The books in the MIT Libraries have been collected for the benefit of present and future members of the MIT community, and they represent a great intellectual and monetary investment. Thus, the preservation of Library materials is a concern of the entire library staff. If they are handled carefully, these resources will remain accessible for years to come. Repeated incorrect handling and storage can transform a new item into a worn one that may require costly repair or replacement.

The following guidelines summarize correct care and handling behaviors in typical library work situations and should be used when training new staff and student workers. The guidelines are available online at http://libguides.mit.edu/content.php?pid=220539&sid=1835168. Please refer to the Curation and Preservation Services Staff Web Site for additional information: http://libguides.mit.edu/CPS.

General Guidelines

Cleanliness
- Wash hands regularly. Dirt and oils on the skin can stain paper.
- Keep food and drink away from library materials and follow the MIT Libraries’ Food and Beverage Guidelines.
- Store food in closed containers and discard food trash at the end of the day

Damaged Materials
- If an item is wet or shows signs of active mold growth or insect infestation, please contact Curation and Preservation Services immediately at 253-5282.
- With all other types of damage, please set the item aside for IDLA staff to forward to Preservation. View the online tutorial “Identifying Book Damage” at http://libguides.mit.edu/content.php?pid=220539&sid=1835287.
- Please do not attempt to repair library materials, as this may inadvertently harm rather than fix the item. All repairs are done by CPS employees trained in library conservation.

Disaster Response
- Disaster response guidelines are online at http://libguides.mit.edu/content.php?pid=220539&sid=1835473.

Sending Notes
- Use a number 2 pencil when writing notes.
- Place sticky notes only on library paperwork, never on the item.
- If you must use a paperclip on a book, “pad” it with a piece of scrap paper.

Handling Materials

Brittle Materials
- Take your time turning the pages, as they may shatter on the edge or break along the inner margin
- Avoid clipping slips or notes to the pages

Erasing
- Use a soft vinyl eraser, either a Magic Rub or Staedtler, to erase pencil marks
Holding Books
- To hold a book open, use a flexible weight bag instead of a heavy, stiff object like a tape dispenser. CPS can help you order weight bags.
- Support covers when the volume is open; use book supports if necessary
- Only open books as far as they will naturally open - do not force

Labeling
- Follow placement guidelines for barcodes and collection stickers.
- Check with CPS before adopting a new label style or manufacturer. The adhesive on some labels can cause damage to materials.

Maps and Oversize Materials
- Clear adequate space
- Support the item fully on the work surface
- Use two people to flip or move items when necessary

Microforms, Slides, and Optical Discs (DVDs, CDs)
- Handle at the edges to avoid fingerprints – thin cotton gloves are available from CPS
- Place items on dust- and grit-free surfaces
- Ensure that the equipment used to view these items is clean and well-maintained

Stamping
- Make the stamped image as even and neat as possible

Shelving

Removing Books from Shelves
- Push in the books on either side of the one you want, and gently pull your selection out by grasping its sides near the spine

Shelving
- When possible, leave a small amount of space between items so that they can be easily removed
- Keep the books upright rather than leaning, using bookends when necessary
- Place books on their spines if they are too tall to fit upright on the shelf
- Remove items left in books such as paper slips, paperclips, and Post-it™ notes
- Do not put materials on the floor

Moving Materials

Book Drops/Returns
- Empty often
- Close book covers first and grasp the entire book when removing it from the container

Book Trucks
- Shelve ordinary size books upright
- Place books on their spines if they are too tall to fit upright on the shelf
- Lay large folio-sized volumes flat
- Keep books within the edges of the truck
- Load the truck so that the center of gravity remains low – this makes the truck more stable when in motion

**Mailing Internally**
- Place loose sheets and thin books into an interdepartmental envelope. Do not use rubber bands or paperclips.
- Tie books that have loose boards or spines with cotton tying tape. See [http://libguides.mit.edu/content.php?pid=220539&sid=1835168](http://libguides.mit.edu/content.php?pid=220539&sid=1835168) for instructions on tying a bindery knot.