

BOOK HANDLING GUIDELINES FOR WATSON LIBRARY STAFF AND PATRONS



Personal habits that will prevent damage to library materials:

Always:

- ❖ Have clean hands while handling books.
- ❖ Be sensitive to fragile and damaged books.
- ❖ Observe the Library's food policy:
 - Absolutely no food in the library
 - Water bottles are allowed in the reading room but may not be used at the special collections table

Never:

- ❖ Place books on chairs, floors or on heating/air conditioning vents.
- ❖ Use pens in proximity to books or write on paper that is resting on book pages or covers.
- ❖ Rest hard jewelry or wrist watches on books when reading.
- ❖ Lean on the books when reading.
- ❖ Use Post-Its, rubber bands or paper clips on books to mark places in books. Acid-free paper bookmarks are available from the Circulation Desk (or Book Conservation).

Physically supporting books prevents damage and improves access to text:

Always:

- ❖ Load book trucks carefully and be careful when in motion (especially on elevators).
- ❖ Use bookends to prevent books from falling over on trucks and shelves.
- ❖ Pay attention to small books, as they are easily lost and damaged.
- ❖ When taking a book off a shelf, hold the book at the center of the spine, don't pull the book from the headcap.
- ❖ Use book supports and snakes when consulting fragile and difficult-to-open books.
- ❖ Clear enough desk space to open large books safely.

Never:

- ❖ Stack books more than three high (larger books on the bottom, smaller on top).
- ❖ Use bookends to prop books open.
- ❖ Force books open or crack the spines of new books.
- ❖ Carry more books than you comfortably can.

Need for special care and intervention:

Many items in the library collections are inherently fragile, damaged, have special handling requirements or are in need of conservation. These items can be difficult to handle safely. Features of books requiring special care are books with fragile fold-out maps and illustrations, embrittled paper, loose and severely torn pages, books with uncut pages; and badly damaged bindings with detached or loose boards or red rot leather.

Please ask the Reference, Registration or Circulation staff for help:

They can:

- ❖ Find you another copy in better condition
- ❖ Find you a copy in digital form
- ❖ Assist with scanning fragile books
- ❖ Contact a conservator if necessary



Please use the book supports and weights provided in the reading room and at the scanners.

If you need information about acquiring supports for your office or library, contact mindell.dubansky@metmuseum.org

For assistance with Museum library collection emergencies, contact the Sherman Fairchild Center for Book Conservation
Ext. 2891