Display Methods for Books

Introduction
When displaying books, consideration must be given to the physical support of their binding structures and to environmental factors that can lead to their deterioration.

Support Methods
Because of their weight or the condition of their bindings, books require an adequate support to prevent damage during handling or display. A few simple and inexpensive display techniques will provide support for a book and will help to prolong its life.

Materials
Supports can be made using a variety of materials. These include the following:
- acid-free matboard (100% rag or highly purified wood pulp)
- acrylic sheet, such as Plexiglas
- lightweight inert plastic board, such as Coroplast (polypropylene twinwall plastic panel) or Hi-core (polycarbonate twinwall profile sheets)
- wood sealed with acrylic latex paint and faced with acid-free matboard. A description of sealants appropriate for wood is included in Catherine Miles, "Wood Coatings for Display and Storage Cases," *Studies in Conservation*, 31/3 (1986): 114-124, which is available as a reprint from the CCI Library.

Suggested Supports for Books
Do not display volumes upright with their covers open because the weight of the bookblock can distort and damage the binding structure. Books displayed on an angle must be supported along the thickness of the bookblock by a ledge or a lip (Figure 1).

Books opened to the title page or to the first or last section of text require a support under the front or back cover to prevent the endpaper and binding material from splitting along the joint (Figure 2).

Strips of thin-gauge (3 mil) Mylar transparent polyester film placed around the bookblock will hold the pages and will prevent them from fanning open. This Mylar band can

Figure 1. Stand for displaying closed books.
be joined using a small piece of double-sided tape (3M #415). Take care that the tape does not come into contact with the book. The strips should be wide enough for the size and thickness of the book and should not be fastened too tightly around the pages.

Books that are to be displayed open or that do not open easily are better supported by a wide, V-shaped form made of stronger, rigid materials like Plexiglas (acrylic plastic sheet), wood that has been painted and faced with acid-free matboard, or Hi-core (Figure 3).

**Display**

Ideally, books should be displayed in a specially constructed display case that protects them from dust and from extreme fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity. Do not display volumes near a heat source, such as a hot air vent, or in direct incandescent or natural light.

Do not display books with sensitive images (e.g., inks, watercolours, charcoal, pencil, etc.) in direct light. The pigments are extremely sensitive to light, and permanent display under high light levels will cause the ink and pigments to fade. To control the amount of light to which books are exposed, keep display lights on only when required and set the lights to the lowest intensity possible. If the volumes are to be displayed for long periods of time, turn the pages frequently.

**Suppliers**

*Matboard (4-ply or 8-ply, acid-free), 3M #415 double-sided tape, Mylar polyester film:*
art and archival suppliers, such as

Bury Media and Supplies Ltd.  
4255 Arbutus Street, B-5  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6H 4R1  
Tel.: (604) 731-3439  
(604) 731-5838  
FAX: (604) 736-7492

Carr McLean Co.  
461 Horner Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario  
M8W 4X2  
Tel.: (416) 252-3371

1180 Winnipeg Street  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
S4R 1J6  
Tel.: (306) 757-5693

University Products of Canada  
6535 Millcreek Drive, Unit 8  
Mississauga, Ontario  
L5N 2M2  
Tel.: (416) 858-7888  
Toll-free: 1-800-667-2632  
FAX: (416) 858-8586

Woolfitt’s Art Enterprises Inc.*  
390 Dupont Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5R 1V9  
Tel.: (416) 922-3017  
* ask about museum bulk orders

**Acrylic sheet (3 mm or 6 mm):**
plastic, building, and art suppliers

*Plexiglas (acrylic plastic sheet):*
Manufactured by Rohm and Haas Canada Inc., Westhill, Ontario.  
Distributed by  
E.M. Plastic and Electric Products Ltd  
430 Norfinch Drive  
Downview, Ontario  
M3N 1Y4  
Tel.: (416) 665-6111  
Toll-free: 1-800-268-1252  
Branches in Dartmouth, Montreal, Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver

*Corrugated plastic board:*
Coroplast polypropylene twinwall plastic panel:  
Manufactured by Coroplast Ltd., Granby, Quebec.  
Distributed by E.M. Plastic and Electrical Products Ltd. (address and telephone numbers given above)

*Hi-core polycarbonate twinwall profile sheets:*
Manufactured by Matra Plast Inc., Schomberg, Ontario  
Tel.: (416) 939-2154

**Further Reading**


Rohm and Haas. *Fabrication Manual.*  

Rohm and Haas. *General Information and Physical Properties.*  

Copies are also available in French.

Texte également publié en version française.

© Government of Canada, 1994  
Cat. No. NM95-57/11-8-1987E  
ISSN 0714-6221  
Printed in Canada