



Best Practices for Preservation in Shared Print Programs

Future access to the materials of shared print collections depends on their preservation over time. Successful preservation of printed books comes from active management at the time of selection, during the entire course of storage and use, and when a book's physical usefulness approaches its end.

Each book selected into a shared print collection has its own materiality and history. Best practice involves significant investment as early as possible in selecting sound copies and in creating a program and a physical environment that minimize deterioration and risks. Early investment reduces later costs and losses; however, it is neither practical nor possible to start a shared print program with only perfect copies.

Even the best storage environments and materials in them can deteriorate over time. Therefore ongoing management directed by dedicated, trained preservation professionals is one of the most important requirements to remediate damage in order to meet the needs of users and to mitigate new risks to the collection as they emerge. Material objects decay, even under ideal conditions. Best practice acknowledges this potential for loss and incorporates mechanisms to transfer text to new formats while maintaining some copies of the old format as long as possible to validate the new.

The following outline articulates the process of print preservation into the areas of staff, environment, condition, security, and risk mitigation. For all their vulnerabilities, printed books are persistent objects, especially in numbers distributed over different locations. Any of the activities described here will increase their chances of survival.

Each level presumes all checks of any/all preceding levels.

1. Staff

a. Good

The SPP will encourage member libraries to

- i. have readily available staff trained in preservation or if that is not possible, identify a member library with preservation staff to assist all program members
- ii. an informal digitization process (i.e. identify where the print item has an equivalent digital version and/or to digitize local materials)

b. Better

The SPP will encourage member libraries to

- i. have readily available staff trained in preservation or if that is not possible, identify a member library with preservation staff to assist all program members
- ii. engage in a formal digitization program that identifies when the print item has an equivalent digital version and/or digitize local materials

c. Best

The SPP will encourage member libraries to

- i. meet all criteria listed under Better
- ii. have dedicated onsite preservation and/or conservator staff

d. Aspirational

The SPP will encourage member libraries to

- i. meet all criteria listed under Best
- ii. have an onsite conservator and dedicated lab

Table 1: Better, Best, and Aspirational Practices for Staffing

	Good	Better	Best	Aspirational
Trained Staff in Preservation	x	x	x	x
Informal Digitization Process	x			
Formal Digitization Program		x	x	x

Onsite Preservation and/or Conservation Staff			X	X
Onsite Conservator				X
Dedicated Lab				X

2. **Preservation Environment** (See Best Practice Tier System for Storage Environments at <https://sharedprint.org/best-practices/storage-environment/>)

a. **Good**

The SPP will encourage member libraries to take actions that correspond with tier 1 of the [Best Practice Tier System for Storage Environments](https://sharedprint.org/best-practices/storage-environment/), and member libraries will prioritize retained items for preservation

b. **Better**

The SPP will encourage member libraries to take actions that correspond with tier 2 of the [Best Practice Tier System for Storage Environments](https://sharedprint.org/best-practices/storage-environment/), and member libraries will prioritize retained items for preservation

c. **Best**

The SPP will encourage member libraries to take actions that correspond with tier 3 of the [Best Practice Tier System for Storage Environments](https://sharedprint.org/best-practices/storage-environment/), and member libraries will prioritize retained items for preservation

d. **Aspirational**

The SPP will encourage member libraries to take actions that correspond with tier 4 of the [Best Practice Tier System for Storage Environments](https://sharedprint.org/best-practices/storage-environment/), and member libraries will prioritize retained items for preservation. In addition, member libraries can strive for the following:

- i. TWPI 200 or better, 30-40% humidity, temperature 50° F or less

- ii. no windows
- iii. no UV
- iv. lights on only in local area at use (timed or motion-sensing)
- v. comprehensive boxing/lids on trays

3. Condition

a. Good (Acceptable)

The SPP will encourage member libraries to use the following metrics:

- i. some damage acceptable
- ii. no active pests or mold
- iii. no significant loss of text
- iv. extensive paper damage flagged as the paper original retained primarily for production of copies¹

b. Better

The SPP will encourage member libraries to use the following metrics:

- i. meet all criteria listed under Good
- ii. text not marked (highlighting, underlining, notes)
- iii. paper withstands at least one double-fold
- iv. binding is intact or can be rebound at modest cost
- v. books not intact (if only option available) are in enclosures or tied
- vi. shelf validation (physical volume present)

c. Best

The SPP will encourage member libraries to use the following metrics:

- i. meet all criteria listed under Better
- ii. few or no tears
- iii. article or chapter validation

d. Aspirational

The SPP will encourage member libraries to use the following metrics:

- i. meet all criteria listed under Best

¹ See Gary Frost's definition of "leaf master" at <https://cool.culturalheritage.org/byauth/frost/frost1.html> or <https://web.archive.org/web/20090327104645/http://futureofthebook.com/storiestoc/leaf>.

