

What Damages Library Materials? Some Typical Culprits

Use this information to talk to staff about the need to weed.

Careless handling

- Dropping books or discs
- Leaning on open volumes, including pressing flat at copy machines
- Exposing books to rain or snow
- Exposing discs and tapes to overheated conditions such as parked cars

Multitasking

- Spilling food or drink on materials
- Reading in baths or hot tubs
- Dirty hands

Vandalism

- Underlining, annotating, or highlighting in books or magazines
- Tearing or cutting out passages, illustrations, or whole pages
- Dog earring pages as casual bookmarking
- Failing to remove adhesive notes ('Post-Its')

And more on damages...

- When wet paper stock dries, not only is it warped, but it can take up to 20% more shelf space. When materials printed on clay coated stock become damp, pages stick together and cannot be loosened without losing content.
- Mold and mildew both grow in damp conditions. Mold and insects both thrive on food crumbs and stains. Mold, mildew, and some insects can infest shelved materials quickly, moving from the originally infected site to nearby hosts.
- Damaged materials are not always evident when they sit on the shelf. Broken spines, scratched discs, vandalism that is limited to one or just a few internal points inside materials can be spotted only when staff opens and examines shelved materials.
- If material smells, isolate it and remove it from the collection. Mold and mildew are health hazards as well as being dangerous to other library materials.