Red Flag!

Identifying Preservation Needs While Processing Collections

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May 2024

HBCU Library Alliance

CONSERVATION CENTER *for Art & Historic Artifacts*

WHY ASSIGN PRESERVATION PRIORITIES TO COLLECTIONS?

- It will focus time, preservation efforts, funding, and storage strategies

- It will help improve access.

- It will help organize application efforts for funding for preservation and conservation projects

- It may be necessary for insurance purposes

When do you prioritize a collection's preservation needs?

- When accessioning or cataloguing new collection items

- As part of a collections survey

- During processing or appraisal

IMPORTANT

Consistency is key to success!

Whatever processes an institution decides to follow should be clearly outlined and all staff members should be properly trained.

Consistency ensures efficient, effective collections care, physical control and intellectual control.

DESTRUCTION OF THE NEW YORK CRYSTAL PALACE BY FIRE, OCTOBER 5, 1858.

AGENTS OF DETERIORATION

http://dhpsny.org/webinars

DETERIORATION OF COLLECTIONS

Deterioration may be put into 3 categories:

- Physical Deterioration

  - Tears, abrasion, compaction, losses, folds, creases, planar distortions, etc.

- Chemical Deterioration

  - Staining, discoloration, degraded adhesive residues, degrading media, etc.

- Biological Deterioration

  - Digestion by mold, bacteria, and insects
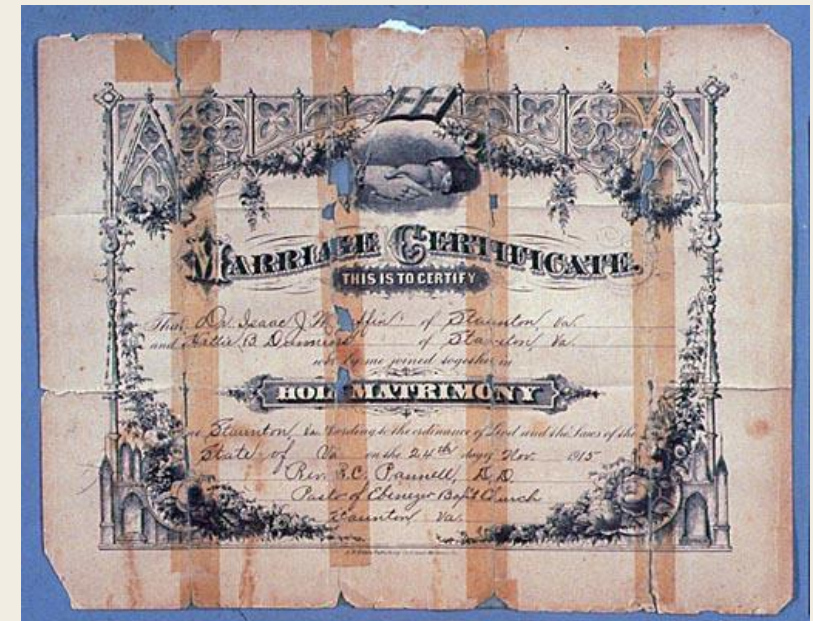
AVENUES OF DETERIORATION

- Materials Composing the Objects
- Object Construction
- Use and Display
- Storage Methods
- Well-meaning attempts to treat damage

Environmental	Disasters or Emergencies	Institutional
– Pests – Pollution – Light, Ultraviolet and Infrared Radiation – Incorrect Relative Humidity – Incorrect Temperature	– Water – Fire – Theft and Vandalism – *Disassociation	– Disassociation – Custodial Neglect
– Physical Force		

EXAMINING PAPER OBJECTS

EXAMINING PAPER OBJECTS

What are you looking at?

Works of Art – Aesthetic

Archival Materials – Information

What is it made of?

Paper supports

Media

Additional materials: adhesives, seals, secondary supports, staples, paperclips
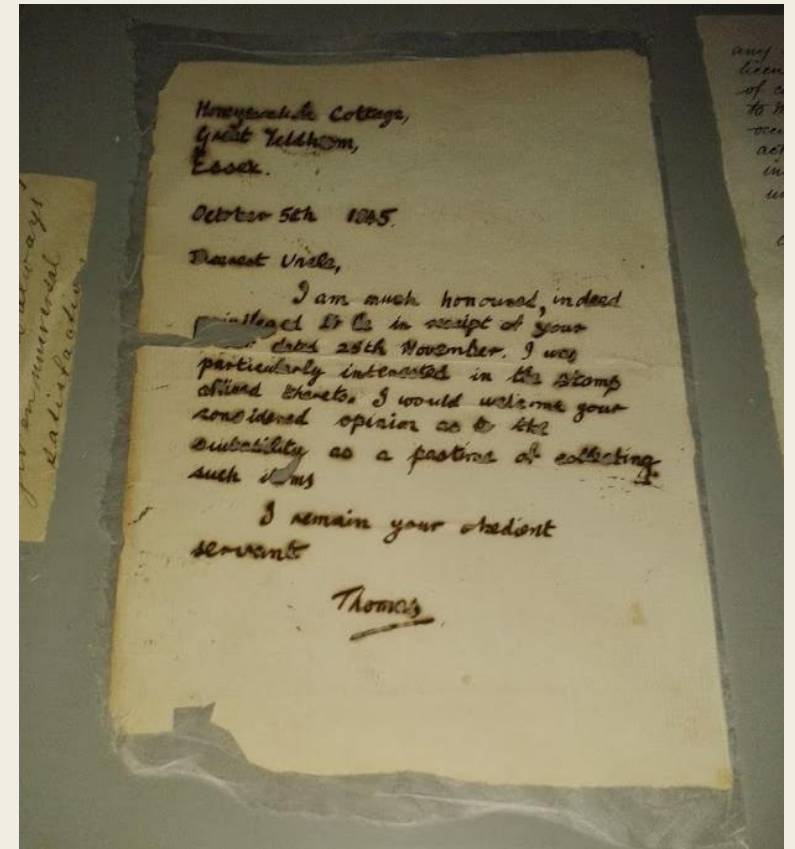
COMMON DETERIORATION ISSUES IN PAPER OBJECTS

- Acidity

- Improper environmental conditions

- Improper handling and storage

- Exhibition materials and methods

- Other Issues:
  - Media or image material deterioration
  - Improper repairs

Clerk of Civil District Court, New Orleans

ACIDITY, DISCOLORATION, & WEAKENING
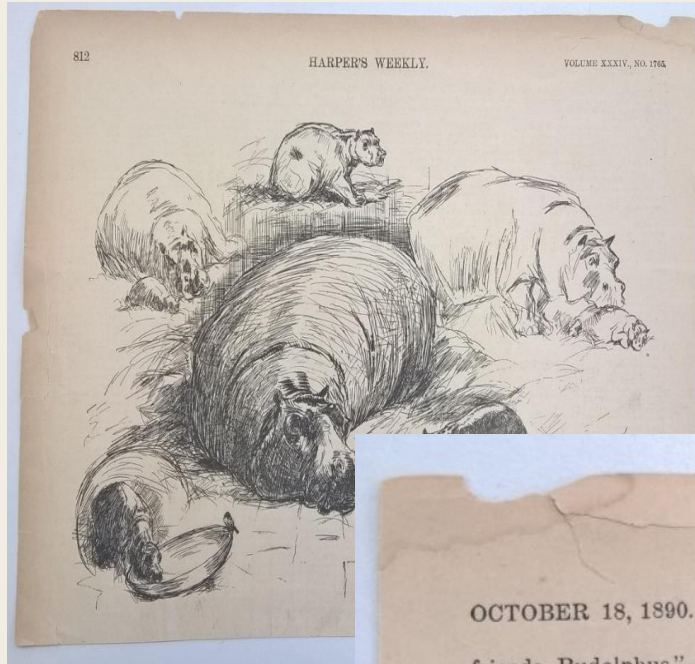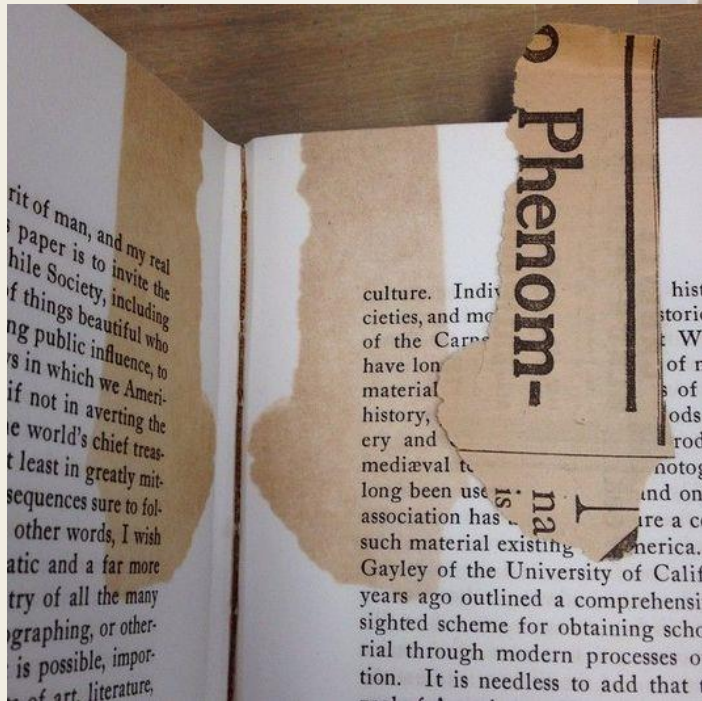
ACCRETIONS AND SURFACE SOIL

Jessica Silverman

DAMAGE FROM IMPROPER ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS
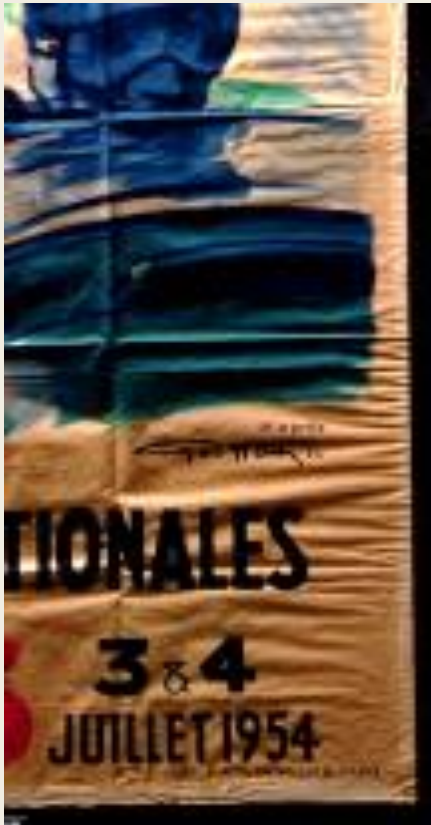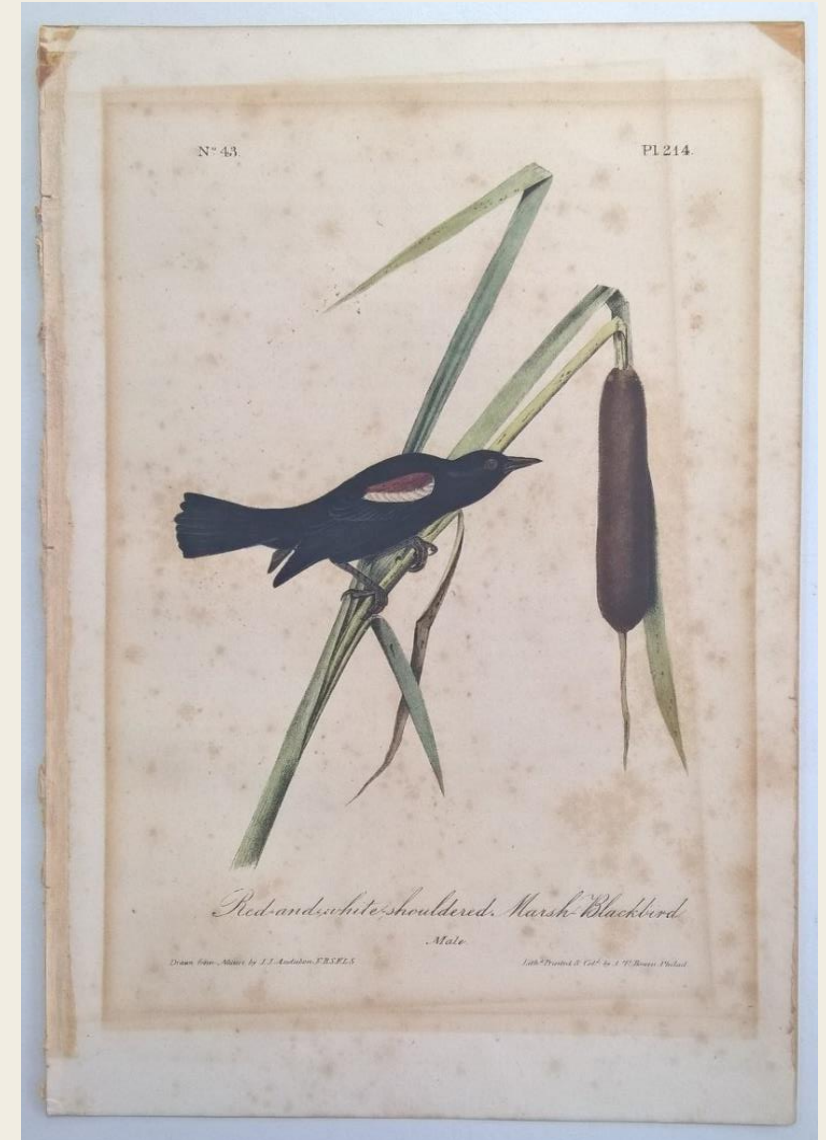

