

News

Helping Patrons Care for Their Home Libraries and Collections

—by Pat Wagner

If you are a professional in a library or archive, you are likely to have had to respond to a bewildering variety of questions from your patrons about the care of books and documents. This article, based on interviews with dozens of book and library professionals from California to Washington DC, can provide you with ways to help average patrons who seek advice about their books and documents.

who hoards romance novels and the professional journalist with the private collection of books on politics and economics. It might also include the Shakespeare lover who has all of the master's works in digital form and the graduate student who lives on the internet. Typical content lovers include authors and writers, educators, business people, consultants, professional researchers, readers of popular fiction and students.

The "Content" Versus "Artifact" Collector

A good first step when discussing home collector care issues with a patron is to find out if the patron is primarily a "content" person or an "artifact" person. The "content" person has books primarily because of the information in the books; the "artifact" person is more concerned with the physical condition of the books themselves. Although most booklovers have mixed agendas, these two simple models can help you to determine the kind of advice that will be most useful, particularly regarding conservation issues.

"How much is my mother's library of cookbooks worth?"

"A book dealer told me to use lighter fluid to remove labels from the dust jackets of old books; is this a safe method?"

"How should I pack my books for moving?"

"Why can't I use duct tape on the cover of this old fishing guidebook?"

"Can I hire you to organize my collection of paperback novels?"

Content collectors don't care about the condition of the book or document, or what form the information takes, as long as they have access to it. They tend to use their collections heavily, either for pleasure or business, and they accumulate resources without much regard for how the information is stored or maintained.

The content patron does things to books that makes conservators shudder. Book pages are underlined and dog-eared. Covers are annotated in ink. For them a book is a tool, nothing more. It is only the voice of the author and the facts on the page that

Content collectors include the stay-at-home parent

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Home Libraries — *continued from page 1*

they want to capture. A Massachusetts college professor — content collector with a home library of over five thousand books — has a color-coding system she uses to mark the spines, fore-edges, and pages of the books. She even will rip books apart and file the chapters in folders according to topic as a way of indexing material.

Helping the Content Collector

For this patron, a lecture on the proper use of wheat paste or deacidification spray would be a waste of time. However he/she could benefit from information about creating facsimile hard copies or scanned electronic records of his/her deteriorating collection of one-of-a-kind resource documents. This patron might also like to know about ready-made solutions, such as prefabricated pamphlet covers for fragile ephemera and archival boxes for unbound manuscripts.

Content collectors need to know that the average midlist fiction or nonfiction book, which probably makes up the bulk of their collection, have a bookstore lifespan of 18 months. Unless they have bought multiple books as backups, a book that is lost to irrecoverable damage could be a book lost forever.

Content collectors also need to know about inventory, appraisals, and insurance, which are probably the most valuable investments they can make. If their collections contain mostly contemporary books from major publishers and the books have no historical value, the content collectors can get away with a simple physical inventory of titles and authors. An inventory will help them work out a reasonable settlement from their insurance company, if replacement is necessary. Some insurance agents will recommend panning a video camera slowly over the spines to provide such a record. Others will suggest still camera shots as well as a written inventory. If content is the only issue, the patron does not have to keep the detailed bibliographic notes an archivist or conservator is accustomed to creating and maintaining.

Suggest that patrons check with an insurance agent for details on how to efficiently inventory their books. This might be a good time to remind them to check on their insurance coverage, particularly if they live in a rented home or apartment. Also, books stored in basements and garages are at great

risk of not being insured, particularly if the patron lives in a flood plain: flood insurance does not cover the contents of a basement. They won't believe you when you tell them, but that's OK. If you panic the neglectful patron into getting better insurance for his/her collection, you have done your job well.

Appraisals are necessary if the books to be insured are out-of-print, rare, or collectible because the patron will have to search for replacement copies from expensive sources. Bona fide book and document appraisers can be found through a local rare and antiquarian bookstores, or by calling the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America in New York City at 212-757-9395. Many states have local chapters, which can provide your library or institution with free literature, including lists of participating bookstores. Warn the patron that appraisers charge for their work, usually by the hour, and patrons should get references on every appraiser.

