

NO BOUNDARIES IN PRESERVATION

SMALL ACTIONS, BIG RESULTS: Cleaning Books and Paper Documents



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO
University Libraries

CLEANING BOOKS AND PAPER DOCUMENTS

Basic information about the cleaning process of books and documents in a library or archive is provided on this poster. Cleaning a collection prolongs its life and makes it less vulnerable to organic and inorganic materials that accumulates over the years.

There are several factors to consider before beginning the cleaning process. A careful evaluation of the intrinsic and extrinsic values of the materials is extremely important and will determine the scope of your project.

Extrinsic value represents the social and historical character of the collection, as well as its monetary value and rarity.

Intrinsic values includes the physical aspects of the book or the document, such as the materials they are made and its conservation condition. These values will determine the type of treatment, the number of people working on the project and its duration.

Taking small breaks or sharing the task with a colleague during the project will help alleviating the monotony of the process and prevent any possible physical injuries from the repetitive movements involved in the cleaning.

Who can help?

Staff, students and volunteers.

Keep in mind that this task is:

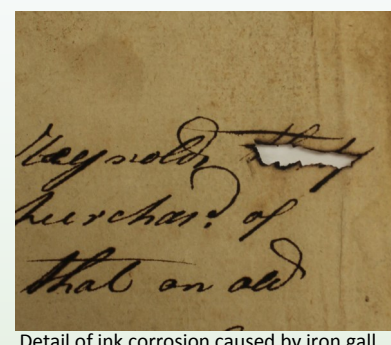
Time consuming Repetitive Tedious

Before working on a collection wash and dry well your hands!

PLANNING THE CLEANING PROCESS

Carefully examine your materials to answer the following questions:

- Is it stable or fragile?
- Is it brittle or degraded due to paper acidity and/or iron gall ink?
- Is there any mold?
- Is there dust?
- Is there insects?
- Are there pencil markings?



Detail of ink corrosion caused by iron gall.

If there are any written marks on the materials do not remove them, they are part of the its history!

With the above information, proceed on creating a **Cleaning Procedures Guide**, with a list of materials to be used by the staff.



SUGGESTED CLEANING MATERIALS

- A big table covered with plastic sheeting.
- Safety face masks or respirator masks.
- Nitrile or latex gloves in case of mold.
- Natural soft bristle brushes.
- Air blower.
- Latex sponges.
- A cleaning procedures guide.



CLEANING BOOKS

Start on the outside of the book:

- Hold it firmly and clean the edges with a brush, a soft cloth or dry sponge, from the spine to the fore-edge.

Then proceed to the inside:

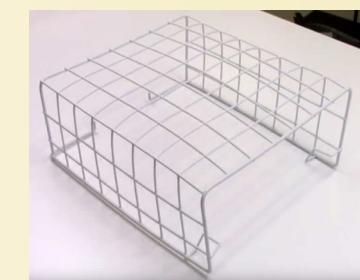
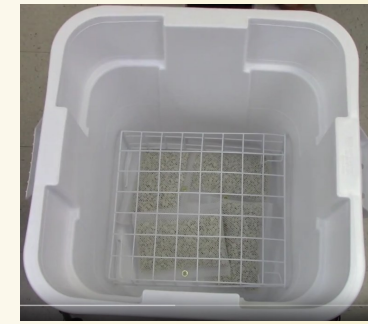
- While cleaning inside, carefully use a brush or a sponge to wipe the surface of the book. Be careful to not apply too much pressure
- Start from the center, then outwards. This will prevent any dust or dirt to get into the gutter of the book.
- If you have dust or dirt inside the gutter, the use of a air blower will help.



REMOVING ODORS - A DEODORIZING CHAMBER

With the help of a deodorizing chamber you may be able to remove some of the following odors found in collections:

- **Mold**
- **Smoke**
- **Wood**
- **Oil or diesel**
- **Vinegar**
- **Pests**



Building a small chamber:

- **A container with a lid**
- **A small grid shelf**
- **Zeolite**



Distribute the zeolite on the bottom of the container, insert a grid shelf then place the book, or books, on the shelf. If necessary, insert a few pieces of a thick paper between the pages, this will keep the book fanned open and stable on the shelf.

Keep the lid closed for a few weeks to allow the zeolites to absorb odors. If necessary, you can keep the books in the chamber for a longer time, repeat it as needed.

