

Western Kentucky University Libraries: Preservation Review Process

Mission Statement

Many preservation and conservation programs have their origins in the individual treatment of special and rare materials; however, the majority of Western Kentucky University Libraries' holdings are in the general circulating collection. The sheer size and diversity of materials in the general collections of University Libraries, present us, as collection managers, with a wide array of issues and values that must be brought together into a meaningful plan of action, e.g., different types of material formats, use patterns, retention criteria, and collection value.

While the traditional item-by-item selection and conservation strategies and various treatment options have been and still are effective, they are not alone capable of providing for a systematic management for our library's conservation program. The overall goal is the preventive maintenance of our investment as an institution through systematic repair and physical maintenance of our collection. In this particular process we are focused upon the physical condition and not the content of the material.

At University Libraries, we have decided to take a pro-active as well as responsive approach to this aspect of collection management. This process has also become more integrated with other library functions and units, such as collection development, cataloging, circulation, where important information is gathered and/or a variety of preservation options can be incorporated into already existing workflows. Over time, the result of our work will also be a careful analysis of the collections and a fuller understanding of the realities of the collection management/preservation operation by using the appropriate management information to determine and maintain collection value and utility.

Collection assessment and evaluation must be an ongoing process and should consist of individual analysis projects, as well as group actions. The Preservation Review program and priorities should be

evaluated and possibly revised at least every five years.

Steps in the Process:

I. Assessment

The most important element in managing collections preservation is to know and assess the collection.

An effective needs assessment will reveal the nature and scope of preservation requirements, help establish priorities, and develop a reasonable strategy for action based on these priorities and the institution's ability to meet them.

WKU Libraries will take the following steps and involve the following groups involved in identifying the materials that require attention:

1. The Circulation Unit will assess the condition of materials as they are checked out or returned to the Circulation desk and deliver those items needing repair or conservation to the DLTS book repair desk.
2. The Acquisitions Staff and their student assistants will systematically perform a sight review of the stacks, looking for library materials in need of repair.
3. Staff, faculty, and patrons are encouraged to bring materials to us that they discover damaged and believe in need of repair and/or conservation.

For each book received, the book repair staff will make the following assessment regarding the physical appearance of the title. There are three possible conditions:

1. Fair: book shows normal wear and tear for its age; is still in very usable condition, though binding may be somewhat loose, cover or pages moderately soiled, etc.

2. Poor: book is still holding together but has one or more major problems: binding very loose, significant number of pages torn, very dirty appearance, significant water damage, etc.

3. Unusable: book is basically in shambles and the condition of the paper prevents rebinding. These books should be checked for possible replacement. The item's records should be withdrawn from TOPCAT by the cataloging staff and surplused per University regulations.

We also check the circulation of each item to determine if a replacement should be sought and purchased.

II. Setting Priorities

Establishing priorities for collections repair and preservation management must be based on recognizing and articulating the nature of preservation needs, capabilities of the book repair/preservation department, institutional objectives, and the resources available to our patrons and/or the collection. Our priorities are as follows:

1. All materials deemed to be of enduring value are to be submitted to the Acquisitions staff and students for general collections repair. If a question exists regarding the repair, the Collection Services Coordinator should be consulted. Repairs can include protective housing/boxing or commercial binding.

2. Items deemed unusable should be reviewed by the subject Library Liaison or the Collection Services

Coordinator to determine if a replacement should be sought or if the title should be withdrawn and surplusd without attempting to replace. The physical availability and cost of replacement must figure into this decision and be handled on a case-by-case basis.

III. Older Materials Review Policy and Procedures:

For the purpose of this policy “older materials” are defined as printed materials seventy-five years or older. These materials may no longer be important in the active collection because of their low current use, but they may have historical and research value. Such materials are pulled from stacks because they are fragile or deteriorating. They need review and should be sent to the appropriate Catalog Librarian who will consult the Kentucky Library Coordinator upon transfer of these materials to the Kentucky Library. Items wanted by the Kentucky Library will be sent to that library. These materials will then be repaired and added to the Kentucky Library's Special Collections. Items not wanted by the Kentucky Library will either be withdrawn or kept, based on evaluation by subject reference librarians in Cravens Library or the Educational Resources Center. Retained items will be repaired by the student assistants in the Acquisition Unit. Re-shelving these materials will complete the review process.

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Recommended by Department Heads; Approved by the Dean of University Libraries

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