Helping the Artifact Collector

The artifact collector is the patron more interested in the book as an object with historic, aesthetic or financial value. They are much more interested in learning about typical conservation techniques, but they can have different agendas than the typical archivist, particularly if they collect books only for investment purposes.

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Fall 1998 Issue: August 31, 1998

The Development of the Pamphlet Binder Conservators Prefer

In the mid-1980s during a round table discussion of conservators and preservation officers, the need for a better technique of pamphlet binding was discussed. A high concern was that the adhesive of the binder's pregummed cloth flange came in direct contact with the pamphlet. The old method of pamphlet binding was damaging to the valuable materials held within. The adhesive strip created fracture points on the title page, caused partial discoloration, and restricted the pamphlet from opening flat. Other procedures the round table examine entailed side-stapling material that was originally joined through the fold causing fracture points and restricted opening.

After listening and interacting in the discussions, Archival Products developed a new pamphlet binder focusing on three main points: 1) adhesives would not touch the pamphlet, 2) flexible, scored cloth spines would make through-the-fold stapling feasible; and 3) a pressure-sensitive strip on the outside of the pamphlet spine would hold any stapling or stitching in place.

Since other pamphlet binders on the market were constructed from poor quality boards and cloth that were susceptible to moisture, soiling, dents and scratches, Archival Products researched and developed with Specialty Paperboard, now FiberMark®, an archival board that is moisture resistant, durable, and very dense. After months of collaborative effort the Archival Products' high density acrylic coated pamphlet board was developed. No other board was as dense and strong. The acrylic coating provided a barrier from stains, dust, handling, and –most significantly– water. The dark gray color was chosen not only for aesthetic reasons but also to conceal soiling visible on light-color boards. The pressure-sensitive cloth spine wrap gave a finished look to the bound pamphlet. During the development period, examiners at 3M® conducted several tests to guarantee against cold flow.

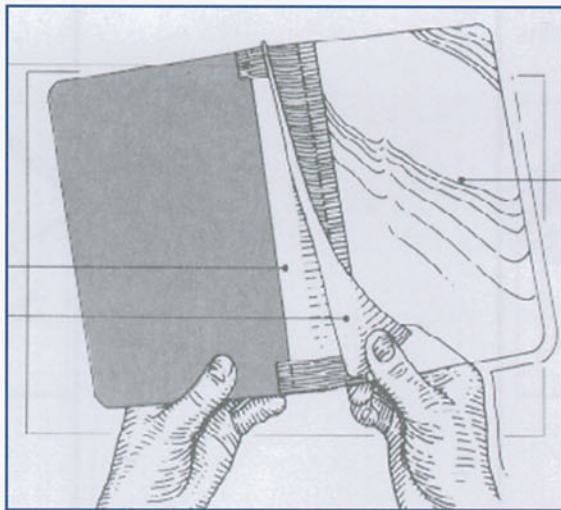
The end product, a spine wrap pamphlet binder, was so unique to other binders on the market that Fritz James, President of Library Binding Service and its Archival Products Division, attained both a

US patent in 1988 and a Canadian patent in 1992 for "making, using, and selling the invention".

There are four principal elements in the spine wrap pamphlet binder invention that make it unlike any other binder on the market, thus warranting the patent protection: 1) no adhesives touch the pamphlet when it is bound into the binder, 2) binding requires little time, effort and does not require tools such as heat sealing devices; 3) pamphlets can be removed from the binder without damage, 4) all components used in the binders are stable and archivally sound.

Due to the preservation quality of the Archival Products spine wrap pamphlet binder, new standards have been set within the field for materials used in preservation enclosures. Too many times pamphlets, documents and music are initially categorized as short-term items only to discover too late they are of long-term value. You can protect these items from damage by initially using the Archival Products spine wrap pamphlet binder.

We invite you to compare other pamphlets to the researched, quality-tested, hand-crafted original made by Archival Products. Free samples are available by contacting Millie Knee, Customer Service Representative, at 1-800-526-5640 or e-mailing: archival@ix.netcom.com. Also ask about our Quick Bind Pamphlet Binder and Archival Folder for comparison.