Insect Damage

High Moisture
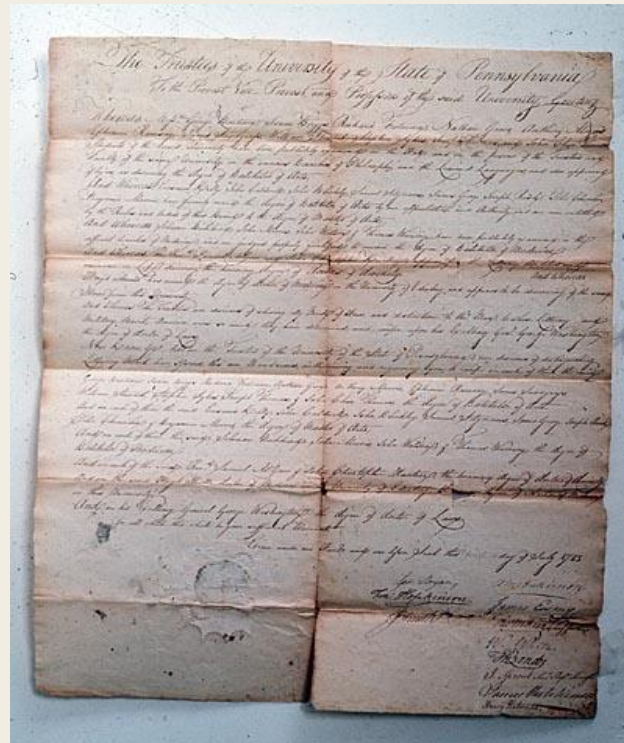
Air Pollutants

Mold Damage

DISCOLORATION

- Darkening paper from light exposure.
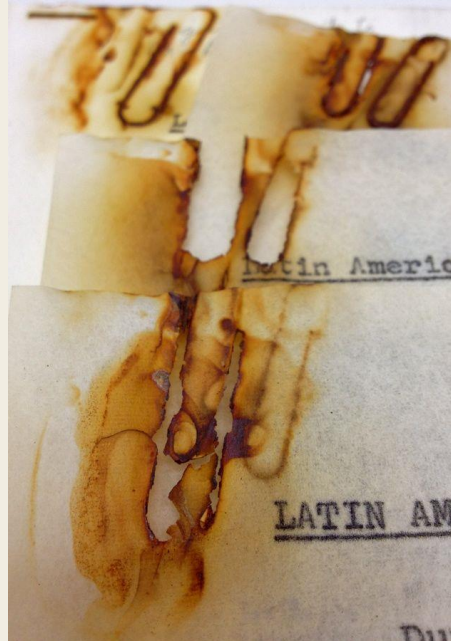- Foxing stains - accelerated localized aging from fungi or metal particles in the paper
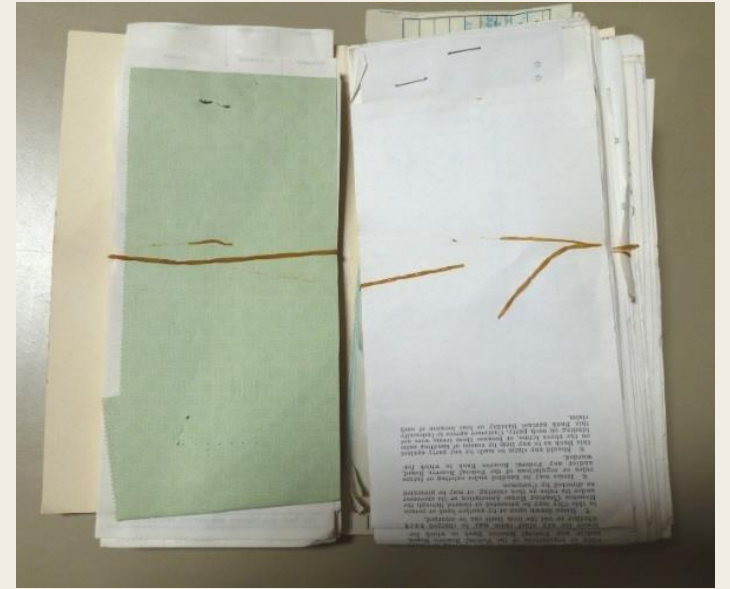
POOR QUALITY HOUSING AND FRAMING

POOR QUALITY EXHIBITION METHODS

POOR STORAGE METHODS AND MATERIALS

Maps were often lined with a cloth backing, varnished, attached to hanging rods, and rolled for storage causing chemical and physical damage.

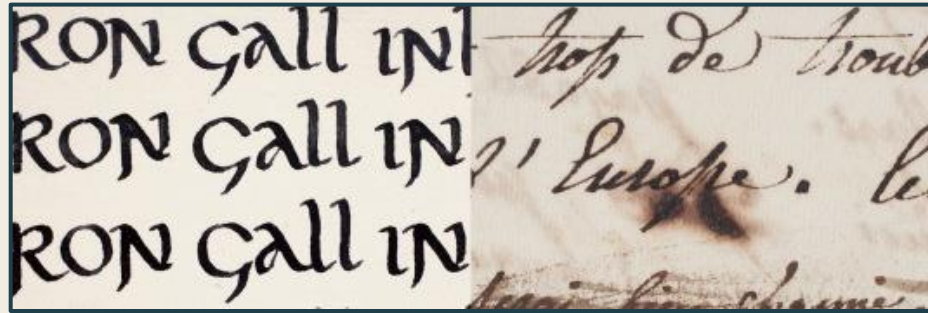Corrosion of metal paper clips and staples

Degraded plastics and rubber bands
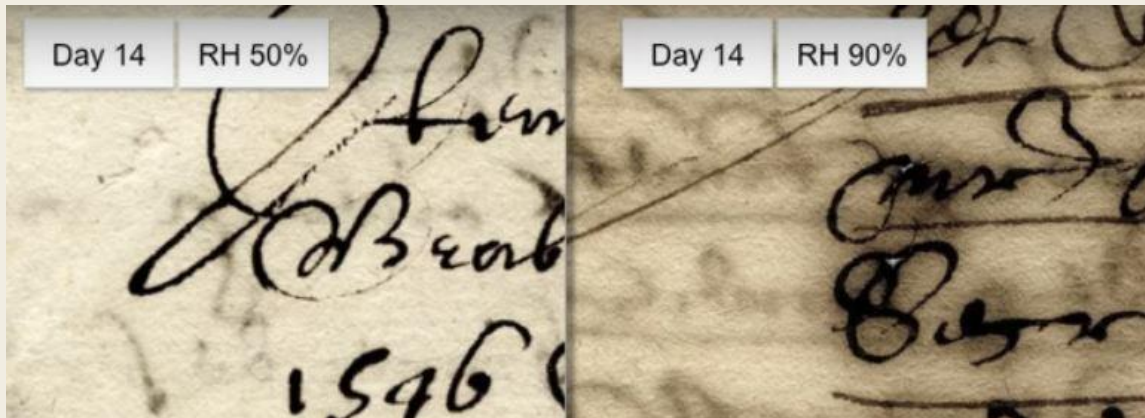
Folding materials to fit in smaller housing

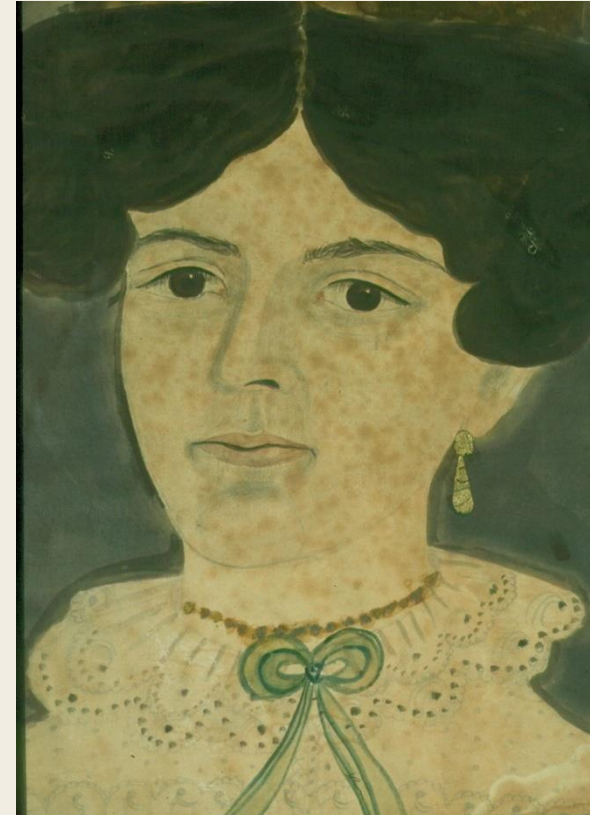# MEDIA ISSUES

Iron Gall Ink

Fresh ink   Old ink

Oil binders in media causing color change in the paper support

MEDIA ISSUES

Flaking Media

Joan Irving

Pastels with Foxing

DAMAGE FROM PREVIOUS REPAIRS

Source: Holly Krueger, Library of Congress

EXAMINING BOOKS

WARPING

Books will absorb moisture causing the different materials to expand and contract at different rates introducing significant physical stress.

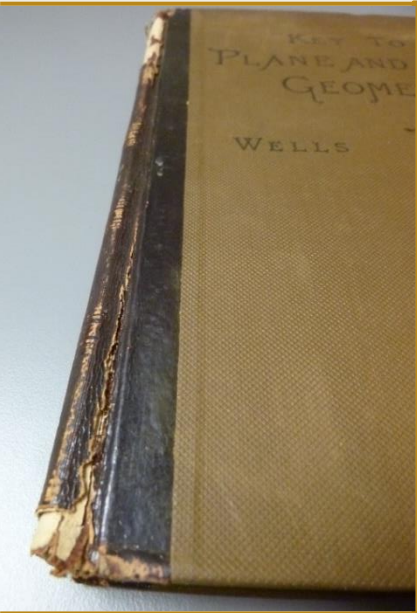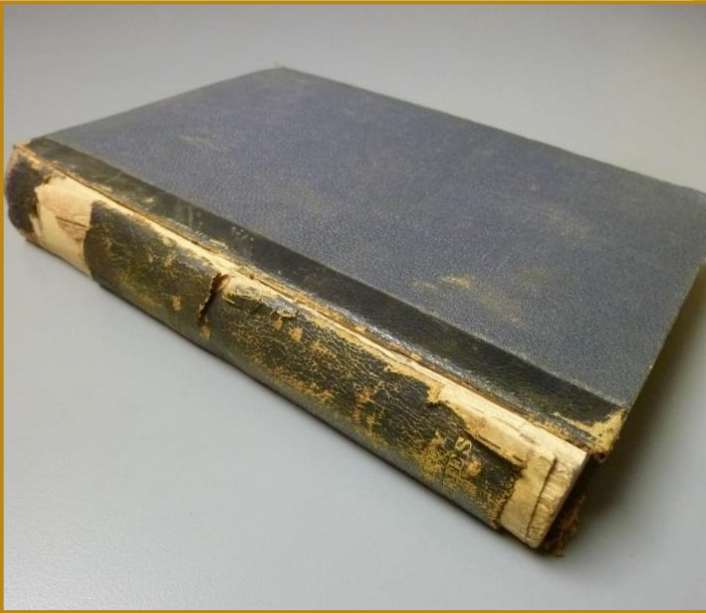# LEATHER DETERIORATION

