

Procedures for air drying wet books and records

Books

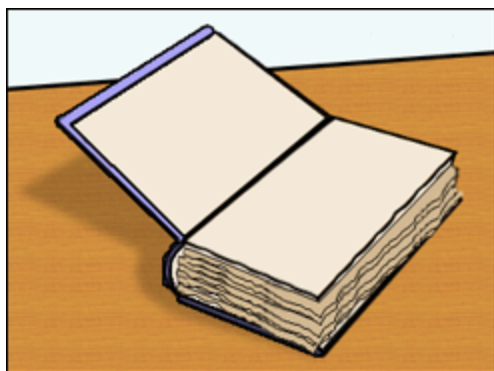
The main objective in **air drying** wet books is to remove water as efficiently as possible while also trying to prevent structural distortion. Structural distortion (excessive swelling of the fore-edge, concavity of the **backbone**) can be avoided if proper judgment is used in determining the point at which the book should be opened. The following steps assume that the covers are in good condition and still attached to the book. If the covers must be removed (because of delamination, color running out of the binding materials, board swelling and warping, and the like), the book should be stood on edge as described below, but supported by loose pieces of binder's board, blocks of wood, or bookends. (See also Cautions at the end of this section.)

NOTE: Depending on the degree of saturation, a book can take from a day to a week to dry.

1. *Books that are thoroughly wet.* Do not attempt to open the book. Do not attempt to fan the leaves. Do not remove the covers. Place the book in a closed position (with **boards** slightly open) on its **head** on sheets of absorbent paper. To permit water to drain efficiently, place small pieces of binder's board at the fore-edge. Place absorbent sheets of paper between the text block and the binding. Change the paper on the table when it becomes wet. If the book is placed in a moving current of air, it should soon dry to the point at which it may be opened for the next step.



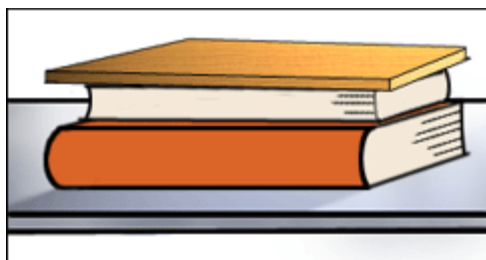
2. *Books that are partially wet.* With care, partially open the book (at a fairly shallow angle) and interleave with absorbent paper. Paper towels are ideal. Begin at the back of the book and interleave every 20 or so leaves. Given good drying conditions, the book may be left flat until the interleaving material has absorbed some of the water, probably after one hour. Change interleaf material periodically until the book is only very slightly damp, then go to step 3.



3. *Books that are damp.* Stand the book on edge, lightly fan the leaves, and allow the book to dry in a current of air. If the binding is damper than the text, place paper between the **boards** and the book. When the book is almost dry, go to step 4.



4. *Books that are almost dry.* Lay the book flat, push the back and **boards** gently into position, and place the book under a light weight, leaving it in this position until it is thoroughly dry.



CAUTION

1. **Coated paper** (shiny paper used for periodicals and art books and occasional illustrations). Give coated paper immediate attention—once the paper starts to dry, it fuses together and can rarely be separated. It may be possible to salvage the item by interleaving every sheet with waxed paper. If time or staff do not permit this, make arrangements to freeze the book and **KEEP IT WET** until it is placed in the freezer.

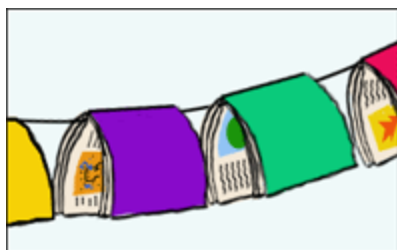
2. Water soluble inks or media (manuscripts, drawings, water colors), rare or unique items, and nonpaper material (film, photographs, discs, oil paintings). Contact a trained conservator.

3. Bound manuscripts or books printed or bound in vellum or leather. **DO NOT AIR DRY** except under the direction of a specialist.

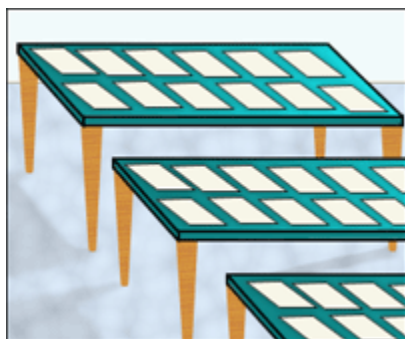
Paper documents or pamphlets

Do not attempt to air dry manuscripts, drawings, or material with water soluble colors except under the advice of a conservation specialist. Do not attempt to separate leaves that are very wet or that are sticking together unless you have been trained to do so.

1. Hang thin pamphlets over strung fishing line to dry.



2. Lay single pages or small stacks of documents out on an absorbent material on tables, floors, and other flat surfaces, protecting them if necessary with paper towels or **newsprint** (unprinted).



3. String clotheslines close together and lay documents across them for drying.

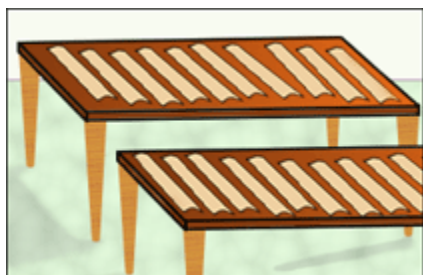
CAUTION

Take care not to separate the contents of folders and **boxes**. Label new boxes or drying areas as necessary to expedite the return of the collection to order after drying.

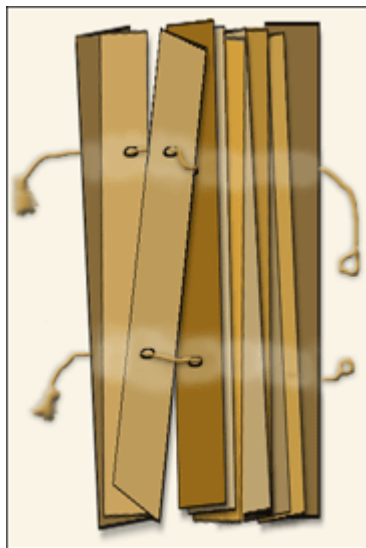
Palm leaf or bark manuscripts

These manuscripts are usually "bound" by cord passed through double-pierced holes. Since the text is generally not paginated or easily readable by nonscholars, take great care to avoid disordering the leaves.

If time and space permit, remove the manuscript **CORDS** and set the leaves flat in strict order on layers of blotting paper, with the curve uppermost. Single palm leaves will generally dry quickly if placed in a gentle current of air. However, if the palm or bark leaves appear to be becoming distorted (curling and twisting excessively), place a layer of **blotting paper** over the leaves along with a light weight, such as a piece of thin board.



If there are many manuscripts and a more urgent approach is needed, loosen the **CORDS** and fan the leaves out as much as possible. Again, allow currents of air to pass over the manuscripts.



The text of most palm leaf manuscripts is inscribed into the surface of the leaf, and the image made up of lampblack and oil wiped into the incisions. Water damage may result in the loss of the image, but this may be easily restored after drying. Moreover, most palm leaf manuscripts have been treated with aromatic oils for flexibility and to repel insects, so water may not be completely absorbed.

CAUTION

Do not use artificial heat to try to speed the drying, as this will lead to dimensional distortion.