Home Libraries — *continued from page 2*

Artifact collectors might include genealogists, book artists, rare, first modern, and antiquarian book collectors, used and rare book store owners, historians, amateur archivists who oversee small collections in private museums, churches, or professional associations, book binders, and even interior decorators! Some of these patrons may shock you with their disinterest in the content of the books; they could own hundreds of books that they never intend to open—let alone read.

For the patron interested in the book as an investment, his or her only interest is in the condition of the book, and most particularly the condition of the book jacket, where at least 90% of the monetary value of the book resides. Flaws such as a chipped book jacket, torn page, bumped corner, nicked cover, or damaged spine can turn a \$500 book into a \$10 book. Consequently the patron is eager to know how to preserve books in the best condition. Prevention is the key, because even archival repair techniques will lower the value.

The biggest mistake collectors make is trying to save money by conducting “do-it-yourself” preservation on their collections. They will often have inadequate environmental controls in place for thousands of volumes. A book collector in Washington DC, for example, was trying to maintain humidity and temperature control for a collection of four thousand books by means of one small portable humidifier. During a preservation workshop, he asked for help with a growing mildew problem. The speaker tried to be kind, but it was evident that years of neglect was going to cost the collector a small fortune in lost revenue. This collector needed to understand the upfront requirements of maintaining a clean, dark and humidity- and temperature-controlled storage area for his books.

Rare and antiquarian book dealers are also notorious for recommending an over-the-counter hodgepodge of chemicals to clean books. In an online e-mail discussion regarding the removal of gummed labels from dust jackets, book dealers cheerfully recommended bathroom tile cleaner, lighter fluid, nail polish remover, rubber cement (dried and used as a pick-up eraser), and household bleach. It doesn't help that popular books on book collecting promote the idea that any chemical that

can be bought in a hardware store is safe to use on a fine book.

One important difference between an archive and a home collection is that a home collection must contend with health issues that are less of a concern in a professional setting. Most rare book collections do not have canaries, babies with asthma, elderly bronchial patients, and other souls more likely to be affected by chemicals used in preservation. I strongly urge you to suggest only the most benign of traditional conservation materials for your patrons to treat any materials they keep in their homes.

Conservators have had mixed luck convincing professional booksellers to use accepted methods and materials in caring for fine books, but you might have an easier time with average patrons who want to start collecting books for fun and profit. They need to know sources of ready-made archival materials, such as inert book jackets and boxes, as well as classes on the use of archival products. They also may be interested in learning more about how to store and maintain the condition of good books.

Advice for Everyone

In general, patrons who come to you, the library or archive professional, for advice need two kinds of advice.

1. Basic information about preventing damage to their collection, so they can preserve the contents and artifacts for future use, and
 2. plugging into the many networks of experts in the book, archive, and library communities.
- They also need to know who to call in case of a personal disaster, such as a flood or fire.

A basic list of supplies I recommend for home libraries can be purchased from a hardware store or office supply company.

Standard Tools

Sturdy ladder with nonskid feet for retrieving books
Dust- and lint-free dusting cloths, such as those found in computer stores

Murphy's Soap® for cleaning greasy dirt from shelves

Club soda for wiping dirt off coated covers or for

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Home Libraries — *continued from page 4*

cleaning shelves

White vinyl eraser for gently removing pencil marks

Clean paint brush for dusting fore-edges of books

Portable vacuum for cleaning shelves and tops of sturdy books

Cheesecloth for protecting fragile books when vacuuming (secure over nozzle)

Sticky traps for monitoring bug activity - can be purchased in garden stores

Cockroach motels for dispensing boric acid to kill cockroaches and many other bugs

Clean, resealable plastic freezer bags for suspended animation of ailing moist books in home freezers

Tyvek® bags for dry storage of books that need to be repaired

Where to Find the Experts

In most communities, archivists and librarians don't automatically attend the other's meetings. The same is true of bookbinders and rare and used book dealers, and book artists and book conservators. If you are fielding many questions from your patrons, you might consider creating a list of local and statewide resources you can share including local disaster recovery services.