Fatty Bloom

Extreme Heat
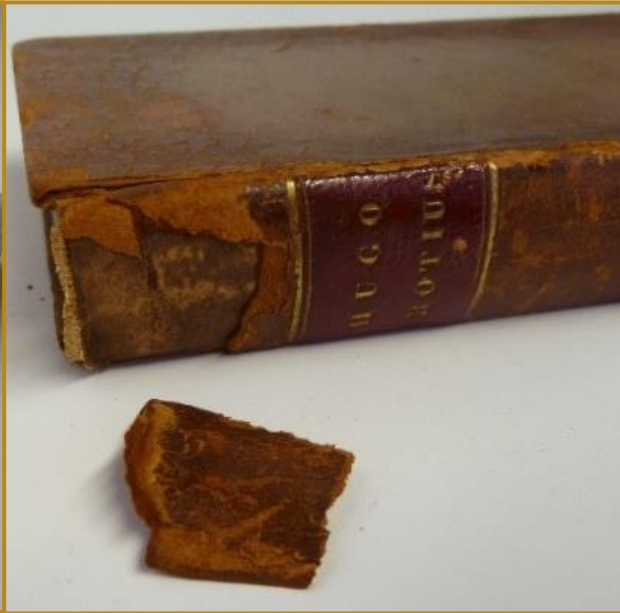
Red Rot

Red Rot

EXTERIOR JOINT & SPINE ISSUES

joint
weak/splitting

precariously attached
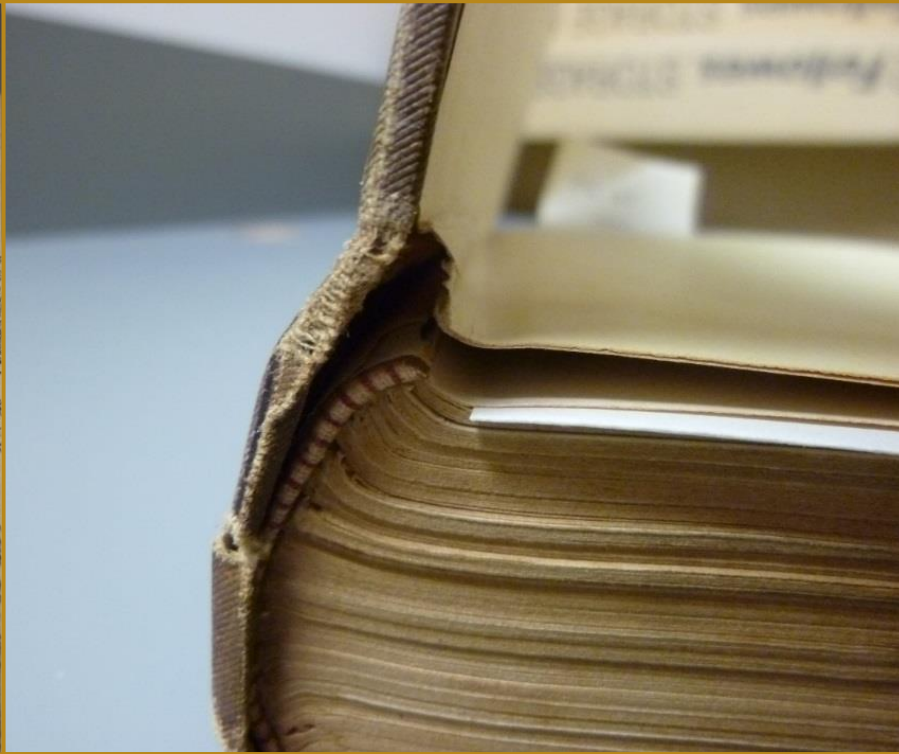spine component with no
information

detached spine
component with no
information

missing spine piece

STRUCTURE FAILURE OF THE HINGE

EXAMINING PHOTOGRAPHS

Dock Worker Series, 1980s Circa 2010 Photograph by Keith Calhoun

PHYSICAL DAMAGE

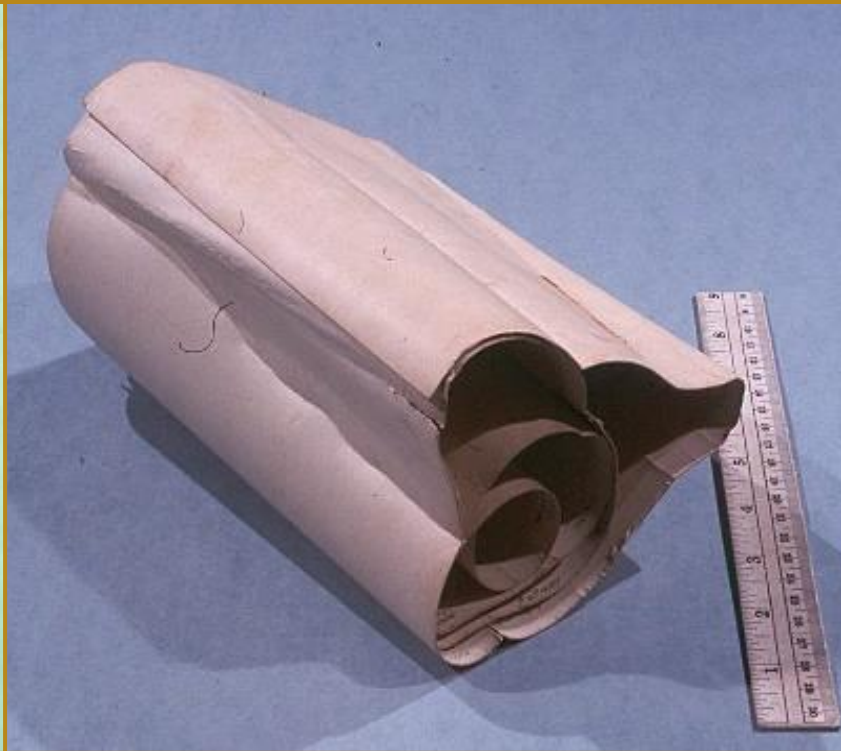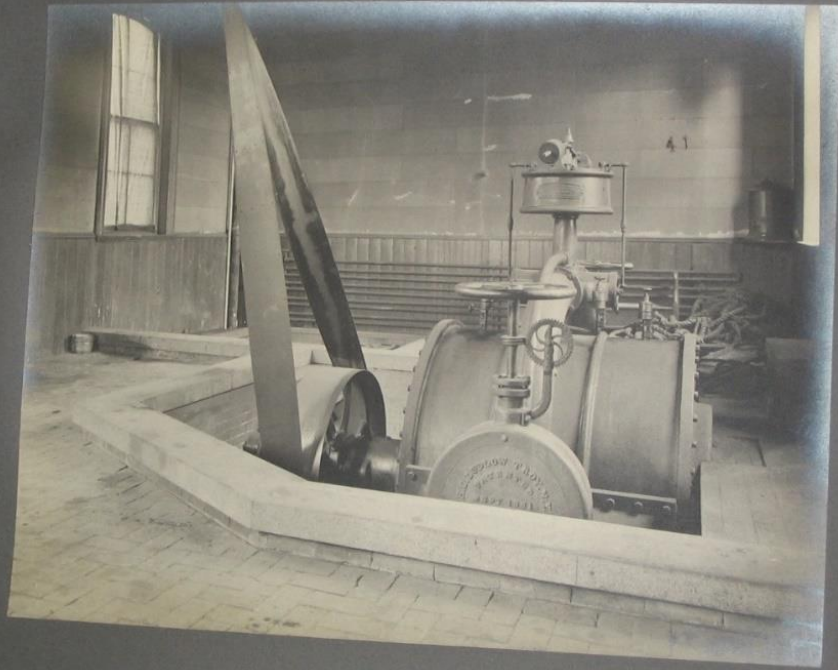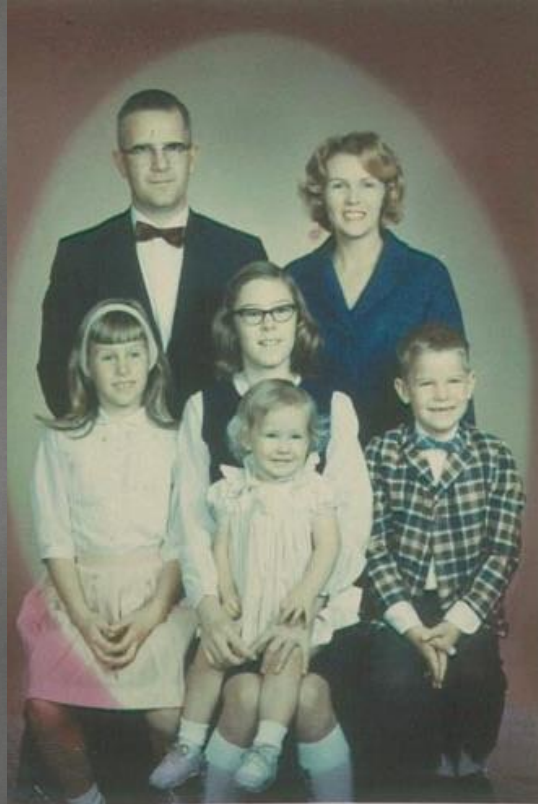# DAMAGE DUE TO MOISTURE

IMAGE MATERIALS ISSUES

Silver Mirroring

Color Fading
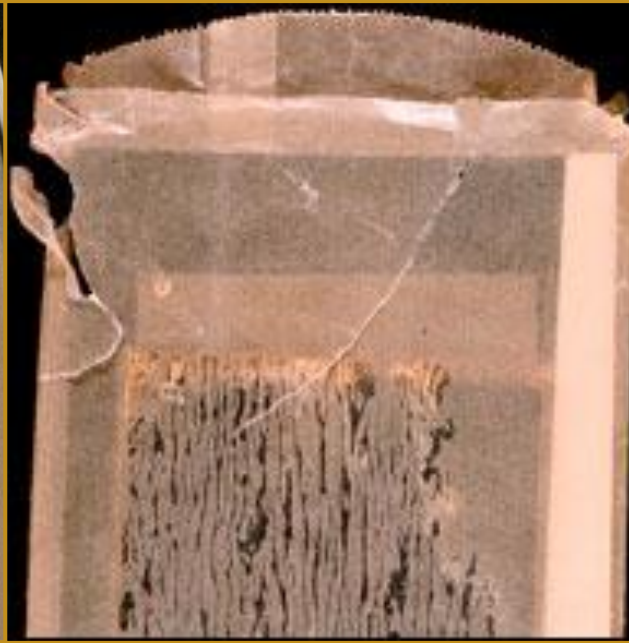
Platinum/Palladium Prints

CHEMICAL DAMAGE FROM POLLUTION AND SURFACE SOIL

DAMAGE FROM POOR STORAGE MATERIALS AND METHODS

Stacked Photographs

Glassine

Improper Vertical Storage

DAMAGE FROM IMPROPER LABELING AND DISPLAY

PRIORITIZING PRESERVATION NEEDS

WHEN DO YOU PRIORITZE A COLLECTION'S PRESERVATION NEEDS?

