HOW TO DRY A WET BOOK

Please contact the Preservation Department if you find wet books. The Preservation Department is equipped to recover wet books and will respond as quickly as possible. The instructions below are for those times when the Preservation Department cannot be reached right away.

Contacts: Elise Calvi, call or email 24/7 -- 315-877-4831, ecalvi@indiana.edu; office -- 812-855-8464
Preservation Department -- 812-856-0991

PRECAUTIONS

Ensure your safety - If there is a possibility that a wet book was contaminated by sewage, dirty water, or other potential biohazard, do not handle it with bare hands. Wear plastic gloves, then put affected items in a plastic bag and notify the Preservation Department. It is more important to ensure your own safety than to save a book!

Mold is a concern with wet and damp books and other paper-based materials. Mold can grow within 24 to 48 hours once materials become wet, or in a warm and humid environment, so wet and damp books should be dealt with immediately.

Rare books, books with coated (glossy) paper, leather, or parchment should be frozen, not air dried. If a preservation staff person cannot be reached right away, follow the directions below for freezing.

Freezing is an alternative when you don’t have time, space, or tools to air dry. It does not reverse water damage, but it stops the damage from becoming worse, and buys time until staff and facilities are available to dry them. Wet books may stick to each other or to other things when frozen, so if possible, put each book in a plastic bag or separate them with waxed paper. Lay books flat so they do not freeze in a distorted shape. In a household-type freezer, adjust to the coldest setting.

AIR DRYING PROCEDURES

Find a space that is as cool and dry as possible. Use fans to keep the air circulating.

When a Book is Saturated

- Stand the book on its head with absorbent material beneath it (e.g., paper towels, unprinted newsprint, or cloth towels).
- Open only the covers enough to allow the book to stand. If the book cannot stand alone, support it with bookends.
• Place absorbent paper inside the front and back covers (between the text block and covers).
• Do not try to separate the pages while they are very wet. Wet paper is very weak and is likely to tear at this stage.
• Change the absorbent paper as soon as it becomes wet.
• Turn the book alternately to rest on its head and tail each time paper is changed.
• When most of the water has drained, follow the procedure for a partially wet book.

When a Book is Partially Wet

• Interleave absorbent paper every 20 pages or so, with the interleaving extending beyond the head (or tail) and fore-edge. NOTE: For a damp book with coated paper, interleave between EVERY page with waxed paper.
• Lay the book flat.
• Frequent changes are better than too many interleaves, which cause distortion (except for coated paper, interleaving between every page is necessary despite distortion).
• Change the interleaving as soon as it becomes wet (check at least every half hour).
• When books are only slightly damp, follow the procedure for damp books.

When a Book is Damp

• Stand a damp book on its head or tail, fanned open a little bit, and position a fan so that the flow of air circulates (gently) into and around the book.
• If the covers are damper than the text block, place absorbent paper between them.
• When almost but not completely dry, go to the final air drying step.

Final Air Drying Step

• When almost dry, lay the book flat.
• Place absorbent paper between covers and text block.
• Reform the book into its normal shape if possible, and place a light weight on top of it.
• Do not stack drying books together. Leave the weight in place until the book is completely dry.