A bibliography is included here of several books that cover the basic information most patrons need for the care of their home libraries. Greenfield's book is my favorite on repair, because of its simple language, useful drawings, and friendly tone. Starred books are highly recommended. For patrons who insist on organizing their home collections the "right" way, the Wynar and Slote books are accessible for those without formal library degrees.

**ABC for Book Collectors*. Seventh Edition. John Carter. Revised by Nicolas Barker. Oak Knoll Press, \$25.00 cloth, ISBN 1-884718-05-1.

**Antiquarian, Specialty, and Used Book Sellers 1996-97: A Subject Guide and Directory*. Edited by James M. Ethridge and Karen Ethridge. \$85.00 paper, ISBN 0-7808-0024-9; Omnigraphics, Inc., Penobscot Building, Detroit, MI 48226; (800) 234-1340; fax (800) 875-1340.

**Book*. Karen Brookfield. Photographs by Laurence Pordes. Knopf, \$19.00 cloth, ISBN 0-679-84012-5.

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Home Libraries — continued from page 5

The Book Lover's Guide to the Internet. Evan Morris. Fawcett Columbine, \$12.95 paper, ISBN 0-449-91070-9.

**The Care of Fine Books.* Jane Greenfield. Lyons & Burford, \$19.95 paper, ISBN 1-55821-003-2.

Introduction to Cataloging and Classification. Bohdan S. Wynar. Eighth Edition by Arlene G. Taylor. Libraries Unlimited, \$37.50 paper, ISBN 0-87287-967-4.

Least Toxic Home Pest Control. Second Edition. Dan Stein. The Book Publishing Company, \$8.95 paper, ISBN 0-913990-07-8.

Weeding Library Collections: Library Weeding Methods. Third Edition. Stanley J. Slote. Libraries Unlimited, \$42.00 cloth, ISBN 0-872676-33-0.

The Best Advice

Most of your patrons who love books own more than they can really take care of. They are not full-time employees of an archive and library, and they don't have preservation training or conservation budget. You, the professional, can help them in several ways, whether they are focused on the content or physical condition of their books.

1. Encourage them to weed rigorously, so that their collections are smaller and more manageable.
2. Suggest that they set aside money for professional services for all of the books that warrant the best preservation method, not just for the rare and valuable books in their collection.

3. Adapt professional conservation techniques for home libraries. For example, although a home freezer might not get cold enough to serve as a treatment mechanism for a truly rare book, it does just fine as a holding tank for a wet book until the patron can get around to drying it out. Demanding that everything be done the "correct" way may overwhelm the modest resources of the patron who has neither time, money, nor skill.
4. If the patron wants to do things the "correct" way, whether that means documenting the entire collection or repairing favorite books with archival products, suggest small projects. Instead of trying to catalog their entire collections, they can start with batches of 20 or so, which might take them a couple of hours. The same holds true of tasks such as cleaning shelves, inventorying books, or repairing books. If they start with their favorite volumes, they are more likely to have systems in place to protect or replace them in a crisis.

Pat Wagner is the author of The Bloomsbury Review BookLover's Guide: A Collection of Tips, Techniques, Anecdotes, Controversies & Suggestions for the Home Library (Owaisa Communications, 1996). She also is the contributing editor for nonfiction for The Bloomsbury Review, and owns Pattern Research, a 23-year-old research and training firm in Denver. She gives talks based on her book for lay audiences and for book and library professionals across the United States. This summer she gave a talk at the Library of Congress Center for the Book in Washington DC, on which this article is based. e-mail: pat@pattern.com

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Archival Products Focus

Pamphlet Binders

Archival Products **Spine Wrap Pamphlet Binder**, designed for quick application and for an aesthetically pleasing appearance on the shelf, is constructed of high density, acrylic-coated board with blue C-1 cloth spine and cambric spine reinforcement. The pressure-sensitive adhesive strip is the most defining feature of this pamphlet binder. The strip folds around the binder, adhering to the outside of the spine concealing the binding structure, giving a finished look to the bound document. This pamphlet binder is so unique that LBS was granted a United States patent in 1988 for the design.

