

Collections Care Section: General Manual

Introduction

Collections Conservation at the Library of Congress

The Collections Care Section (CCS) at the Library of Congress supports the mission of the Library's Preservation Directorate to assure long-term, uninterrupted access to the intellectual content of the Library's collections, either in original or reformatted form. CCS staff provides expert and timely in-house treatment of permanent general research collection materials, and make custom-fitted boxes for appropriate research collection materials using state of the art box making machines. CCS staff also provides training for staff, visitors, and interns from preservation programs around the world, and participate in Library-wide preservation activities such as emergency response and recovery.

Treatments are carried out in accordance with the [AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice](#).

The preservation procedures described here have been used by the Library of Congress in the care of its collections and are considered suitable by the Library as described; however, the Library will not be responsible for damage to your collection should damage result from the use of these procedures.

Treatment/repair services

Treatments are performed in a production setting using pre-cut preservation supplies and materials that meet preservation standards. To look at these preservation standards please follow this link to [Preservation Supply Specifications](#). A production setting means that many items needing the same treatment are treated together. Similar items are grouped by size and/or color to facilitate gathering of supplies. One major aspect of the treatment, such as making new cases, will all be done at the same time and then further treatment will be more individualized for each book. Available treatments include tip-ins, page mending, recasing, creating or mending covers, text-block consolidation and preservation facsimile replacement of damaged or missing leaves. The facility to complete these repairs in-house makes it possible for CCS to return items to the Library's research collections in a timely manner while retaining as much as possible the artifactual and informational components of each item.

Housing services

Custom made protective enclosures are created through the use of automated box-making systems for collections throughout the Library. These boxes are most often made for items that are too brittle to repair but are intact and those with special cases that require protection. Boxes are also made for items that have unusual structures (spiral bindings and children's books with unusual shapes), accompanying materials (compact disks and maps), or the need for physical support and protection (globes and wax cylinders).

A damaged is in place for items that cannot be treated. The workflow provides for replacement, reformatting or replacement of pages and sections through use of digital imaging and Inter Library Loan services.

Liaison services

Staff from the Collections Care Section serve as liaisons to the Library's custodial divisions, and when appropriate, work closely with other Preservation Directorate staff to provide training, emergency response, and maintenance of the Library's collections.

Highlights in the Development of a Collections Conservation Section

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In 1967, following the Florence flood, a disaster that drew many book conservators together who had formerly been working separately, the Library centralized its preservation efforts in one office.

In 1983, a Book Repair Unit was created within the Library Binding Section staffed by one full-time technician.

The Collections Care Section was created in 1995 under the stewardship of Debra McKern. The first Section Head was Joanne Martinez. Since the creation of the Section, all of the supervisors have contributed generously of their time and knowledge to the creation of this manual, including Werner Haun, Holly Robertson, and Ben Bahlmann.

History of Collections Conservation Management at the Library of Congress

For the fascinating history of preservation at the Library of Congress see [*Caring for America's Library: A Brief History of Preservation and Conservation at the Library of Congress*](#) by Kenneth E. Harris and Susan E. Schur at



This image shows collection materials grouped by color and similar treatment during the batch processing. Text blocks are all ready and materials have all been cut so that all items shown will receive new spines at the same time, making the work of the section more efficient and cost effective.

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Similarly, these items have also been grouped by color and treatment needed. Supplies have been cut as a batch and work will commence on treatment of the items as a whole.