- During appraisals
- When accessioning, cataloguing, and/or processing new collection items
- As part of a collections survey
- As part of access considerations
- Prior to exhibition or loan
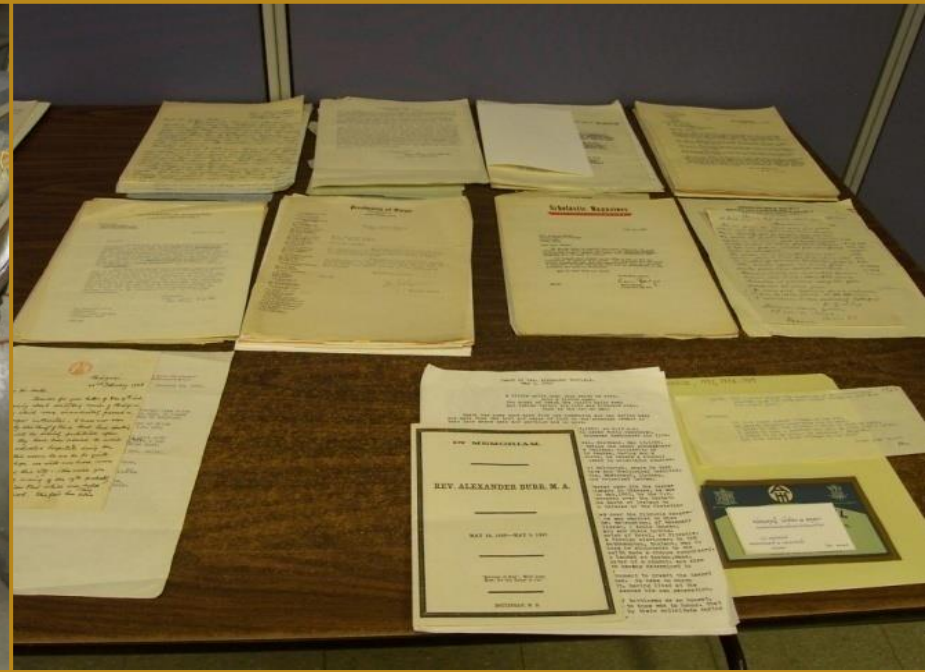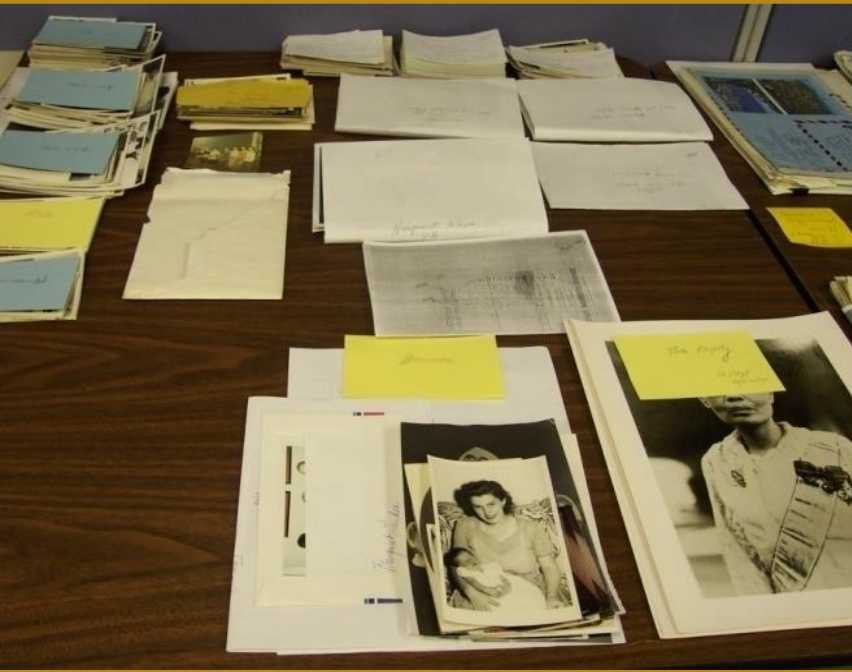- Prior to digitization or other imaging

PROCESSING

- Arranging
- Housing
- Labeling
- Describing

CREATING A PROCESSING PLAN

APPRAISAL

- Intellectual Value
  - Evidential
  - Informational

- Intrinsic Value

- Other Considerations
  - Administrative, age, uniqueness, physical condition, accessibility

- Ethical Considerations

Cataloging

Collections Survey

Access Considerations

Exhibition or Loan

Digitization and Imaging

WHAT ARE YOU PRIORITIZING FOR?

Conservation treatment

Digitization

Better housing

STEPS TO PRIORITIZING PRESERVATION NEEDS

▪Assess and record the condition of the objects

▪**Identify the parameters guiding prioritization for each object**

▪Apply the parameters to each object to assign preservation priorities for implementation by a preservation plan

▪Consider what the collection needs: conservation, housing, display, Imaging (facsimile), Digitization, special storage
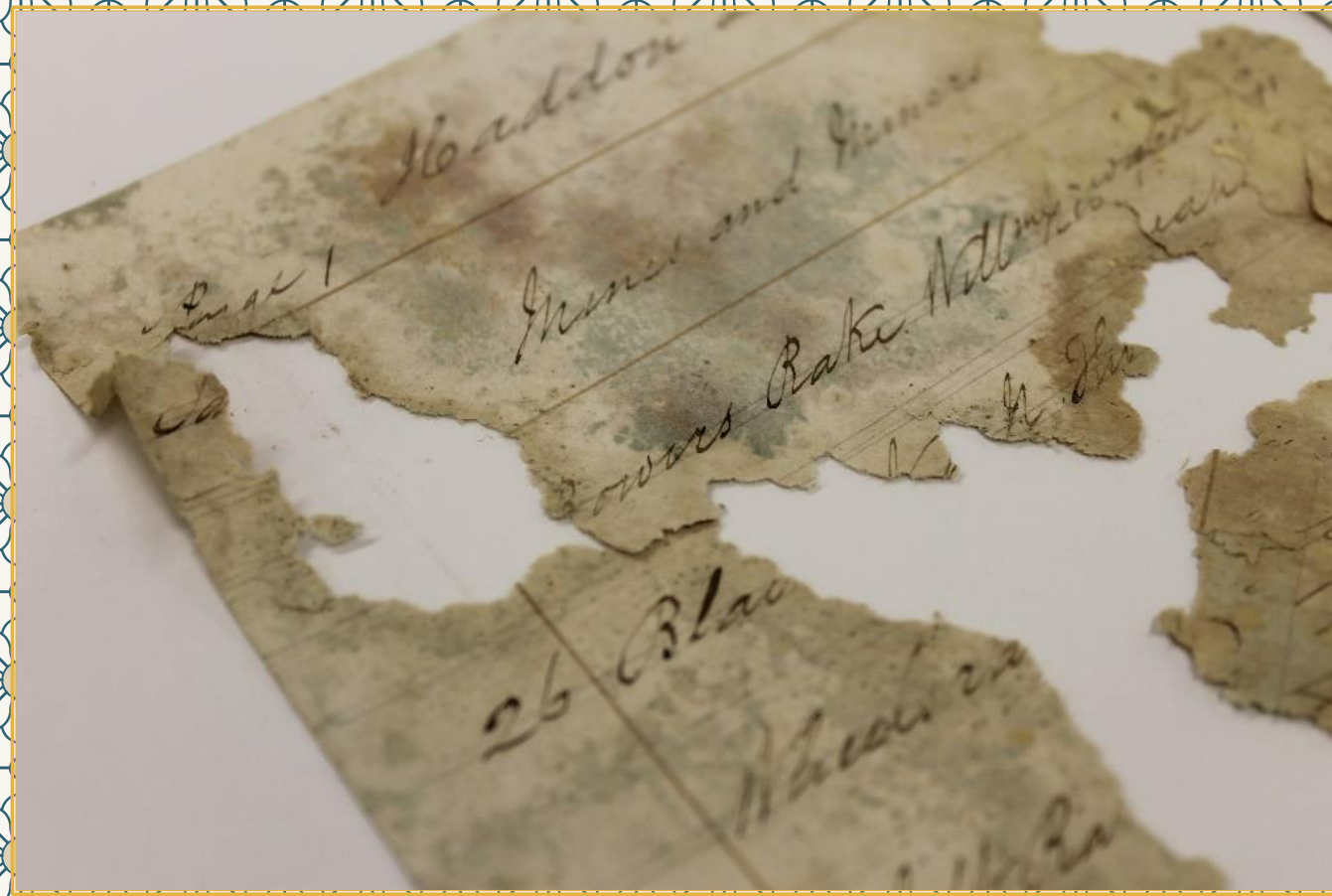
PARAMETERS EFFECTING PRESERVATION PRIORITIES

Needs to Identify:

- Conservation
- Exhibition Housing
- Display
- Imaging
- Digitization

Storage Housing

Effective Preservation
- Condition
- Use
  - Research Collection
  - Exhibition Collection
- Mission Relevance
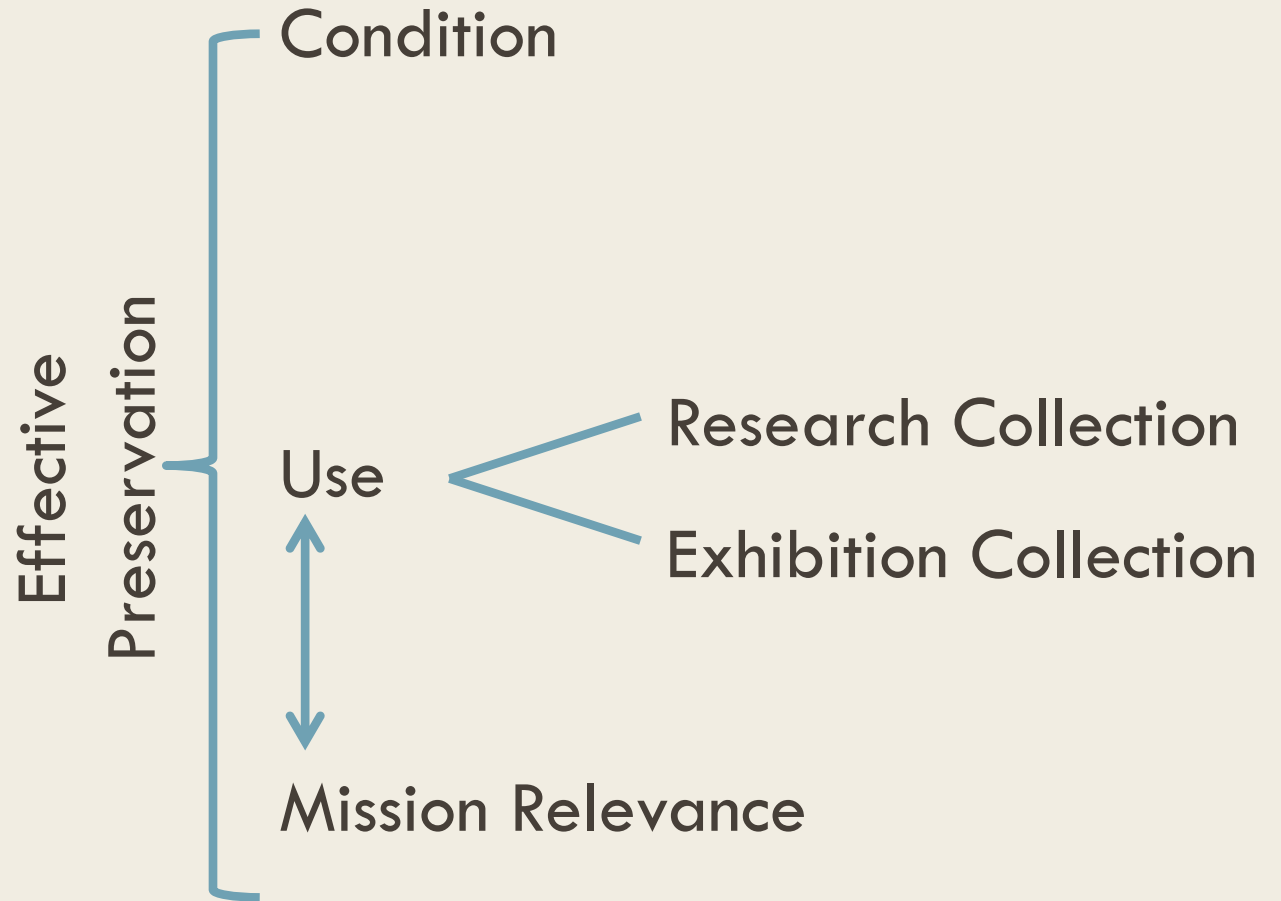
PRIORITIZING BY CONDITION

CONDITION

This is the base line to prioritizing as it indicates what the object needs in order to be stabilized.

Preservation needs addressed:
- Conservation treatment
- Object sensitivities that effect use, display, and loan requirements
- Storage and housing needs

CONDITION + USE + MISSION RELEVENCE
=
PRESERVATION PLAN AND TIMELINE

CONDITION: PRIORITY LEVELS

Urgent (Contagious)	Immediate intervention is needed; cannot be accessed without treatment
High	Object(s) are in danger of further damage; access should be limited to none
Moderate	Object(s) are vulnerable but not in immediate danger; should be handled with moderate supervision and instruction
Low	Object(s) would benefit from treatment but can be safely accessed
None	Object(s) are in stable, good condition

CONDITION: PRIORITY LEVELS

Urgent or Contagious:

- Active or inactive mold
- Active insect infestation
- Damp or extremely soiled objects

NOTE: This category will always be the highest priority requiring immediate attention regardless of the object's or collection's mission relevance

CONTAGIOUS

CONDITION: PRIORITY LEVELS

High Priority - objects inaccessible due to:

- Significant structural damage i.e.:

  - Tears
  - Losses
  - Creases
  - Planar distortions

- <u>Significant</u> discoloration or staining
- Damage from acidic and corrosive housing or secondary materials
- Losses, flaking, powdering, silver mirroring, or faded, light sensitive media.
- Damage from amateur repair i.e.:

  - Significant amount of deteriorated tape
  - Poorly executed mends or fills
  - Improperly executed cosmetic work like bleaching, inpainting, or toning.

