

Guidelines for Enclosing Books and Works on Paper in Small Library Special Collections

Most small libraries do not have professional conservators or rare-book librarians on staff, nor do they have the resources necessary to routinely contract for such services. There are several low-cost strategies that small libraries can undertake to preserve materials in their special collections. One such strategy is to place fragile materials in protective enclosures. These guidelines focus on the creation of preservation enclosures that are appropriate for paper-based special collections in small libraries.

Selection for Enclosure

Enclosing every item in a special collection is usually neither affordable nor necessary. Librarians should select the items for which the cost of enclosure provides the greatest benefit. First consideration is typically given to the following:

- manuscript material
- materials printed before 1850 that are in deteriorating condition, especially leather bindings
- works with vellum binding
- works with brittle paper (especially works printed between 1860 and 1900)
- first editions of important works
- works with attribution value (signed works, presentation copies, books with significant marginalia)
- works of special aesthetic value (fine bindings, papers, illustrations, etc.)
- works of high intellectual value because of association with significant people, places, or events
- materials of high monetary value
- scarce works generally not available in reprint

Preparation for Enclosure

Work with small groups of similar materials to create enclosures. This will facilitate efficient workflow and standard practice. Depending on the condition of the item to be enclosed, some preparation may be required before creating an enclosure.

- Restore the integrity of item as far as possible. Place detached pages in the proper order.
- Flatten folded paper if possible without causing damage. Undertake archival-quality paper repairs as possible to allow for readability. It is usually not necessary to repair every tear.
- Remove harmful fasteners such as staples or paper clips.
- Remove acidic inserts such as bookmarks, clippings, or pressed flowers. Place these in a buffered, acid-free envelope or another enclosure (see below) if appropriate to retain for collection.

- Dust, if possible, or otherwise lightly clean soiled items without soft media (e.g., charcoal, pastel, pencil). Clean only insofar as needed to remove particulate matter that could cause abrasion or to allow for readability.

Enclosures

Select an enclosure based on the item's format, medium, condition, and anticipated use. Enclosure materials are permanent and durable, as defined by ANSI/NISO standards.

Material type	recommended enclosure	enclosure characteristics
Book Small book or pamphlet	Tuxedo box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ .044" or similar thickness acid-free low-lignin/lignin-free boxboard. ✓ Grain of box board runs parallel to book spine. ✓ Tongue-and-slot closure. ✓ Round corners for safer handling ✓ Custom-made to closely fit a specific book. ✓ Label on enclosure identifying contents
Book Large, heavy book	Phase box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ .044" or similar thickness acid-free low-lignin/lignin-free boxboard. ✓ Grain of boxboard runs parallel to book spine. ✓ Tied closure. ✓ Round corners for safer handling ✓ Custom-made to closely fit a specific book. ✓ Label on enclosure identifying contents
Book High-value, very fragile	Clamshell box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All materials used in construction must be chemically stable. ✓ Buffered material used for acidic paper. Do not use buffered materials with works that contain dyes or pigments sensitive to high alkalinity (such as some types of photographs and textiles.) ✓ Custom-made to closely fit a specific book. ✓ Label on enclosure identifying contents ✓ Typically prepared by professional bookbinder.
Flat document Stable print material Content viewed on two sides	Mylar encapsulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 4 mil Mylar ✓ Air space ✓ Not suitable for pencil, charcoal, pastel, chalk, or graphite media ✓ Round corners for safer handling

Material type	recommended enclosure	enclosure characteristics
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Store document in acid-free folder or storage box. ✓ Label on enclosure identifying contents
<p>Flat document Single stable print document stored in acid-free folders or other storage</p>	<p>Paper L-folder</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Acid-free buffered paper ✓ 20# paper for durable items, 80# paper for items needing slightly more support. ✓ Do not use buffered materials with works that contain dyes or pigments sensitive to high alkalinity (such as some types of photographs and textiles.) ✓ Not suitable for media that can be smudged, such as charcoal or pastels. ✓ Notch in top layer for easier handling ✓ Store document in acid-free folder or storage box. ✓ Label on enclosure identifying contents
<p>Flat document Stable print material Content viewed on two sides, access to original retained</p>	<p>Mylar L-folder</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 4 mil Mylar ✓ Open on two sides ✓ Not suitable for pencil, charcoal, pastel, chalk, or graphite media ✓ Round corners for safer handling ✓ Notch in top layer for easier handling ✓ Store document in acid-free folder or storage box. ✓ Label on enclosure identifying contents
<p>Flat document larger item requiring extra support</p>	<p>Mylar-cardstock encapsulation Or I-folder</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 4 mil mylar ✓ Acid-free, buffered card stock, .010-.025" ✓ Encapsulation for items that need to be viewed from one side only ✓ L-folder to retain access to original ✓ Not suitable for pencil, charcoal, pastel, chalk, or graphite media ✓ Label on enclosure identifying contents
<p>Photographs</p>	<p>Unbuffered L-Folder</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Store photos away from other materials. ✓ Small photos may be placed in folders made from unbuffered #80 paper. ✓ Large photos may be placed in folders made from acid-free boxboard on one side, unbuffered paper on the front. ✓ Label on enclosure identifying contents

Material type	recommended enclosure	enclosure characteristics
Documents in soft media (e.g., charcoal, pastel, pencil)	Covered mat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Acid-free mat for support ✓ Cover mat with acid-free board, hinged at top ✓ No glass or plastic covers ✓ Label on enclosure identifying contents ✓ May be stacked in small groups in map cases or file cabinets.
Colored prints	Mylar encapsulation or L-folder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Unbuffered papers only with color prints ✓ Otherwise directions as above.

March 2005

Prepared by Kathy Parker, West Virginia Wesleyan College, and based on a workshop by Jill Deiss, Cat Tail Run Bookbindery.
A New TiLTS Project of the Appalachian College Association Central Library