

W. R. Poage Legislative Library

Shelving Books in General Collection

Library collections are directly affected by the way staff and users handle them. Damage to books is cumulative. Repeated poor handling can quickly wear a new book, and transform a worn book into an unusable book that requires costly repair, rebinding, or replacement. By following the guidelines presented here, the library can make significant strides toward preservation of the collection.

Shelving Books of Standard Size

- Use smooth, solid metal shelves without jagged edges or protruding screws. Avoid wooden shelves.
- Ensure that there is air circulation around the volumes. Don't store books in an enclosed cabinet.
- Shelf volumes a minimum of four inches off the floor to reduce the risk of damage from flooding.
- When possible, use shelves that have a "canopy" on top, as this will deflect water, dust, and some damaging light.
- Stand all volumes upright, resting on their base (or tail).
- Do not shelve too loosely or too tightly packed. Shelves should be about 60% full.
- A good way to remove a volume from the shelf, is to ease back the books on either side of the desired volume. Grasp the volume by the sides, remove it, then readjust the bookend. (See illustration at right) Another way is to press your finger down on the textblock a few inches behind the head of the spine and tip the book out, without pulling on the spine itself.
- To replace the volume, loosen the bookend and move the existing volumes aside to create a space. Insert the book, then readjust the bookend snugly.

Shelving Oversize Volumes

- Oversize volumes should be shelved on deep shelving and on their tails or flat, *never* on their fore- edges. Avoid shelving short books next to tall books as the latter will not be properly supported. Do not allow volumes to protrude into the aisle.
- Support standing volumes with an appropriately sized bookend--one that is tall enough to provide good support and that has a wide profile.
- Remove and replace carefully, using both hands. Remember that many of these volumes are extremely heavy.
- Political Materials has an oversize shelving section at the end of the general collection.

Adapted from:

<http://libraries.ucsd.edu/preservation/pshelve.html>