The **Quick Bind Pamphlet Binder** was economically designed as a response to the need of librarians with smaller budgets. We use the same high quality materials as our original patented spine wrap pamphlet binder but eliminate the spine wrap and cambric liner. The inner hinge as well as the outer hinge is covered with C-1 grade book cloth for strength. The aesthetic difference between the Spine Wrap and Quick Bind Pamphlet Binder is that the sewing or stapling is visible on the outer spine of the Quick Bind Pamphlet Binder.

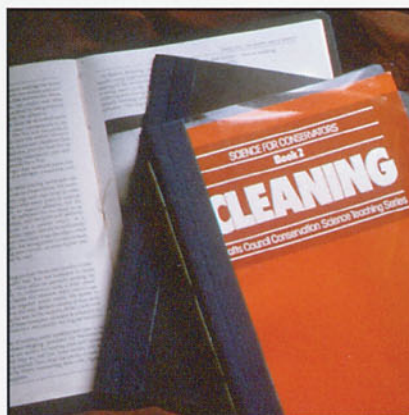
Both styles of pamphlet binders are available with spine scoring of 0, 1/8, 1/4, 3/8 and 1/2 inch.

The **Archival Folder**, designed to be an even more affordable alternative for pamphlet storage, is constructed of acrylic-coated grey/white board and light grey C grade book cloth.

The Spine Wrap Pamphlet Binder, Quick Bind Pamphlet Binder and Archival Folder are all available with clear polyester or board fronts.

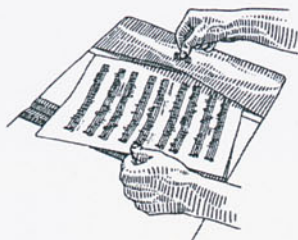
We would be delighted to discuss your preservation needs with you. If you have a special project that needs a special enclosure we will research, develop and help you consider the methods to appropriately contain your materials. Contact us for more information and to request a sample.

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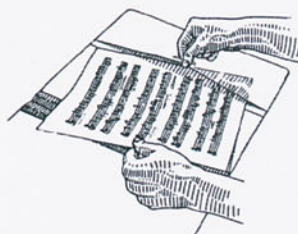


Archival Products Focus

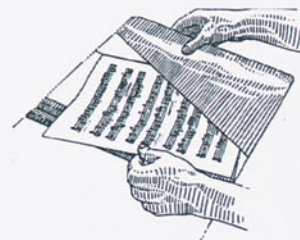
Music Binders



A. C-1 Cloth Vertical Pocket



B. Tyvek™ Vertical Pocket



C. C-1 Cloth Diagonal Pocket

Archival Products Music Binders, designed for music to open and lay flat during performance, allows for quick and easy sewing of music scores. The binding is completely reversible and is not damaging to the material it protects.

We offer the music binder in our original, patented spine wrap edition, designed to conceal the sewing or stapling application, and in the quick bind version which does not have the spine wrap.

Pockets designed to hold loose parts are available in durable Tyvek™ or acrylic-coated C-1 cloth. The Tyvek™, a unique non-woven, spun-bound polyolefin synthetic having a pH of 7.0, is high-strength, durable, tear resistant, and water resistant. The Tyvek™ vertical pockets have a thumb-cut for easy opening and can be adhered to both the front and back board covers of our music binders. The C-1 cloth pockets made of durable bookcloth are available in two styles: a vertical pocket with a tab opener, and a diagonal pocket.

Technical Specifications:

- Binder is constructed from .050 high density acrylic-coated pamphlet board with a 2% calcium carbonate reserve and a pH of 8.5%. The board is acid free and lignin free.
- An optional .020 clear polyester front cover is available at no extra cost for all music binders except the two pocket style.
- Binder is constructed using acid-neutral polyvinyl acetate adhesives.
- Spine is constructed from blue acrylic-coated C-1 grade book cloth.
- Spine wrap pamphlet binders have a pressure-sensitive adhesive strip with acid-neutral adhesives.
- Corners are rounded to 1/4" radius.
- Hinge measures 3/4 inch with binder closed.
- Spine scoring is available from zero to 1/2 inch.



We would be delighted to discuss your preservation needs with you. If you have a special project that needs a special enclosure we will research, develop and help you consider the methods to appropriately contain your materials. Contact us for more information and to request a sample.

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