CONDITION: HIGH PRIORITY
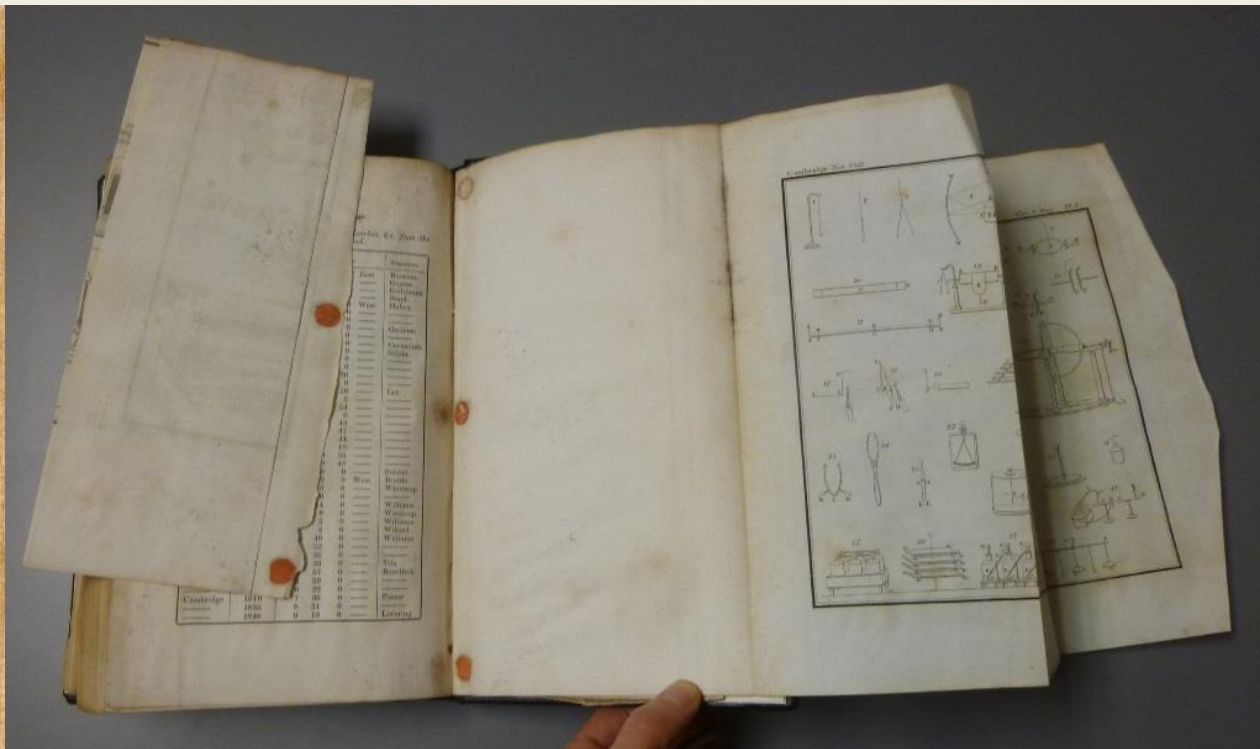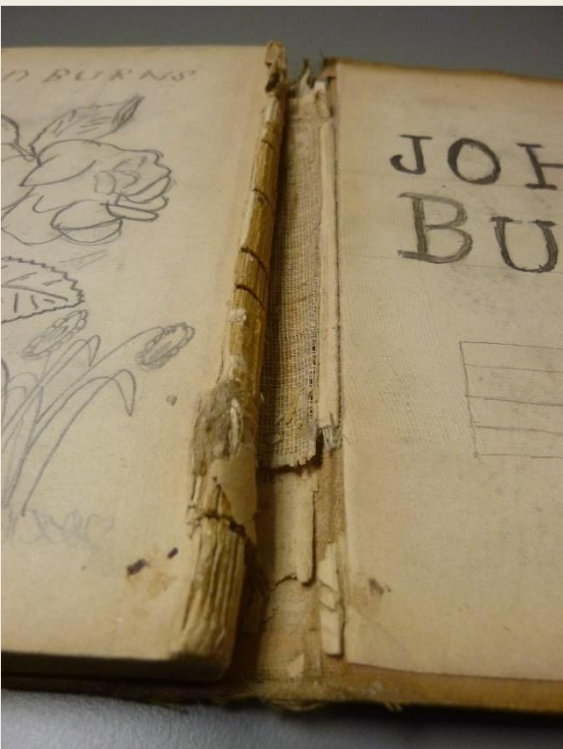
CONDITION: MODERATE PRIORITY

- some tears, abrasions, loose components

- Some staining or discoloration

- Previous past repairs

- Some grime

- Some poor quality mounts or housing
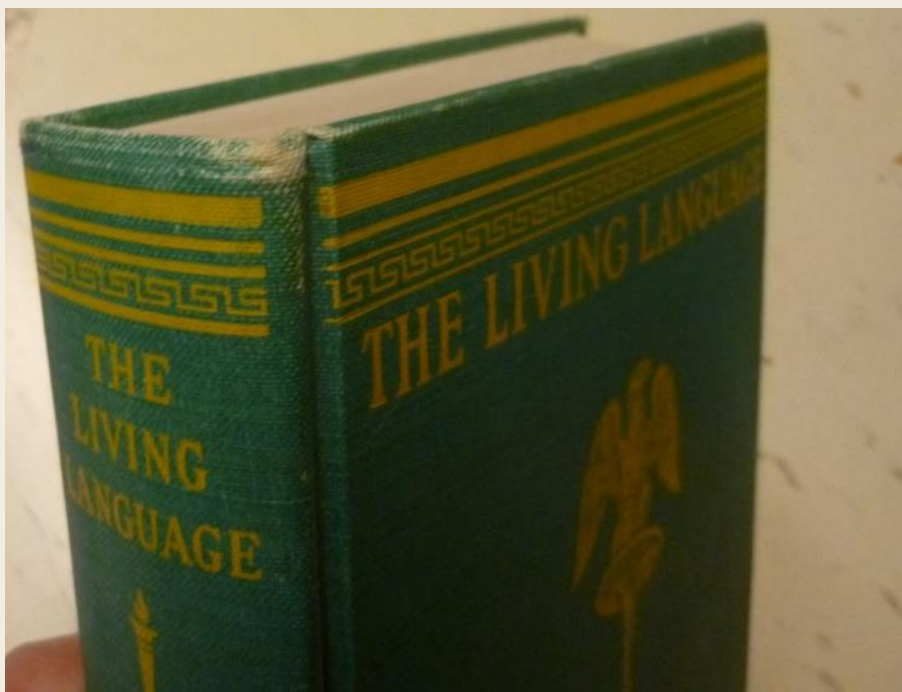
- Loose book cover

- Rusty fasteners
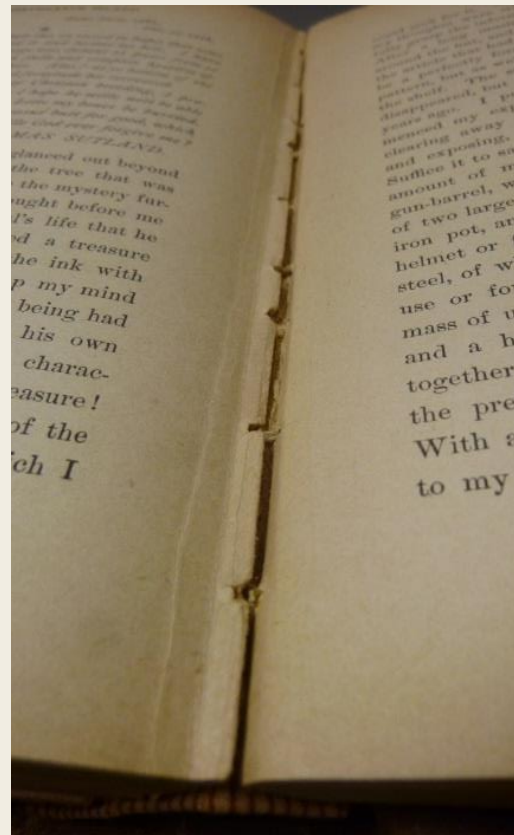
CONDITION: LOW PRIORITY

- Small tears and creases in margins

- Slight staining or discoloration (not affecting information or image)