- ii. as printed condition (original binding)
- iii. page validation
- iv. value added: effective enclosures, deacidification
- v. brittle: have verified additional copies or digital surrogate

Table 3: Good, Better, Best, and Aspirational Practices for Condition

	Good (Acceptable)	Better	Best	Aspirational
No Major Damage	x	x	x	x
No Active Pests or Mold	x	x	x	x
No Significant Loss of Text	x	x	x	x
Major Paper Damage Flagged for Reformatting	x	x	x	x
No Markings		x	x	x
Paper Withstands Double Folds		x	x	x
Binding Intact		x	x	x
Book Enclosed (if Necessary)		x	x	x
Shelf Validation		x	x	x
Few or No Tears			x	x
Article/Chapter Validation			x	x
As Printed Condition				x
Deacidification				x
Surrogate Copies Available				x

4. Security/Circulation See also Best Practices for Inventory at

<https://sharedprint.org/best-practices/inventory-for-shared-print-programs/>

a. Good

The SPP will encourage member libraries to have

- i. some sort of security tracking (RFID/3M etc)
- ii. ownership marking/labelling

b. Better

The SPP will encourage member libraries to

- i. meet all criteria listed under Good
- ii. engage in shelf verification

c. Best

The SPP will encourage member libraries to

- i. meet all criteria listed under Better
- ii. have closed stacks (staff retrieval only)

d. Aspirational

The SPP will encourage member libraries to

- i. meet all criteria listed under Best
- ii. have closed verified stacks
- iii. engage in controlled digital lending

Table 4: Good, Better, Best, and Aspirational Practices for Security/Circulation

	Good	Better	Best	Aspirational
Security Tracking System	x	x	x	x
Ownership Marking	x	x	x	x
Shelf Verification		x	x	x
Closed Stacks			x	x
Verified Stacks				x

CDL Practiced					x
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5. Risk Mitigation

a. Good

The SPP will encourage member libraries to have

- i. a disaster response plan
- ii. fire detection
- iii. shelves 1 or more inches off floor
- iv. integrated pest management program

b. Better

The SPP will encourage member libraries to

- i. meet all criteria listed under Good
- ii. have an up-to-date (within 5 years) disaster response plan
- iii. have fire suppression
- iv. be sited for safety (not in flood plain, high-industrial area, or next to railroad, etc.)

c. Best

The SPP will encourage member libraries to

- i. meet all criteria listed under Better
- ii. have a disaster response plan and permanent staff trained in disaster response/recovery
- iii. have a building shell designed to reduce risks (no water lines over stacks, roof design appropriate to climate; insect and small animal barriers)

d. Aspirational

The SPP will encourage member libraries to

- i. meet all criteria listed under Best
- ii. have a comprehensive disaster plan that is reviewed regularly (annually recommended) and permanent staff trained in disaster response/recovery

- iii. have a standing contract with disaster response firm

Table 5: Good, Better, Best, and Aspirational Practices for Risk Mitigation

	Good	Better	Best	Aspirational
Disaster Response Plan	x	x	x	x
Fire Detection	x	x	x	x
Shelves Off of Floor	x	x	x	x
Integrated Pest Management	x	x	x	x
Up-to-Date Disaster Plan		x	x	x
Fire Suppression		x	x	x
Sited for Safety		x	x	x
Permanent Staff for Disaster Response			x	x
Building Designed to Reduce Risk			x	x
Comprehensive Disaster Plan				x
Standing Contract with Disaster Response Firm				x

6. Shared Print Program MOUs (See also [Best Practices for MOUs](#))

a. Good

- i. MOUs include preservation considerations and recommendations for member libraries

b. Better

- i. MOUs include preservation requirements for member libraries
- ii. The SPP provides access to preservationists for questions and issues that may arise within member libraries

c. Best

- i. MOUs include preservation requirements for member libraries
- ii. The SPP provides a designated preservation expert for member libraries

Resources

Library of Congress:

- [Preservation Guidelines for Digitizing Library Materials](#)
- [Risk Management](#)
- [Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiatives](#)

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