Preservation Policies at the Classics Library

Ensuring the longevity of our library collections for future researchers is the responsibility of all library staff, students, scholars, and researchers. To that end, many of the policies at the Classics Library address the long-term preservation of library materials that all library users must follow.

Below, are the preservation policies with their rationale. Knowing why the policy is in place will help you answer questions from users and improve your own handling of materials while working at the Classics Library.

1. **No food or drink (including water; drinking fountains are available in the lobby).**

   *Why?!* Water damaged materials are easy to spot in a collection! Water damage to paper may destroy information and is almost always detrimental to the experience of reading the materials. Here are some common types of damage caused by introducing liquids to paper:

   - **Cockling** - Paper is exceedingly hygroscopic (able to absorb water from surroundings). So, just a drop of water will be absorbed quickly causing paper to deform as individual fibers swell and later shrink with drying. This swelling is called cockling.

     ![Cockled paper](http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/.a/6a00d8341c464853ef0192ac5325dc970d-pi?_ga=2.165188220.2133259656.1522089202-660631858.1522089202)

   - **Fusing** - Clay coated papers (glossy, smooth to the touch, heavy) once wet, fuse together. This type of damage is in most cases non-reversible.

     ![Fused paper](https://psap.library.illinois.edu/collection-id-guide/paper)
• Tidelines - Depending on the type of liquid spilled and/or the cleanliness of the paper damaged, after drying tidelines may appear. These lines are a concentration of contaminants and degradation products left behind from the evaporation of the spilled liquid. Tidelines both weaken and mar the paper.


• Mold - Water and/or high-humidity are necessary components to instigate mold growth. Materials that are damaged by water and shelved while still damp can create a microclimate favorable for mold growth. Mold can eat organic material, causes staining, hasten chemical deterioration, and in certain species is toxic to humans.

![Mold remediation of a book that had a hidden wet gutter.](https://blogs.library.duke.edu/preservation/2014/03/21/1091-project-the-mold-edition/)

• Staining - The most common damaged to paper is the staining left by liquids. Though the below might be an extreme example, after studying all-night it is plausible.

![Clearly coffee and paper don’t mix. This type of staining takes hours to remove, if it is possible to remove, and only takes seconds to create.](https://newsamnews.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/coffeestains.jpg)
2. Patrons are asked to handle materials with clean hands, turn pages slowly and carefully, and touch only the margins, if possible. Lotions and hand sanitizers are to be avoided before handling materials as they contain harmful residues.

Though the pages were turned from the margin, obviously the hand was not clean! (Image from https://medievalfragments.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/leiden_ub_bpl_191_a.jpg)

3. Books must be supported as evenly as possible to prevent strain on the bindings. Staff will provide book cradles as necessary.


4. Do not rest objects or take notes on top of library materials.


5. Unopened leaves of books may be cut only by staff members.

Learn why leaves might be left uncut by visiting https://collation.folger.edu/2016/08/uncut-uncropped-untrimmed-uh-oh/ (Image also provided by Folgers)

6. Only pencils may be used in the Classics Library. No marks on materials may be added or erased. No tracings or rubbings may be made without specific permission.

A rare book that has writing attributed to the previous owner is considered annotated; sadly for our patrons a library book written in by a contemporary student is considered vandalism. (Image from https://queenslib.wordpress.com/category/18th-century/)
7. To hold or mark a page for later reading, use only clean, unused paper. The adhesive in post-it/sticky notes will stain the paper where they are adhered, and on fragile items can lift the inks and tear pages. Scrap of paper with ink or soft graphite on the surface may bleed or rub off on the adjacent pages. Clean white paper is the best marker.

![A hastily removed sticky note and the paper that came along with it!](https://www.senatehouselibrary.ac.uk/using-the-library/loveyourlibrary-help-stop-book-damage)

8. Books not in use are most safely stored as they are shelved – on their tail or bottom edge. Leaving materials piled for an extended period of time may lead to deformations of the covers and/or spine, as well as to the loosening of the text block.

9. Speaking of how books are shelved, to remove a bound item from a shelf, push back the books on either side and grasp the middle of the book. This will ensure there isn’t undue strain on the top of the spine.

The right way to remove a book, easy and good for you and the book! (Image from https://blogumlib.com/2015/05/25/useful-tips-for-handling-the-library-books/)

A book awaiting repair in the Preservation Lab. (Image credit Holly Prochaska)
10. A final tip when working in the stacks—when bound materials are too tall to be shelved standing upright, they should be shelved with their spines down. Shelving with the spine up (call# label showing, fore edge down) will cause the text block to pull away from the book’s cover due to the weight of the text block. Turning the book over and placing the spine down allows the shelf to support the weight of the bound pages.

The fourth book from the left has been shelved incorrectly, with the spine up. The heavy text block has broken away from the cover. The green book next to it has been shelved correctly, with the spine down. The heavy text block is supported by the shelving.

(Image credit Holly Prochaska)

Thank you for caring for our library materials!