's Access Services Department. The guidelines help staff make appropriate decisions about handling and shipping. They also provide step-by-step instructions for cleaning, tying, wrapping, and boxing. From the sections on cleaning and tying, once again, clear illustrations are an essential part of the message, as seen in the examples on the right.

Can't See the Forest for the Trees

Often in our day-to-day work life it is hard to detect the trends in library practice as they evolve. Quick remedies become long-term practice and then standard methodology. Few day-to-day managers have the luxury of time to take a moment to step back and say to themselves, "Just what is going on here?"

But if I may be allowed a little armchair speculation, I think it is safe to say that unless book and paper acquisitions disappear overnight into that vast Ethernet in the sky of electronic textbooks and downloadable novels, we will have to find space for new materials. Off-site storage is here to stay and developing guidelines to protect materials in transit is the

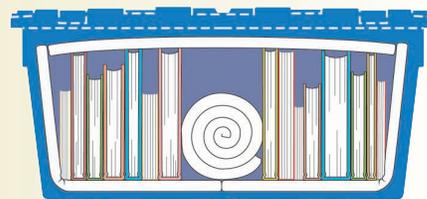
Excerpts from

Conservation Guidelines

Packing Bins to Transport Library Materials

Choosing Containers and Cushioning

- Heavy-duty polypropylene bins provide sturdy support. Blue bins are the standard containers for transporting materials between HCL Technical Services and HC libraries. They come in two sizes (large and small) and may be obtained from the mailrooms in Widener Library and HCL Technical Services. Gray bins are used to ship books to and from the Weissman Center and HCL Imaging Services.



- Foam rubber packing sheets, custom-sized to fit in bins, provide cushioning. These too are available to HC Libraries from the HCL Technical Services mailroom at 625 Massachusetts Avenue.

General Principles

- Limit the weight of packed bins to no more than forty pounds so that they can be lifted comfortably. Bins weighing more than 40 pounds will not be accepted by the mailroom.
- Distribute the weight evenly within the bins.
- Use foam sheets as cushioning so that books do not shift and bang against each other.
- Place books spine down when storing on edge.
- Place larger books flat on the bottom when shipping.

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responsibility of the campus preservation team. Here at Harvard University, all of our Preservation and Imaging staff work collaboratively to analyze new challenges, develop new procedures, and prepare guidelines to meet the evolving demands of the university community. We know how books are built and what they can and cannot withstand. It is our responsibility to share this expertise.

SOURCES:

“Packing Bins to Transport Library Materials.” Library Preservation at Harvard. 28 May 2002. Harvard University. 22 August 2002. <http://preserve.harvard.edu/guidelines/packingbins.html>

“Transfer of Library Materials to Harvard Depository.” Library Preservation at Harvard. 28 May 2002. Harvard University. 22 August 2002. <http://preserve.harvard.edu/guidelines/hdtransfer.html>

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Excerpts from

Conservation Guidelines

Transfer of Library Materials to the Harvard Depository

Cleaning

Library materials are to be as dust-free as possible when they arrive at HD. It is best to clean materials when they enter the transfer workflow. There are two options for cleaning. Vacuuming is best because it is least likely to introduce dust back into the environment.

- **Vacuuming:** We recommend a vacuum cleaner with variable speed control so that suction can be adjusted with micro tools that facilitate thorough cleaning. HEPA filtration is absolutely essential. Hold the book firmly closed and vacuum along the top, from spine to fore edge (Fig. 1). The tops of books are usually the most dusty. Next, vacuum the fore edge and bottom edge of the volume. Clean remaining surfaces if needed.