- Minor surface soil

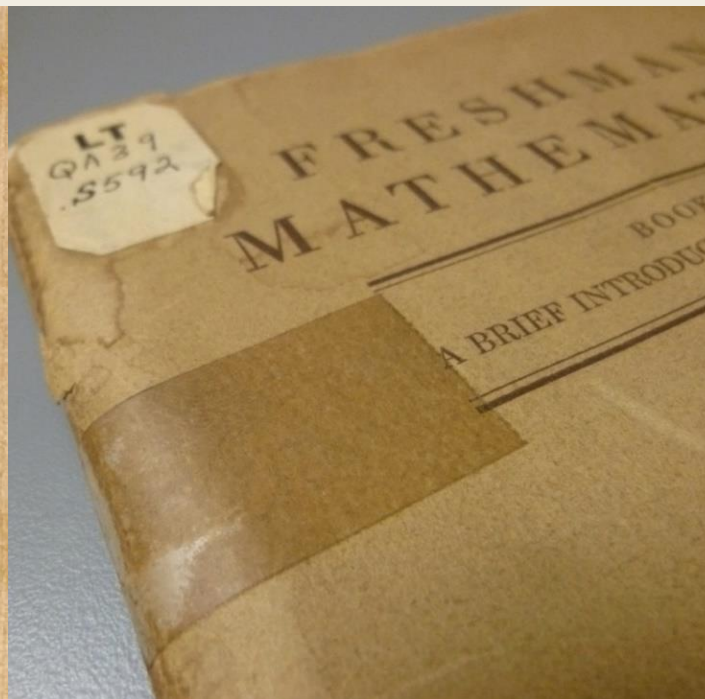- Some poor quality mounts or housing

- Loose book cover
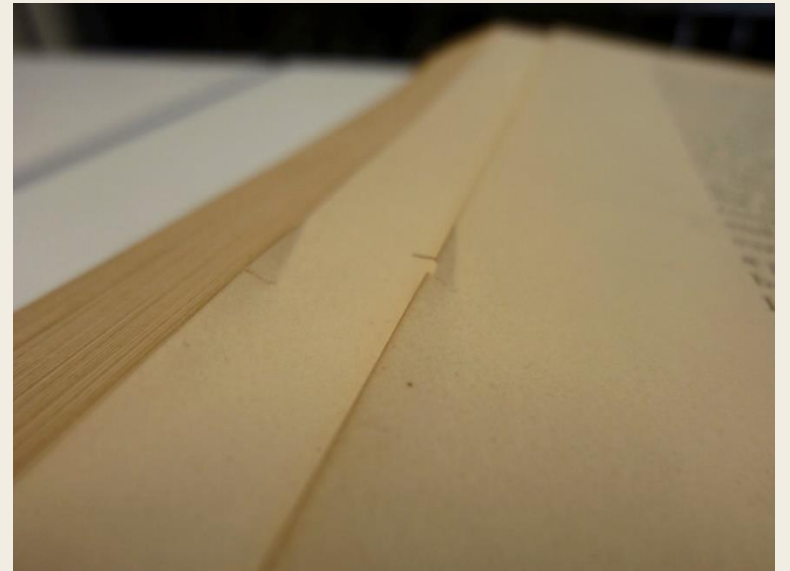
CONDITION: NO TREATMENT NEEDED
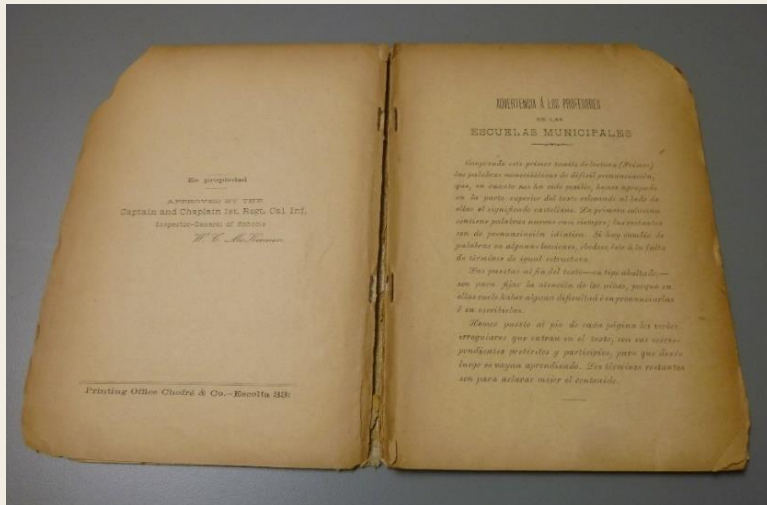
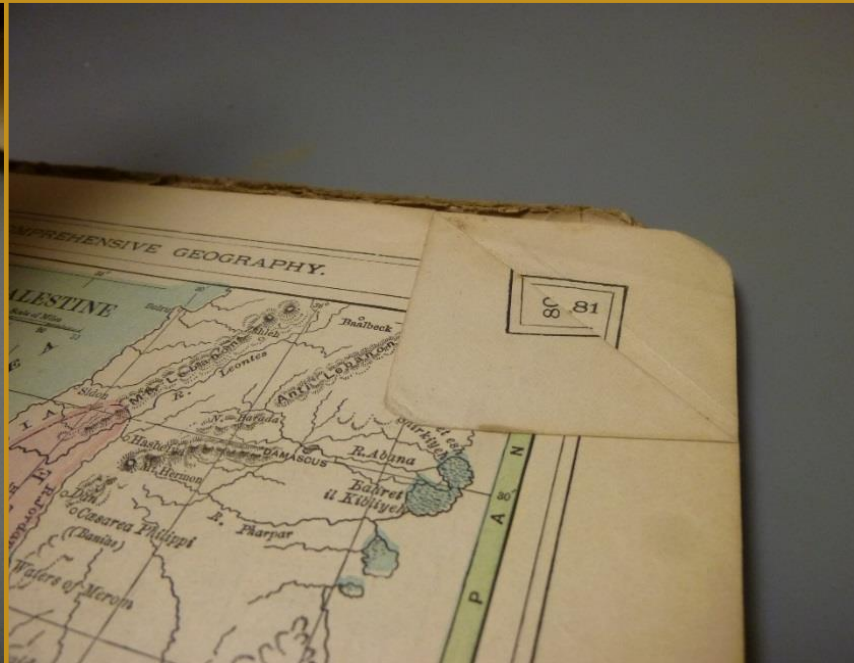# PRIORITY LEVELS BASED ON CONDITION
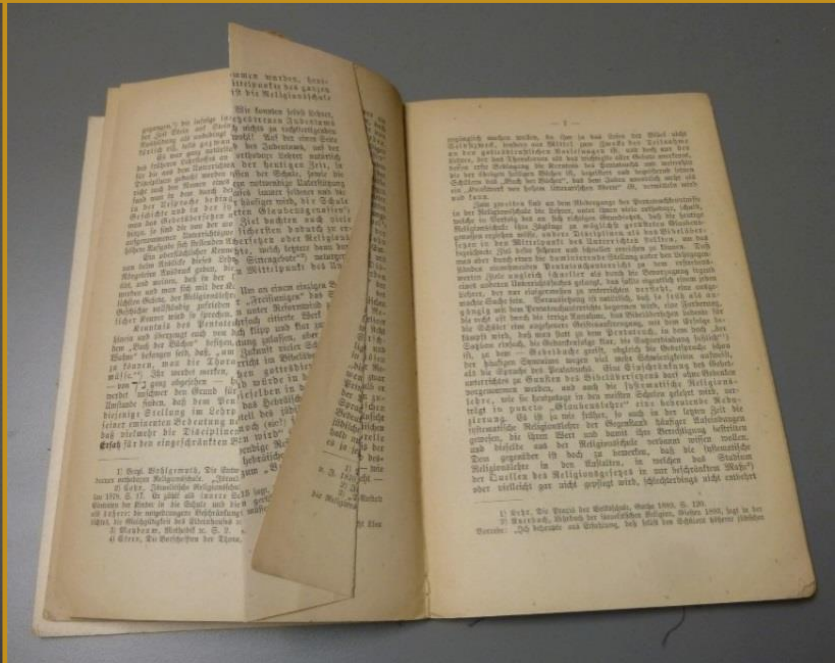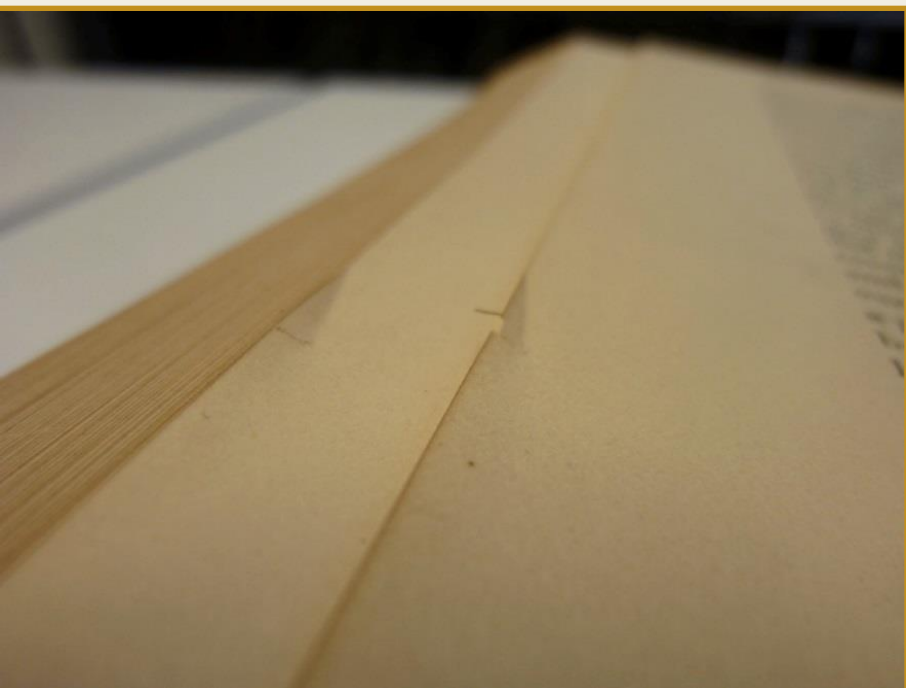

