

## Caring for Your Books

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### The Storage Environment

In order to preserve your personal library, you should consider the environment of the storage area. Books are made of different materials that are all sensitive to heat and humidity. To get a good idea of where you should store your books, you can start by considering what sorts of environments you are comfortable in. For instance, most people are uncomfortable in a cold, dark, damp basement, or a hot, dry attic, and both of these areas would also be a poor storage environment for books. For the preservation of your personal book collection, consider the following storage tips.

#### 70° Fahrenheit and 50% Relative Humidity (RH) is an ideal environment for book storage

- Hot, dry conditions lead to brittle paper and leather
- Damp storage conditions lead to mold growth

#### Store books in an area with a fairly consistent temperature and relative humidity

- Fluctuations can cause warping and cracking of materials

#### Keep books away from direct sunlight and other light sources

- UV rays from the sun can cause fading and deterioration
- Fluorescent lights also emit UV rays, so turn off the lights when they are not required

#### Keep storage areas clean

- Regular dusting prevents the attraction of insects that eat books
- Store books on bookshelves with doors to minimize dust

#### Store books upright on shelves

- Storing books on their spines or their sides can cause distortion and damage to the structure of the book
- Use bookends to prevent books from slumping or falling over

#### Keep book shelves on interior walls

- Effects of outdoor climate change is lessened if books are stored on interior walls
- Bolt bookcases to walls to prevent the case from toppling over

#### Do not store books in plastic containers

- As they age, many plastics release emissions that can harm your collections

#### Do not store books in an area that you know may flood or have leaks

- Water can permanently damage books

Even minor improvements can have a lasting effect on your collections; simply moving books a few feet away from the direct sunlight from a window, regular cleaning, or moving books out of a box and putting them upright on a shelf can prolong the life of your collection. For more valuable or older materials you may wish to take further steps. For more tips and guidelines on storage environment and collection care, explore the resources below.

### Resources

[“Temperature, Relative Humidity, Light, and Air Quality: Basic Guidelines for Preservation”](#)

Northeast Document Conservation Center

[“Low Cost/No Cost Improvements in Climate Control”](#)

Northeast Document Conservation Center

[“Care, Handling, and Storage of Books”](#)

Library of Congress

[“Caring For Your Treasures: Books”](#)

American Institute for Conservation

[“Basic Care of Books”](#)

Canadian Conservation Institute

[“Damaged Books”](#)

British Library Preservation Advisory Centre

