



Tips for caring for old and treasured volumes

NOTE: these tips are general in nature and no responsibility is accepted by 'The Bookbindery' for any loss or damage, of any kind, should you choose to follow these guidelines.

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The most important things relating to the care of books are relatively obvious; Books should be protected from moisture, extremes of temperature, fire, insects, high humidity, direct sunlight, etc and also, of course, from anybody or anything (pets have often damaged books) that won't be careful with them.

In addition note:

- Where a book is very heavy or has a very large 'square' (that is, the cover is a lot bigger than the pages) it is often better stored 'lying down' (horizontal) rather than upright on a shelf.
- Take care with the number of books on each shelf. If there are too many books on a shelf, the books can get damaged - the tops of the spines can become torn from people trying to get books out. It is also easy for pages and soft covers to get caught-up and crushed when the books are forced in and out of the shelf. Even hard-covered volumes can become twisted out of shape, if left for a long time in an unusual position - which is much more likely where there really isn't enough room on the shelf. Too few books on a shelf is obviously just as bad, if it means the books are left to fall over or off the shelf.

One solution, especially applicable in a display situation is to use book ends. If these are the right size for your books, they will hold them in place without making it difficult for you to remove your books from the shelf. In addition, many book ends have some aesthetic value. Apart from extremely fragile volumes, occasional, careful use is often good for a book - may hinder mould growth and also may alert you to any problems.

- Always use appropriate gloves when touching volumes that are especially old or valuable or fragile.
- Avoid doing repairs yourself to any book you value, unless you are sure you know what you are doing. We especially advise against using self adhesive tapes on treasured books. This is particularly important if you think you may eventually want to have the volume(s) properly restored/repared by 'The Bookbindery'.
- In contrast to the previous point, if you have inexpensive books that you just want to 'keep going' for a little longer, see the [SMART book repair kit](#) - which seems to us great for this type of situation.

- Covering films do have their uses, they are especially good in a situation where a book has a high use for a relatively short period - such as in some libraries. However we advise against applying films, especially self-adhesive films, to hard-covered books, where they often do more harm than good.
- Dust-jackets are relatively fragile and sometimes very valuable, so a non-adhesive film (so that it can be removed) is often a good idea. 'The Bookbindery' does supply some film for this.
- 'The Bookbindery' can make special boxes for books that are specially valuable and or specially fragile - see [Protective Boxes and Cases](#)
- Leather books often benefit from a small amount of neatsfoot oil every 12 months - put a small amount on a rag and wipe onto the covers (make sure you avoid the pages and anything else that isn't leather). In general don't do this on suede leather as the oil may stain it. In any case always trial this in an inconspicuous place first.
- Don't photocopy out of books - you may break an already weak binding.
- For treasured books that you think you may eventually wish to have repaired, make sure you save any pieces of cover material that have become detached from the main cover of the book. Also, be careful to save any pages that have become torn or have fallen out. If you aren't able to bring the volume to us straight away, it is obviously important to ensure the these loose pieces are stored safely, but are also easy to find when you are ready to have the book repaired.
- Don't force a metal clasp, on a book, that doesn't close easily. Many photograph albums, family Bibles, and other precious volumes were made with metal clasps. Over the years a book can swell through what the paper absorbs from the atmosphere. Also many clasps have been damaged, so, for one reason or another, these clasps may not fit perfectly. If the clasps are forced 'into place' it often puts considerable strain on the binding - which may cause other damage.
- To help preserve your books, don't allow a multitude of 'keepsakes' and 'bookmarks' to be stored inside them. Many family Bibles and other books that are significant to a family, have a lot of pressed flowers, prize notices, newspaper clippings, photos, bookmarks, religious tracts, and so on, collected inside them. A single one of these, in most cases, wouldn't make any great difference to the binding. However the accumulation of them can put considerable strain on the binding of a book. It is also worth noting that even a single unsuitable item can sometimes cause discolouration or other damage to the pages of the book. We suggest that you would be much better to make something (or we can often help by making something) to store these items in.