

Preserving BOOKS



Because our stories tell us who we are

Find a stable storage space.

Books present challenges because they are made of multiple materials (paper, leather, cloth, etc.) and include moveable parts like pages and bindings. Store books in a clean storage area where you can keep temperature moderate (72°F or less) and relative humidity stable (50% or less). High temps and humidity (or rapid changes in either) speed decay in paper and bindings. Provide good air circulation and do not expose books to chemical fumes, cleaning supplies, plywood or cardboard. Check regularly for insect activity and pests. Avoid attics and basements; an air-conditioned room or closet is best.

Protect from light.

Light, especially the UV part of the spectrum, causes fading and other damage. Store special books away from natural and artificial light.

Handle with care.

Keep books of similar size together vertically on shelves so the covers of taller volumes don't bend over shorter ones. Try to store books away from exterior walls. Keep bottom shelves several inches above the floor to avoid damage from flooding.

When taking a book from a shelf, push the books on either side toward the back, and grasp the volume you want firmly on both sides of the spine. This prevents damage caused by pulling at the top of the spine. Use two hands or support wedges for opening large or fragile books. Avoid putting stress on the joints between spines and covers, and never force a book to open flat.

Always make sure your hands are clean before handling. Don't use rubber bands, paper clips, marking pens or highlighters on books you want to preserve. Don't apply oils to leather bindings, as they can cause or increase damage.

Use preservation storage enclosures.

Use clear polyester wrappers marked PAT (passed photographic activity test) to protect dust jackets and keep deteriorating covers from transferring debris to other books.

You can also wrap books in heavy paper before storing in boxes, or purchase individual boxes and custom-fitted enclosures for your most important books. Look for archival-quality products, buffered paper or plastics free of sulfur, acids, peroxides and other reactive materials.

Protect, don't repair.

Don't try to repair books that are unique or that you wish to pass on to future generations. Using tape to mend torn pages or reattach loose or detached covers, while well-intentioned, ultimately causes more damage. Simply box a damaged book, store it flat, and handle the volume very carefully.

Donate

Remember, you can always donate your materials to Archives & Local History!

For more information, speak with an archivist.



**Archives &
Local History**

303-688-7730

DCL.org/history

Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm
or by appointment

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