Urgent

High

Moderate

Low

BRITTLE PAPER
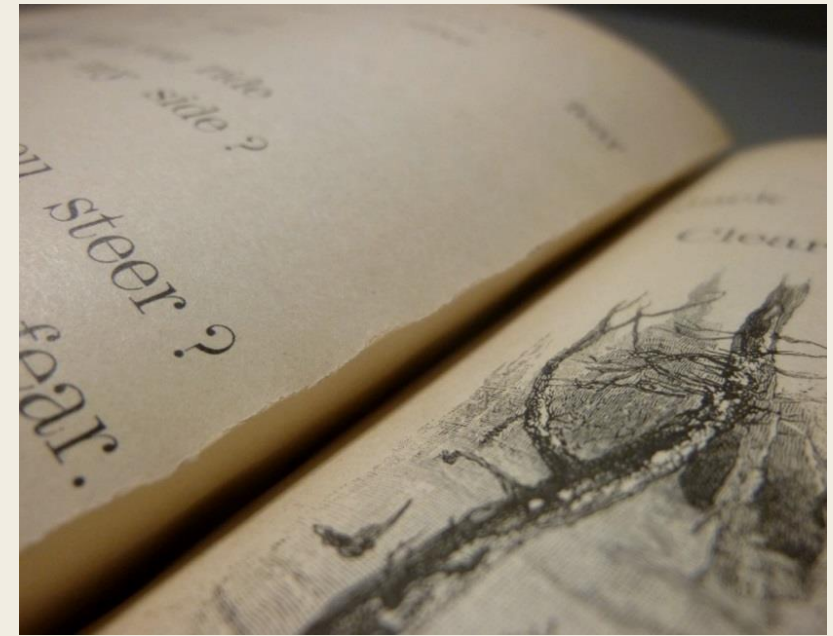
High
Priority

CREASES

Low

Low-Moderate

Low-Moderate

TEARS

Low

Moderate

High

PAST PEST EVIDENCE, FUNCTIONING AS TEARS

Low

Moderate

High

LOSSES

Low

Moderate
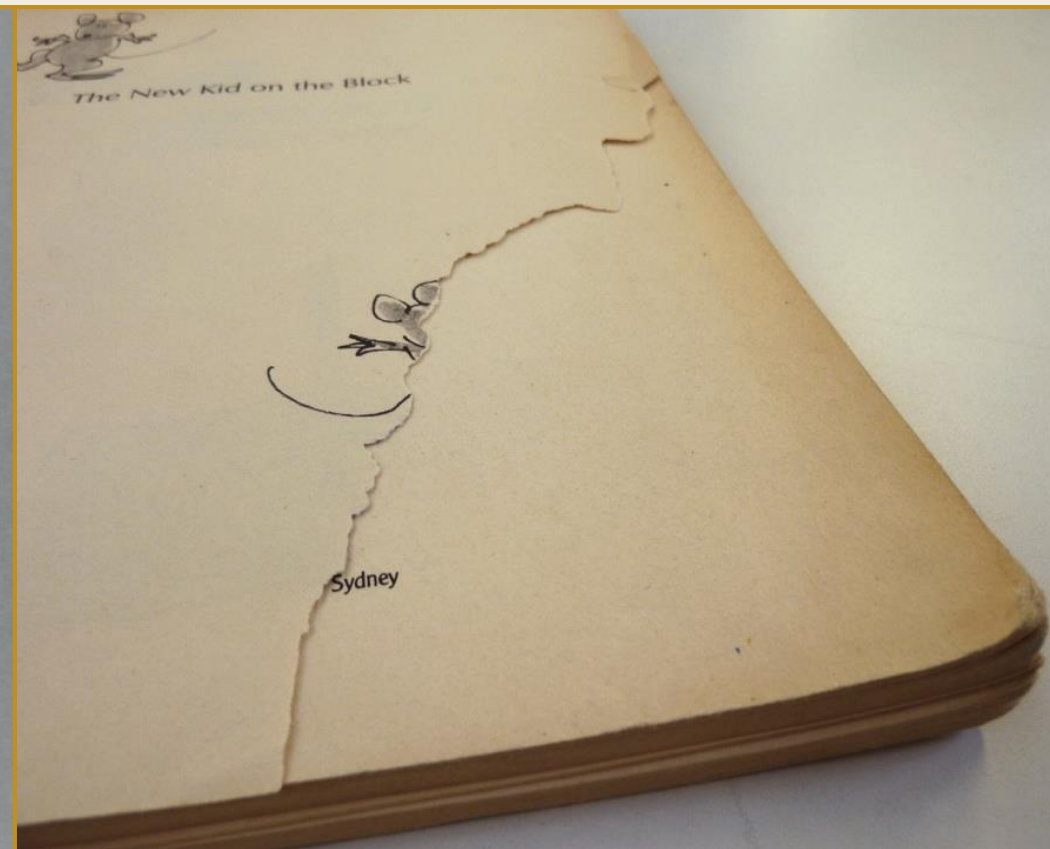
Moderate

DETACHED ELEMENTS

High

SURFACE DIRT

Moderate

ACCRETIONS
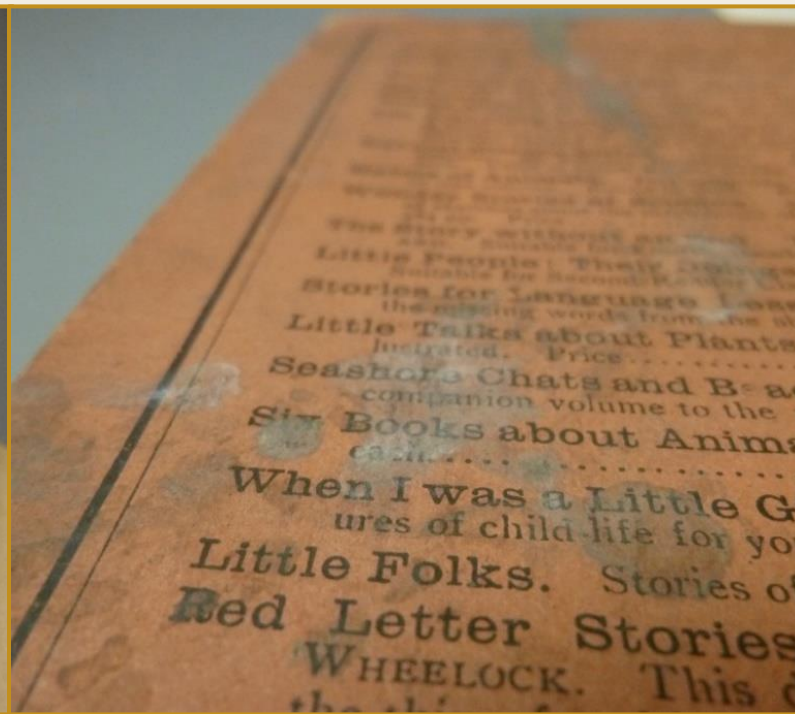
Low to High

STAINS
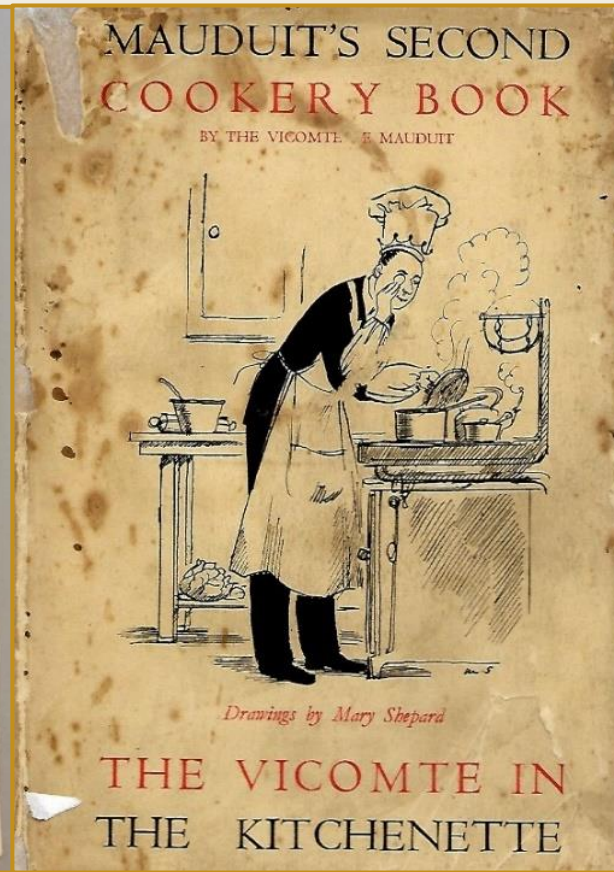
MEDIA ISSUES

High – flaking media
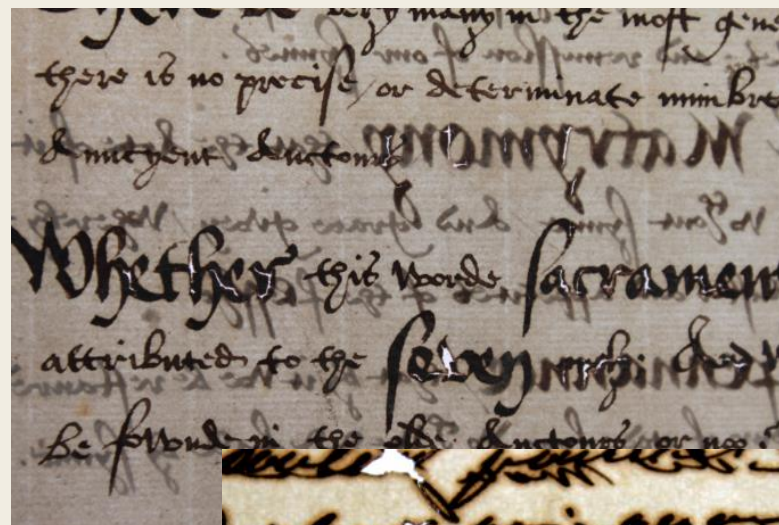
High – iron gall ink corrosion

MEDIA ISSUES: DELAMINATING LAYERS

Silver gelatin photograph with flaking emulsion (200x magnification)

High
Priority

TAPE ON PAPER

High

METAL FASTENERS

Low
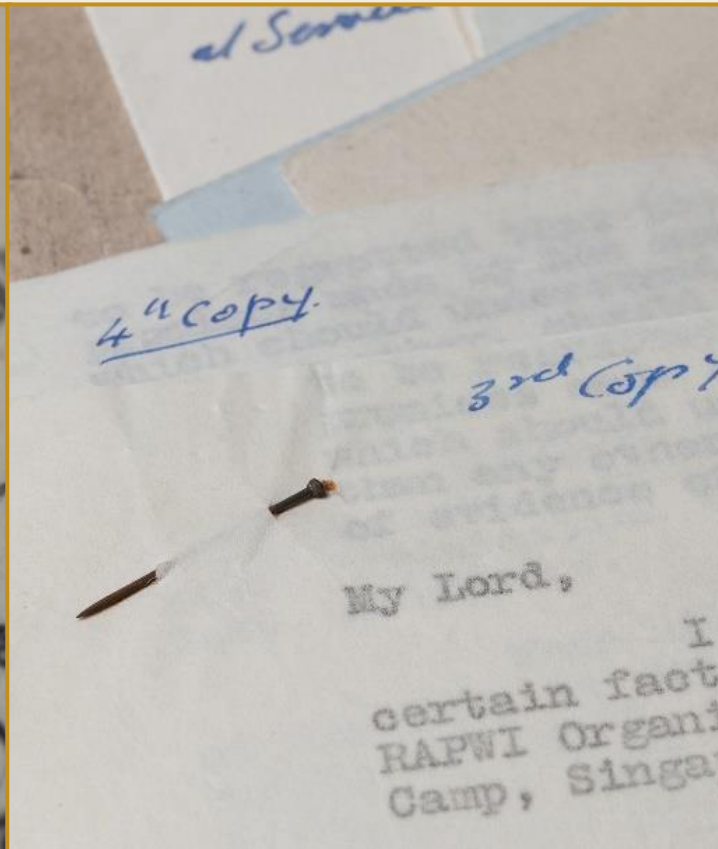
Moderate
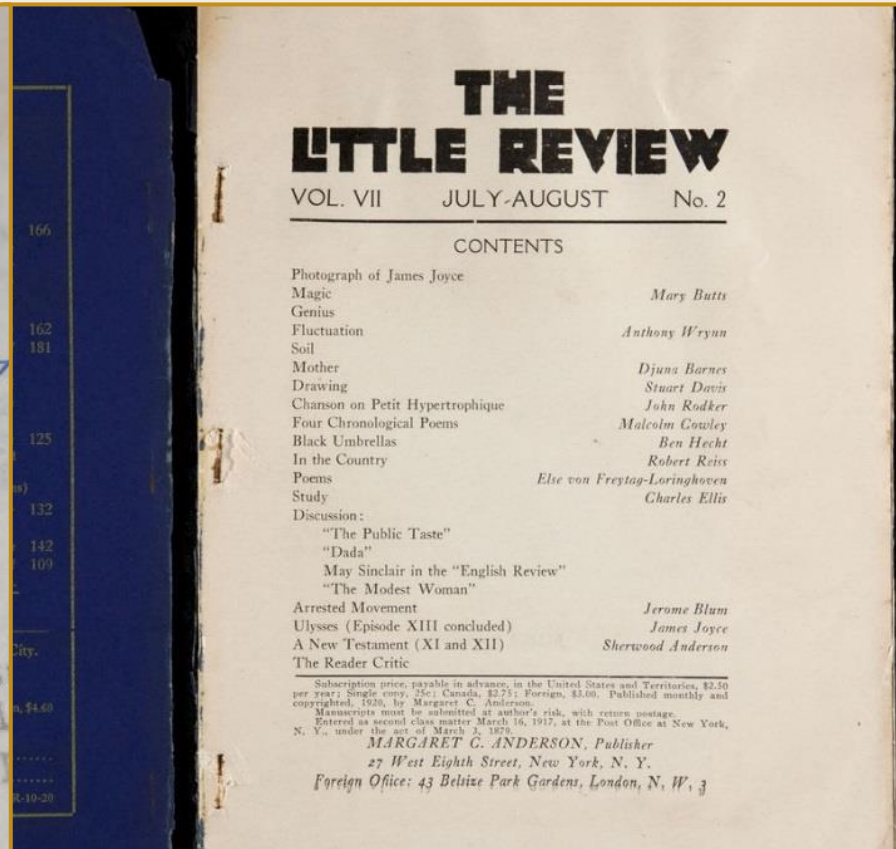
Moderate

