

Yale University Library
Preservation Department

Care and Handling of Books

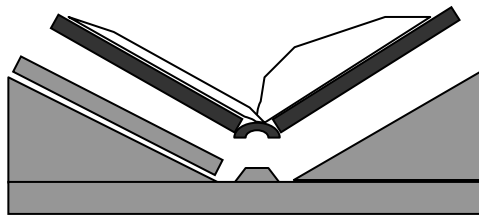
It is important to remember that we are all stewards of the Library collections. We have a responsibility to take care when handling collections and assisting others in handling collections. Remember: poor handling can cause irreparable damage to books, so don't rush. Accidents are more likely to happen if you are in a hurry.

Retrieving Books

- ✓ Books should not be pulled off the shelves by the headcap. Instead:
 - Books on either side of the desired book should be pushed in, and the desired book pulled out gently by grasping it on both sides with the thumb and fingers, OR
 - Two fingers should be placed firmly on the head of the textblock (away from the headcap) and the book should be tilted toward you.
- ✓ To minimize chances of dropping books, one should not stack them too high when they are moved or carried. Books of special value should not be stacked.
- ✓ If book trucks are used, books should not be stacked high on the truck, nor should they protrude beyond the edges; the center of gravity of the loaded truck should be low to help stabilize it.

Handling Books in the Reading Room

- ✓ Inspect the book visually before moving or opening.
 - Pay attention to the functionality of the book. Make sure to demonstrate that functionality to the reader.
 - Note its weak or damaged areas if any.
 - Handle the book avoiding its weakest areas.
- ✓ Books should be used with a book cradle to properly support the volume. Foam inserts should be used to minimize space between the book boards and the cradle surface:



- Remember: the book cradle is not appropriate for every book. Sometimes the human hand is the best tool (e.g. post bindings, miniature books)
- ✓ Pages should be turned from the top right corner of the page, using the whole hand to turn the page. This will prevent accidental tearing.

- ✓ Book weights or “snakes” should be used to keep tightly bound books open if necessary. They should be draped evenly across the outside edge (fore-edge) of the textblock and adjusted as necessary. Readers should be instructed to not force the book open.

Shelving and Storing Books

- ✓ Books should be upright on shelves. They should not be allowed to lean to one side or the other, because this causes strain on the binding.
- ✓ If shelves are not full, bookends should be used to hold books upright. Bookends should be non-damaging, with smooth surfaces and broad edges to prevent bindings from being abraded or leaves from being torn or creased.
- ✓ Books should not extend beyond the edges of shelves into aisles because they may be bumped or otherwise damaged. Instead, adequate oversized shelving should be provided. If oversized shelving is unavailable, oversized volumes should be stored flat.
- ✓ Books should not be stored on the fore-edge. Books should be stored spine down until the shelving is rearranged; storing a book spine down rather than spine up will prevent the text from pulling out of the binding due to its weight.
- ✓ Large books should not be stored next to small ones because they are not adequately supported by them. When possible, books should be shelved by size to prevent this.
- ✓ Volumes should be stacked only when absolutely necessary, and the stacks should contain only two to three books. Books with bindings of special value should be stacked only if they are boxed to prevent abrasion to the bindings.
- ✓ When oversized books that are stored flat are removed, the upper volumes should be transferred to an empty shelf or book truck. The desired volume should be removed by lifting it with both hands, and then the removed volumes transferred back to the shelf. Replacing the book on the shelf is done in the same way.

What if I Find a Damaged Book?

- ✓ Damaged books should never be held together with rubber bands or string. They should be boxed, wrapped in paper, or tied with a flat undyed cotton, linen, or polyester tape. Tape should be tied with bows at the top or fore-edge of the text block.
- ✓ Contact the Preservation Department for further assistance.