

HANDLING LIBRARY MATERIAL

Guidelines for Staff

Preserving the library's collections in Trinity College is an immense task, which relies upon the support and assistance of both the staff and readers. At the forefront is the Library's duty to preserve material from the Early Printed Books and Manuscripts Collections, Irish and UK Legal Deposits, materials unique or significant to Trinity College Dublin, College Archives, and material collected under shared preservation or resource management agreements. By adopting the practices in the following guidelines you can help maintain access to the Library's collections and play an active part in its preservation for future generations.

GENERAL HANDLING GUIDELINES

The manner in which staff and the public handle items directly affects their longevity. Damage is cumulative. Constant handling inevitably leads to the deterioration of even the most robust item; rough handling, however, can quickly lead to serious, irreparable damage.

READING ROOM/ BOOK STACKS/OFF-SITE STACKS/OFF-SITE STORAGE

- **Use clean hands / Powder-free Nitrile gloves.** Always ensure you have clean hands before handling items from special collections, wash them frequently (i.e. every 20 minutes) during extended use of collections. If wearing gloves does not impede dexterity and safe handling, then use powder-free Nitrile gloves. Powder-free Nitrile gloves must be used when handling parchment/vellum, metal objects and photographs. Handle all items as little as possible. *Powder-free Nitrile gloves are available from the Preservation & Conservation Department.*
- **Create a clean and clear work area.** Make sure work surfaces are clear of junk, dirt and debris before transferring items to them. A fresh blotter, or barrier paper may be laid down to provide a clean surface. Clean the area after use to prevent further transfer of dirt and dust. *Blotter and barrier paper are available from the Preservation & Conservation Department.*
- **Do not eat or drink in any storage, exhibition, work areas or reading rooms.**

Food and drink are easily spilled, will stain and will also attract pests. Stains are often difficult, if not impossible, to remove, and will add to the rate of deterioration of an item. Pests are difficult to eradicate and cause extreme damage if an infestation occurs.

- **Switch off lights.** The effects of light damage are cumulative. Switch off room and table lamps when items are left unattended. This will reduce heat buildup (causing accelerated chemical reactions) and fading. Always protect collections from direct exposure to sunlight.

- **Supervising readers.** Keep an eye on readers at all times and be aware that they have less experience at handling collection material and will need guidance and assistance.

- **Pencils / Erasers**

Only pencils and laptops may be used in areas where valued materials are handled, used, or stored. All pens, markers are prohibited as inks can easily offset onto hands and counters, and transfer onto objects in the collection. Do not use erasers as eraser debris is easily transferred into, or under items, and will cause abrasion, soiling or leave impressions in the surface.

- **Readers or Staff should not make notations in any media on Library collections.** Special arrangements are made for accession marking by staff, and guidelines must be followed.

- **Special care is required when accessing boxed items.**

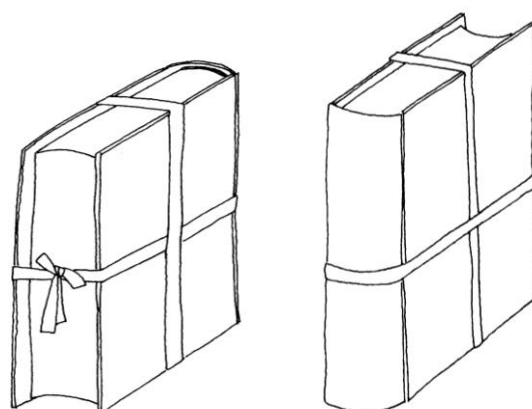
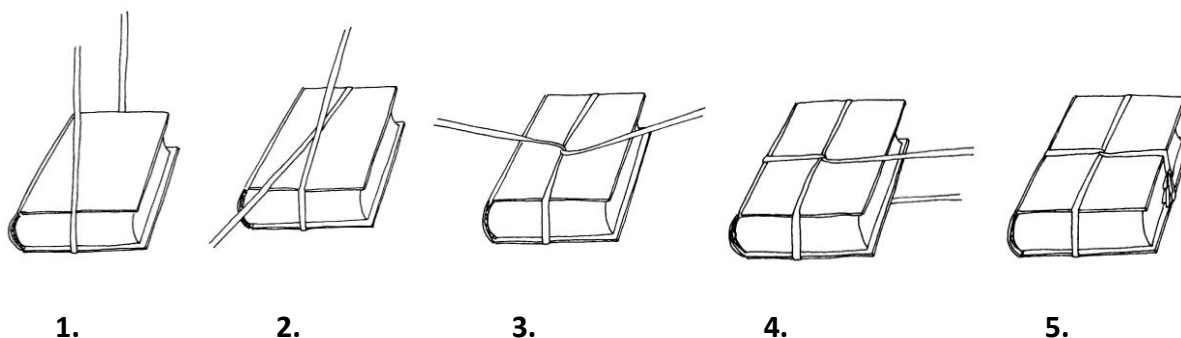
When retrieving a single item from a folder, first remove the file folder from the box then remove the item. Do not extract the item from the file folder while it is still in the box. Also note the sequence or order in which it was stored. *Do not extract items from boxes or folders unless requested and permitted to do so.*

- **Do not use metal paper clips or rubber bands to secure objects together.** Individual folders can be used to organize and combine multi-sheet records. Use folders or enclosures approved by the Library.

