

PHOTOCOPYING GUIDELINES

Photocopying, whether frequent or occasional, is harmful to all library and archival materials. The short, intense light exposure required to make a photocopy is harmful to collection items, but most of the damage caused during the photocopying process is from improper handling. This is especially true regarding bound collection materials. In order for the text to be readable when using a conventional photocopier, a book must be opened to a 180 degree angle and pressed against the glass platen, beneath the copier cover. Many books cannot withstand this pressure: spines and sewing break; pages become loose and possibly lost.

DEVELOP PHOTOCOPYING GUIDELINES

All photocopying of collection materials should follow specific guidelines. These guidelines should include instructions for the safe handling of both bound and unbound objects as well as a list of materials for which photocopying is not permitted. Photocopying of rare, fragile, or brittle materials should be carried out by trained staff, and then only when necessary. The protocol for requesting photocopies of such materials should be clearly outlined in the photocopying guidelines. The institution's photocopying policy should be explained to each patron and staff member as part of the library/archive orientation, and the photocopying guidelines should be posted at each machine. Staff members should be fully trained in safe photocopying practices.

Photocopying guidelines can also limit the amount of pages copied from each particular volume at one time, and suggest that if multiple copies are required of the same page, subsequent copies can be made from the first copy.

Use of the automatic document feeder should be prohibited when photocopying collection materials. Copying two pages of any bound item at one time should also be prohibited.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR RARE AND/OR FRAGILE MATERIALS

Rare and/or fragile materials should be photocopied only when absolutely necessary, and then only by trained staff. As a general rule, if there is a risk or concern that an item's condition might worsen as a result, then photocopying should be refused. The circumstances under which such materials would be photocopied should be determined during the development of the institution's photocopying guidelines.

For certain collection items, it could be advantageous for staff to make a master photocopy onto acid-free, alkaline paper. This master photocopy should be stored with the original item and used for future photocopy requests. Institutions might consider implementing a recording system to keep track of the number of times particular items are requested for copying.

TIPS FOR HANDLING

- If manuscript materials are housed in polyester sleeves, damage due to handling during photocopying or microfilming can be reduced by leaving the items in the sleeves during the copying process.
- Do not do not exert pressure on the spine of a book, even when the binding is tight.
- Never open a binding more than 180 degrees.
- Provide adequate support to any volume or loose pages while the item is placed on the platen.
- If a volume is especially heavy, thick, or large, or if it is essential to photocopy fold-out pages in a book, two staff members should handle the job. One staff member should support any parts of an item that project beyond the machine, while the other gently holds the item onto the platen.
- Always be extremely cautious when photocopying photographs, and never leave a photograph on the platen longer than absolutely necessary. Heat from the machine may cause the surface emulsion to peel and the paper to curl.
- Use the utmost caution when copying from books with vellum bindings; historically significant or fine bindings (including those with gilding or paint); tight bindings; items that are already brittle or fragile, including volumes with damaged or missing covers, tears, loose pages, and weak or broken spines; parchment; items with seals or any other type of attachment; newspapers and news clippings; and items that have been folded or creased for some time as paper may break at fold lines when opened.
- **If a staff member has reservations about damaging an item by photocopying it, or if two staff members are not on hand to facilitate copying a cumbersome item, it is always better to be safe than sorry and choose not to make the copy.** There are various alternate ways for reproductions to be made. The best interest of the item should always be first in mind.

APPROPRIATE PHOTOCOPIERS

Most photocopiers are intrinsically destructive to library and archival materials. The design assumes that the item to be copied can be laid completely flat onto the platen. Photocopiers which are suitable for library and archival materials put less stress on a binding than conventional photocopiers.

Acceptable drop-edge platen photocopiers typically allow for one page at a time to be duplicated while the rest of the book rests on an angled attachment that supports the weight of the book without causing the structure undue stress. It is also possible to retrofit existing photocopiers with edge platen attachments and cantilevered platen covers. In the case of extremely fragile bound materials, face-up digital scanner/copiers are available.