TEXT BLOCK SPLITS
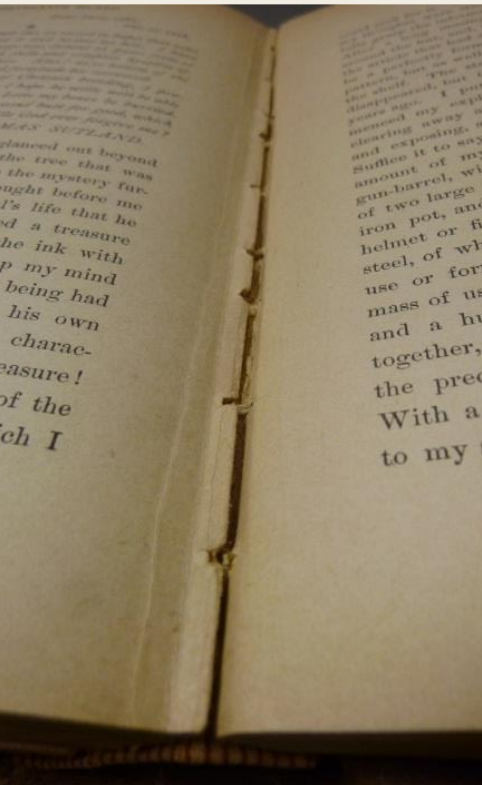
Moderate

High

High
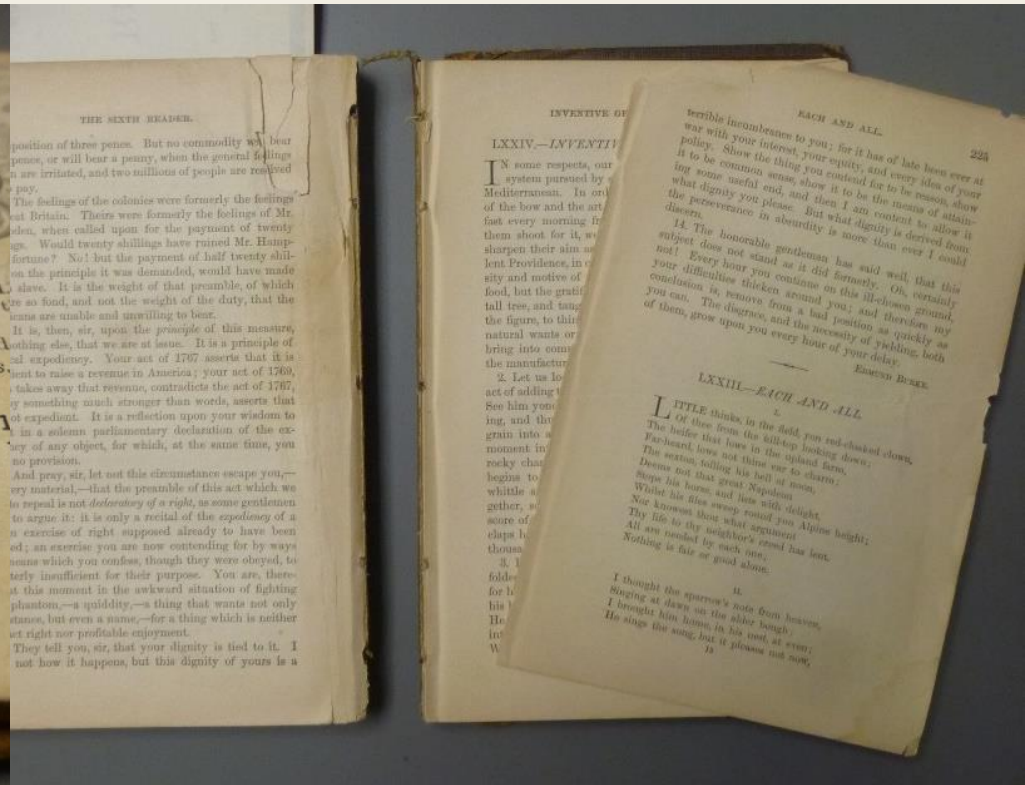
High

INNER HINGE ISSUES
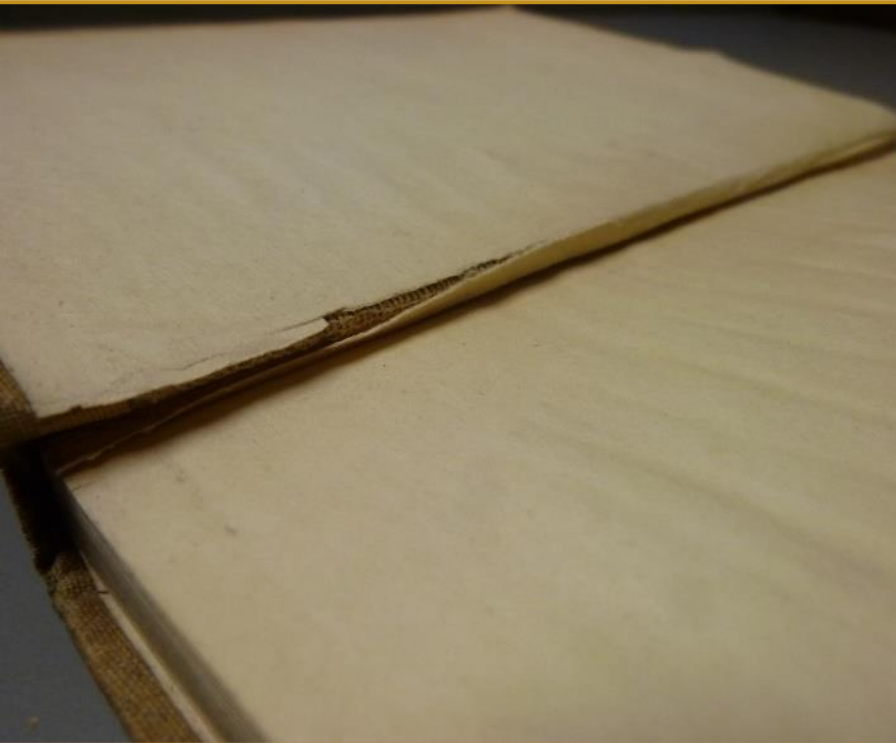
Low – split paste down; securely attached boards
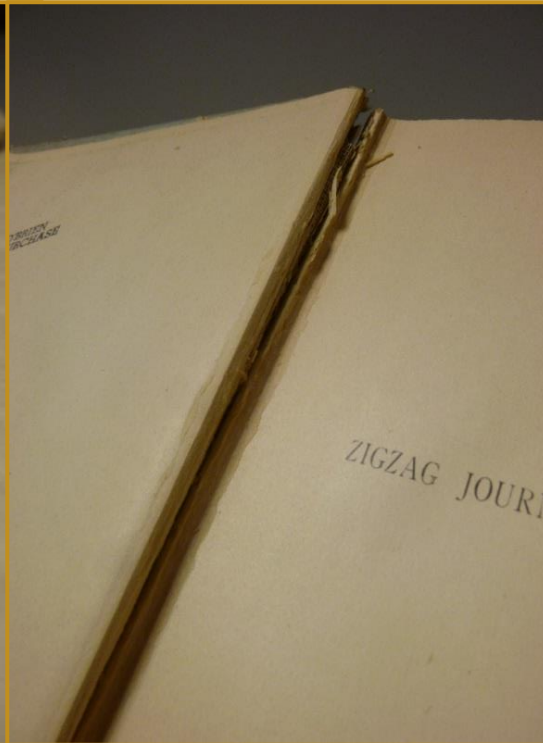
Moderate – weak/splitting
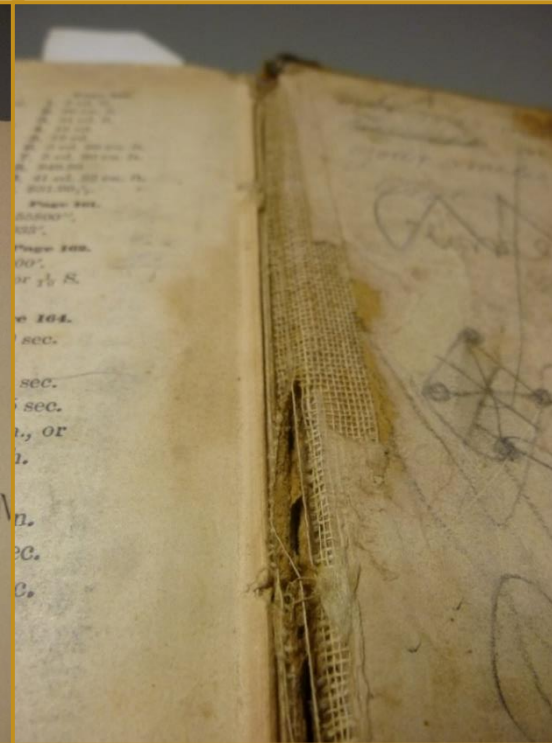
High – precariously attached
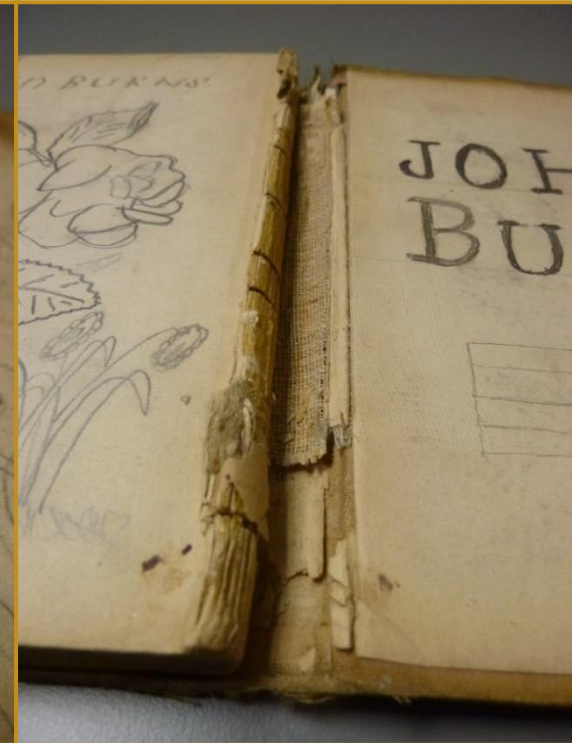
High – Broken

EXTERIOR JOINT & SPINE ISSUES
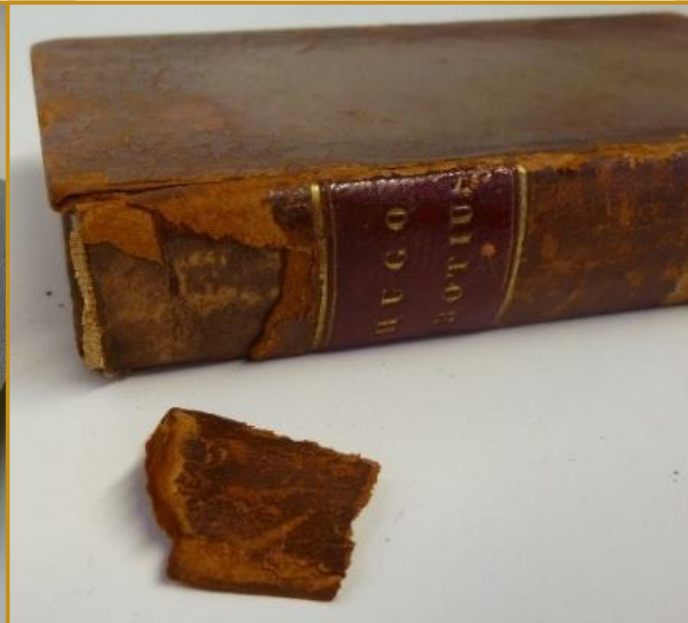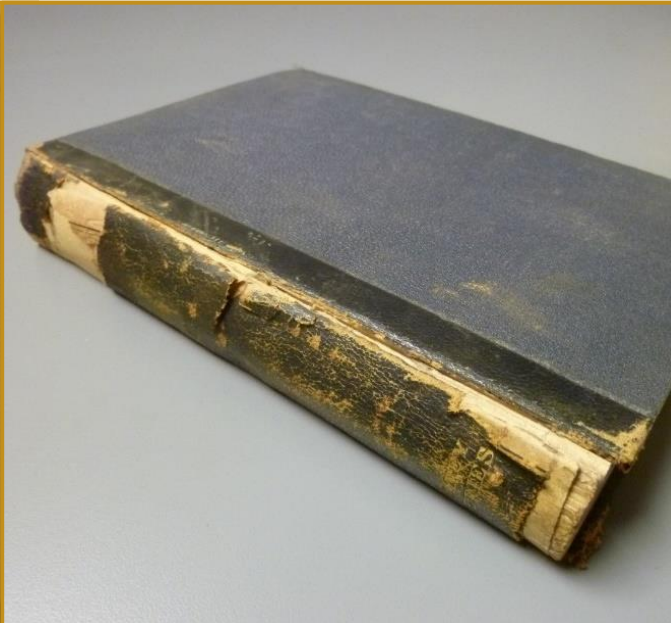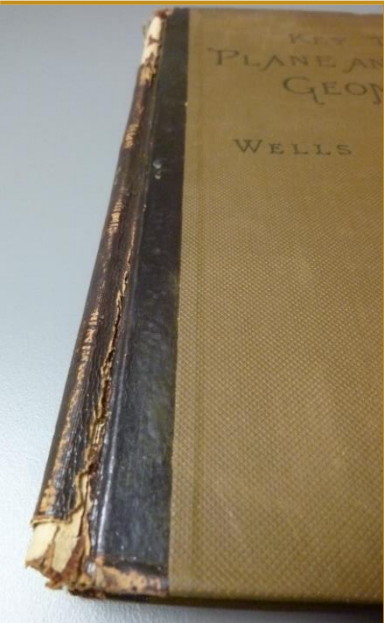
joint
weak/splitting

precariously attached
spine component with
no information

detached spine
component with no
information

missing spine piece

MODERATE PRIORITY

PRIORITIZING BY USE

USE: PRIORITY LEVELS

Research Collection

Use

Exhibition Collection

A. Priority should be given to the collection category (research or exhibition) that is most used by the institution.

B. Preservation efforts should begin with those collection items that are most frequently used.

Frequently Used = Higher Priority

PRESERVATION NEEDS OF RESEARCH COLLECTIONS

- What should have conservation treatment first?

- Does it need storage housing to minimize handling and provide support and protection i.e. storage mat?

- Does it have sensitivities that would benefit from making a facsimile (media is subject to fading etc.)?

- Is digitization an option for improving access and preservation of objects?

PRESERVATION NEEDS OF AN EXHIBITION COLLECTION

- Does it need treatment before it can be displayed?

- What sensitivities does it have that may limit exhibition time?

- What housing and framing/display is needed to meet its preservation needs?

- Does it have sensitivities that would benefit from making a facsimile (i.e. media is subject to fading)?

Animals — Fox #729 PICTURE COLLECTION

PRIORITIZING BY RELEVANCE

HOW RELEVANT IS THE OBJECT TO THE INSTITUTION'S COLLECTION?

The relevance of an object to the institutions mission will be the ultimate deciding factor to the preservation priority level.

Use of an object or collection can be related to the relevance of a collection.

This will guide the preservation plan by signifying what objects to address first.

Greater Relevance = Higher Priorities

ASSESSING PRIORITIES

STEPS TO PRIORITIZING PRESERVATION NEEDS

1. Assess and record the material and condition of the objects

2. Identify the parameters guiding prioritization for each object

3. Apply the parameters to each object to assign preservation priorities for implementation by a preservation plan

4. Consider what the collection needs: conservation, housing, display, imaging (facsimile), digitization, special storage

Use:

Research Collection
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Moderately
- ☐ Infrequently

Exhibition Collection
- ☐ Frequently/ Loans
- ☐ Moderately
- ☐ Infrequently

Mission Relevance
More relevant to mission=higher priority

Preservation Priority Level

Use

Condition

Priority Levels:
- ☐ Urgent/Immediate
- ☐ High
- ☐ Moderate
- ☐ Low
- ☐ None

Use Determined Preservation Needs:
- Type of Housing
- Type of Display
- Imaging
- Digitization

Condition:
- ☐ Contagious
- ☐ Very Poor
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Low
- ☐ None

Base Line for Preservation Needs:
- Conservation
- Sensitivities guiding housing and display
- Special Storage

Preservation Priority Levels Chart

Object Type	Condition Level	Use		Relevance
		Research/Study *Collection*	*Exhibition Collection*	
☐ Paper	☐ Contagious	☐ Frequently	☐ Frequently	☐ Directly
☐ Book	☐ High	☐ Moderately	☐ Moderately	☐ Moderately
☐ Photograph	☐ Moderate	☐ Infrequently	☐ Infrequently	☐ Vaguely
☐ Mixed Media	☐ Low			
☐ Other	☐ None			
_____				

Needs: ☐ Conservation ☐ Housing ☐ Framing/Display ☐ Facsimile ☐ Digitization
☐ Cold Storage

Preservation Priority Levels: ☐ Urgent ☐ High ☐ Moderate ☐ Low ☐ None

WHAT CAN A CONSERVATOR DO FOR YOU?

- Conduct surveys addressing preservation needs assessments, risk assessments, and conservation treatment surveys of your collection.

- A conservator may help in the following situations:
  - When an object needs treatment
  - When you have questions about object condition issues, housing, display, storage recommendations, and long term stabilization recommendations for collections
  - For help with emergency or disaster response to facilitate immediate salvage of objects or to assist with mold or pest infestations

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QUESTIONS?

With special thanks to Brook Prestowitz, Amelia Parks, Amber Hares, and Gillian Marcus for their help and contributions