- **Never attempt to repair items,** especially with pressure sensitive tape. Do not use any pressure sensitive tabs or labels in direct contact with archival materials. *The Preservation & Conservation Department must be consulted on all issues concerning the repair of collection material.*

- **Damaged Books** are difficult to handle. If guidelines are included with the item, follow them. If you are unsure how to handle the item contact the Preservation & Conservation Department.

If a book is held together with cotton tapes, please retie it in the correct manner. If in doubt please ask for assistance from Reading Room staff, Preservation & Conservation staff, or refer to the diagram below.



HANDLING/MOVING LIBRARY MATERIAL

Know the route you are traveling. Consider obstacles such as closed doors, lifts, stairs, and tight turns. If necessary, get someone to accompany you. Make sure you have space available at your destination. Do not leave any library material directly on the floor.

When packing, use Library plastic crates or Archival Boxes, especially when moving items out of buildings. Cardboard Archive boxes provide poor protection from the weather, impact, and stacking, therefore care must be taken when these are used. Certain material may be transferred to storage areas in polyethylene folders. Please ensure items are fully inserted into the folder when transiting areas. Place these items at the top of trolleys or boxes as the contents may be damaged if weight is placed on them. Do not remove items from enclosures including folders or boxes unless authorized to do so.

Ensure access-ways are covered to protect cardboard archival boxes from the rain.

Pack books into crates and boxes vertically, flat or with their spines down and fore-edges up. Pack around books with bubble wrap to ensure items do not move in transit.

Move plastic containers with two people whenever possible. The maximum weight for a plastic container should be no more than 15kg. Contact the Preservation & Conservation Department if you need packing material.

Avoid overloading crates, as they will become difficult to handle and potentially dangerous if they are too heavy. Observe fill-level guide. Avoid leaving library material unattended in vehicles. If moving crates to off-site storage make sure they are adequately protected from the weather and ensure crates are well secured in the transit vehicle.

When stacking trolleys pack books vertically, flat or with their spines down and fore edges up. Avoid overloading the trolley or jamming books too tightly. Lay large folio-sized volumes flat; keep books within the edges of the trolley. Load the trolley so that the center of gravity remains low making it more stable when in motion. As books are removed for re-shelving, try to prevent damage to those remaining on the trolley by ensuring that volumes remain supported.



Do

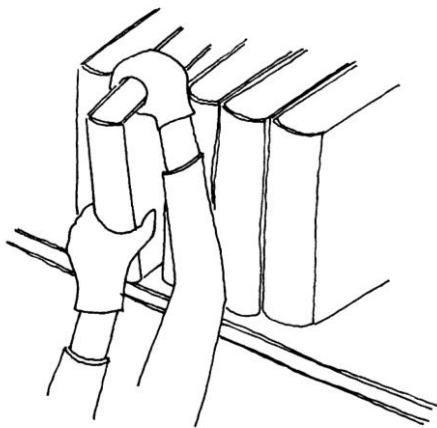


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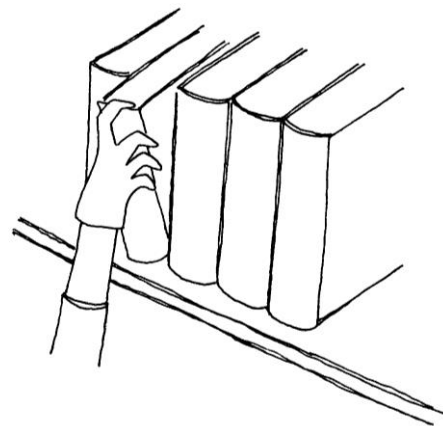
SIMPLE GUIDELINES WHEN RETRIEVING BOOKS

Always ensure that your hands are clean. Most of the dirt on book covers and pages is accumulated grime from oily fingerprints; while invisible initially, finger grease becomes visible as it oxidizes and collects dirt.

Try not to pull the book off the shelf by the top of the spine, as this will eventually cause the spine to tear or be pulled completely off the book. If there is room on the shelf then reach over the top of the book to the fore-edge and pull it out, this will make it easier to remove the book. Books should be supported when pulled from the shelf by holding the text block either side of the spine.