Tying

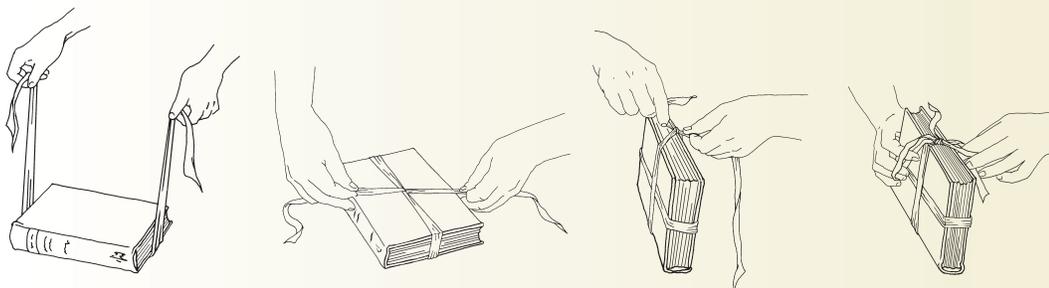
If the covers of a volume are loose or detached but the textblock is sound, tie up the volume with flat, 5/8" wide cotton tape.



Cut a piece of tape that is 4 times the length of the longest side of the volume plus two to four inches. Place the book on the tape and tie as illustrated. It is important that the bow be placed on the fore edge or top of the textblock so that it doesn't interfere with shelving or take up additional space in the trays at HD.

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How to Properly Tie Up a Book



Collaboration: The Key to Viable Preservation Solutions

by Janice Comer

This year Archival Products had the opportunity to collaborate with the University of Iowa (UI) on the development of a new product. Gary Frost, UI Libraries Conservator, suggested the possibility of a spiral book binder. The UI preservation department including the conservation lab and LBS/Archival Products staff began brainstorming as to the desired structure and qualities of the product, possible components and its intended use. Desired qualities included 1) a binder made of archival materials, 2) quick and locking attachment, 3) easy insertion, 4) spiral book protection, 5) no additional strain on covers or pages and 6) reversibility.

Prior options

Archival Products was excited to have the opportunity to work on a solution for spiral bound books. Prior options were for conservators to make a pocket binder, stiffen the spiral book's covers, send the book for binding or do nothing at all. Some libraries that do not have personnel to make pocket binders or a budget for binding spiral bound books have done nothing with them because there has not been a quick solution. Many libraries now have a large number of spiral bound books in their collection that need attention.

The Product

After devising a plan to produce prototypes, several samples were sent back and



New Spiral Book Binder

forth. Although some initial attempts were not practical for production and some ideas were cost prohibitive, our main objective—to design an archivally sound binder that is simple and quick to attach and will hold, lock and protect a spiral book at a reasonable price—was attained. After several prototypes, a viable product was created. We then consulted with other preservation librarians and book conservators to gain more comments and suggestions and then further refined the product.

We use a .040 sandstone archival board, round the corners to prevent damage and score and flex the board to form the binder's spine. We attach a .020 clear PETG front cover with durable maroon c-cloth so that the cover of the attached book shows. A .056 high-density dark gray archival board strap is riveted to the inside spine. A hole is pre-drilled through the strap and spine of the binder for the polypropylene locking mechanism.

Archival Products was excited to have the opportunity to work on a solution for spiral bound books. Prior options were for conservators to make a pocket binder, stiffen the spiral book's covers, send the book for binding or do nothing at all.

We thank everyone who participated and contributed to the development of the Spiral Book Binder.

Insertion entails slipping the spiral of the book over the strap, attaching the polypropylene lock through the appropriate hole in the spine, applying the lock nut on the inside of the binder and clipping the end of the shaft to the appropriate length. The binder is available with 3/4", 1-1/4" or 1-3/4" spine in four sizes to accommodate spiral books measuring 7 1/2" x 9", 8 1/2" x 9 1/2" and 8 1/2" x 11 1/2" and city planning books 17" x 7". Additional sizes will be added to the product line as requests are made.

Collection use

There are many types of collections that have many spiral bound books: 1) health sciences, 2) cookbooks, 3) music, 4)

directories, 5) city planning books, 6) atlas and 7) maps. All are candidates to be protected by the spiral book binder.

A group effort

We are delighted to offer the new Spiral Book Binder. A viable preservation solution has been attained through learning the need and through the collaboration of preservation and conservation professionals. We thank everyone who participated and contributed to the development of the Spiral Book Binder.

Contact us by email, phone or fax to try a sample of this new innovative solution for spiral bound books or to collaborate on a solution for a housing problem in your library.



A Division of Library Binding Service

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