Caring for Books and Paper

On today’s agenda:

- Deterioration Mechanisms of Paper
- Care and Handling of Books
- Care and Handling of Paper
- Resources
HISTORY AND PROCESS
PAPER MAKING

PAPER MAKING BY HAND
- Rags softened by fermentation (setting)
- Rotted fibers stamped to create individual flakes
- Fibers dispersed in water to create slurry
- Mold and deckle dipped into slurry to form sheets
- Sheets couch'd between felt and pressed
- Wet sheets hung to dry
- Dry sheets sized with gelatin

HISTORY DRIVES CHANGE
- The industrial revolution increased the need for inexpensive paper.
- This led to improvements in the paper making process.
  - Paper making machines
  - Wood pulp paper
  - Alum rosin size
PAPER ADDITIVES

- Whiteners
- Brighteners
- Filler
- Wet strength additives
- Sizes
  - Gelatin
  - Alum rosin

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Paper deteriorates via hydrolysis reactions

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A NOTE ABOUT ACIDIC PAPER

- Prevalent from mid-18th century until 1960s-70s.
- The more acidic your paper, the more hydrolysis reactions you have.
- The more hydrolysis reactions you have, the more brittle your paper.
- But just because paper is brittle does not mean that it is in immediate danger.
CARE AND HANDLING
BOOKS

PARTS OF THE BOOK
Some common vocabulary

COMMON FORMS OF DAMAGE TO BOOKS
- Textblock separates from the case
- Damage to top of spine
- Detached covers
- Torn pages
- Torn endsheets
SHELVING BOOKS

- Make sure that books are straight up and down on the shelves.
- Use bookends to keep shelves tidy and books from leaning.
- Shelve books by size.
- If a book is too large to fit on the shelf, shelve spine down or with oversized materials.
- Remove books from shelf by pushing the volume on either side back and pulling from the spine.
- Avoid wooden shelving.

SHELVING OVERSIZED BOOKS

- Oversized books should be shelved horizontally.
- Ideally, shelve no more than three high.
- Shelve the largest book on the bottom.
- Remove individually to reach books at bottom.
- Always transport on book trucks.

USING BOOKS

How does the book open?
ACID FREE

LIGNIN-FREE
Less than 1% lignin

ALKALINE BUFFERED
- Contains a chemical reserve that neutralizes acids as they form.
- Not suitable for:
  - Textiles
  - Art with dyes and pigments
  - Metal
ONE WORD: PLASTICS

- 3 acceptable plastics
  - Polyester (Mylar)
  - Polypropylene
  - Polyethylene
- Never use polyvinyl chloride (PVC)

THE CLOSER THE ENCLOSURE IS TO THE COLLECTION ITEM, THE MORE IMPORTANT QUALITY BECOMES.

A rule of thumb

LAYERS OF SUPPORT

- Primary - box
- Secondary - folder
- Tertiary - sleeve
BOXES, FOLDERS AND SLEEVES

LOOSE PAPER

OVERSIZED BOXES

- Drop front boxes with telescoping lids are best.
- Use for oversized and extremely fragile materials.
- Come in a range of sizes large enough to hold unfolded newspapers.

LEADS TO DAMAGE

NO FOLDERS
FOLDERS FOR BOXES AND FLAT FILES

- Can be standard folder stock or reinforced.
- Choose folders slightly smaller than boxes.
- Consider the application and sturdiness of folders.

POLYESTER SLEEVES

Protection for your most fragile paper

HOUSING LOOSE PAPER

- Make sure your boxes and folders are in good condition.
- Place paper into folders before putting into boxes.
- Make sure your boxes are properly filled.
- Always label boxes in pencil.
- Separate oversized documents and store flat.
- A separation slip will help you maintain archival order.
ROLLED DOCUMENTS

- Flat storage is preferable to rolled storage.
- Roll in acid-free tubes.
- Wrap in acid-free paper or Mylar to protect from dirt.
- Store flat.

RESOURCES

- THC’s Collections Care for Small Museums resource list
- Sustainable Heritage Network
- Ritzenthaler’s Preserving Archives and Manuscripts
- Harvey & Marhard’s The Preservation Management Handbook

THANK YOU!

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