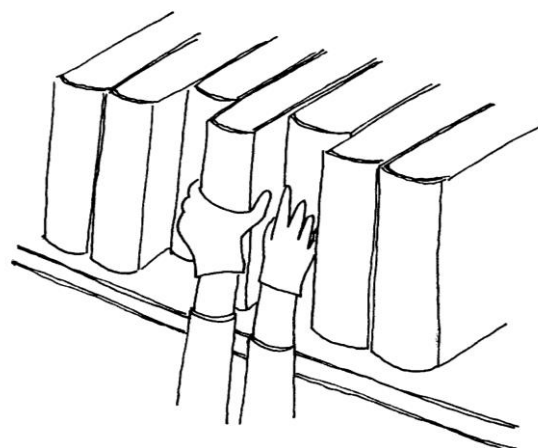


Do



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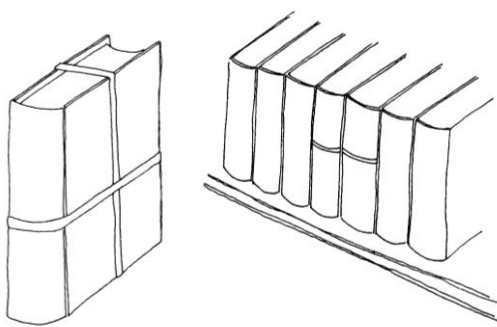
If modern books are tightly packed and there is no room above the book, then push back the volumes on either side of the one to be retrieved, exposing enough of the book to allow a firm grip on the text block. **This method should be used with caution when removing early printed or fragile books** as it can cause damage to the binding due to friction and strain. **Once a book is removed adjust the remaining books** and bookends to support and protect those left behind.



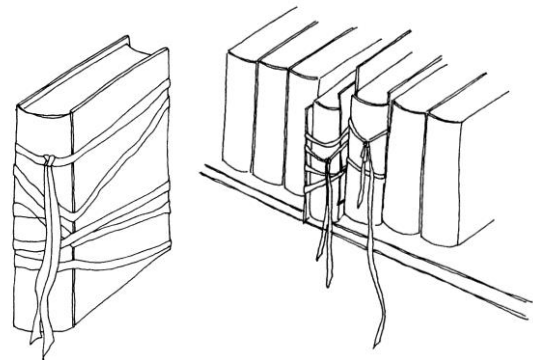
Books that are already damaged are particularly vulnerable, once identified they should be handled with extra care. Always use two hands to remove and replace large books onto shelves. Please do not attempt to make repairs to a library book, as this may inadvertently harm, rather than fix the volume. *If you notice any damage please notify a member of staff from the Preservation & Conservation Department.*

SIMPLE GUIDELINES WHEN RE-SHELVING BOOKS

In the presence of moisture, dust and dirt become a breeding ground for mould growth and acidity. Ideally the shelves should be dust free before items are placed on them. **Most books should be shelved vertically** and firmly supported by a bookend, leaving some room at the end of the shelf. If the book is tied with cotton tape ensure it is re-tied correctly before being returned to the shelf.



Do



Don't

To replace a volume, loosen the bookend and move the existing volumes aside to create a space. Insert the book, and then readjust the bookend.

Where possible, volumes of similar height should be shelved vertically as a unit. Support standing volumes with an appropriately sized bookend, one that is tall enough to provide good support and that has a wide profile. Interspersing short and tall volumes in a vertical unit must be avoided, since the taller volumes need the support of their neighbours to avoid distortion. If book-ends are not available several books on their sides can be used as book-ends to keep the remaining books upright. Do not leave any library material directly on the floor.

Oversize volumes should be shelved on deep shelving vertically or flat, never on their fore-edges, as this position suspends the entire weight of the book from its joints and pulls the text block out of its cover. Where possible do not let books extend beyond the edges of shelves into aisles, as they can be damaged by passers-by or trolleys.

When books are stored horizontally, make sure they are not stacked too high. This will prevent damage to volumes due to compression. Only volumes of similar size should be stacked on top of one another to allow for easy access and to ensure that volumes are fully supported, which will prevent warping. Large volumes should never be stacked on smaller volumes.

It is important to allow space for air to circulate freely around the shelves, including behind the books. Try to avoid overcrowding shelves as the books become difficult to remove without damaging the spine and the bindings can distort, leading to further damage.

Additional guidelines for compactus shelving. Books must not extend beyond the edge of the shelf. Oversized books should be reassigned to a fixed shelf. Take care when opening or closing the compactus. If the shelving is moved too quickly or jolted it will cause books to become dislodged, leading to crushed or lost items.

SIMPLE GUIDELINES WHEN CARRYING BOOKS

For health and safety reasons all staff involved in the constant handling and moving of books must receive authorised instruction in the correct way in which to lift and handle heavy loads, and must complete Manual Handling Training. **Please notify your supervisor if you haven't received this training.**

Always check the proposed route, clear any movable obstacles out of the way, look for places to stop and rest and consider the size of entrances/doorways, stairs, lifts, corridors.

Make life easier for yourself! Avoid risk of damage to books, and only carry what you can comfortably hold in both hands. Use boxes or trolleys if it is necessary to carry more books than can be securely held in two hands.



Do



Don't

Carry extra large books under the arm with the spine down or in front of you against your body with both hands.

Never carry or pack books with the fore edge down as this position suspends the entire weight of the book from its joints and pulls the text block out of its cover.

For further information on handling please contact the staff from the
Preservation & Conservation Department ~ 896 1137/ 1149
Early Printed Book Department ~ 896 1172
Manuscripts Department ~ 896 1189
Illustrations by Marie Jose Gonzales 2007