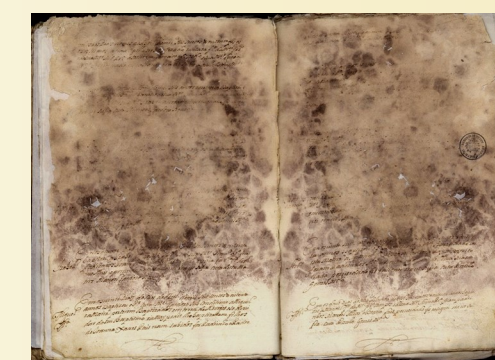
You should always first assess the physical condition of your historical books. In many instances cleaning is not recommended.

CLEANING WITH A HEPA FILTER VACUUM

Cleaning with a HEPA FILTER vacuum is necessary when the collection has a high degree of dust, dirt or mold. A HEPA filter captures much smaller pollutants and particles than any other types of filters, although it does not filter out or remove gases and odor molecules.

It is important to consider:

- The size of the vacuum attachments. The smaller attachments will help with maneuvering while cleaning.
- If you have fragile items, using a screen placed over the paper will prevent the suction of any loose pieces. You can also cover the vacuum intake with Reemay® cloth to prevent the suction of small pieces.
- Control the vacuum suction intensity - a lower setting is safer for the materials
- When cleaning mold, wear non-porous gloves (Latex or nitrile gloves), protective eyewear and masks are also recommended. (Masks with FFP2 or FFP3 rating).



Contact your local health department if you have a high degree of mold. Check our first video for more information on mold.

TO USE OR NOT TO USE GLOVES?

When cleaning a book or document the use of gloves is not always recommended. Gloves do not protect against dirt or perspiration.

The use of gloves - nitrile or latex - is recommended when the collection is infested with mold or pests.

The best way to work on a book is with your washed, cleaned and very dry hands.



Read more about the use of gloves:

- Baker, Cathleen A., and Randall H. Silverman. "Misperceptions About White Gloves." International Preservation News 37 (2005): 4-9. USpace Institutional Repository. Web. 30. Nov. 2015.

★
The physical integrity of historical books or documents is always a priority to be considered and, many times, cleaning is not recommended. Contact your local conservators association for advice and more information.

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Some procedures here presented have been used by trained staff and conservators. If you cannot receive specific training, work with basic techniques.

REFERENCES

- Balloffet, Nelly and Hille, Jenny. *Preservation and Conservation for Libraries and Archives*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 2005.

- Florian, Mary-Lou E.. *Fungal Facts: Solving Fungal Problems in Heritage Collections*. London, England: Archetype Publications Ltd, 2004.

Iron Ink Gall
<http://irongallink.org/>
Library of Congress
<http://www.loc.gov/preservation/about/faqs/index.html>
Preservation Advisory Centre
www.bl.uk/blpac

Icon, the Institute of Conservation
www.icon.org.uk
Northeast Document Conservation Center
<http://ncppt.nps.gov/blog/preservation-101-an-internet-course-on-paper-conservation/>
Zeolites - Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeolite>
HEPA Filter - Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HEPA>

IMAGES

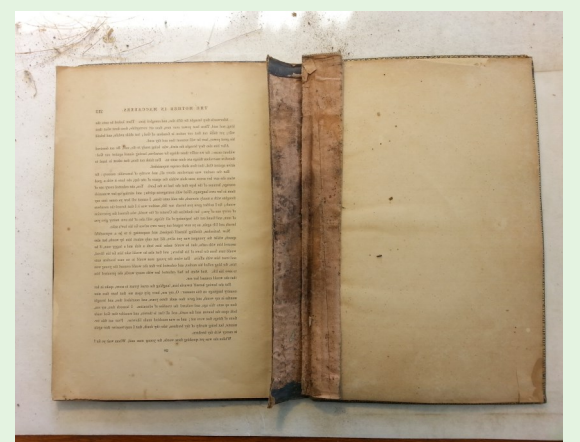
Zeolite. Google Image: Labeled for reuse. Accessed on 01/25/2016. http://www.filtrah20tda.com/Images/os_imagegallery_100/original/zeolita.jpg

Catholic church baptism record with mold. *Centro do Conhecimento das Acores*. Azores, São Jorge Island, Velas, Velas Parish Records. Open Source. Accessed on 03/04/2016. http://culturacores.azores.gov.pt/biblioteca_digital/SJR-VL-VELAS-B-1660-1700/SJR-VL-VELAS-B-1660-1700_item1/P120.html

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Cleaning Collections in Libraries and Archives

DUST, DIRT AND MOLD



DEODORIZING CHAMBER



HEPA FILTER VACUUM



SPONGE, BRUSH AND AIR BLOWER



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