



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

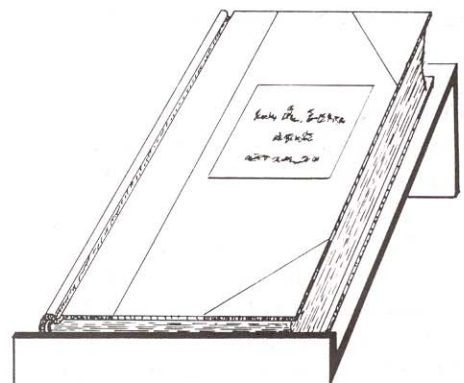


Figure 1. Stand for displaying closed books.



Figure 2. Box support holding front cover.

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).



Figure 3. V-shaped support for open books.

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.
V6J 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

Norcal Reproductions (1981) Ltd.
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
Downsview, 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

Canadian Conservation Institute. *Protective Enclosures for Books and Paper Artifacts*. CCI Notes 11/1. Ottawa: Canadian Conservation Institute, 1988.

Greenfield, Jane. *The Care of Fine Books*. New York: Nick Lyon Books, 1988.

Rohm and Haas. *Fabrication Manual*. Plexiglas Acrylic Sheet product information booklet PLA-21. Philadelphia, PA: Rohm and Haas, 1990.

Rohm and Haas. *General Information and Physical Properties*. Plexiglas Acrylic Sheet product information booklet PLA-22. Philadelphia, PA: Rohm and Haas, 1990.

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