
Handling special collections material: Quick reference sheet of tips and tools

Keep these tips in mind for all types of collection material:

- Always handle materials with clean, dry hands (use gloves for photographs, glass, and metals).
- Take a breath. Approach material in a calm, relaxed manner.
- Look before you leap: Look for vulnerable spots on the item like tears, bends, or loose media.
- If you pick something up, always make sure you have a clear, safe space to put the item down.
- Make sure you have a clean, dry workspace free of dust and debris.
- Faster is not better — speedy handling can cause accidents! Handle material slowly and carefully.
- Make sure that any clothing or accessories (such as jewelry, badges, scarves, or neckties) do not dangle over or brush against material.
- Avoid placing anything other than weights on top of collection material.
- Avoid leaning or resting on material.
- Support material at all times by resting it directly, and fully, on a table or foam supports.

HANDLING TOOLKIT **blue text indicates a tool that may be needed in some circumstances*

Book cradles



Flat foam book rest



Book weights



Nitrile gloves



Support board
(large enough to support the item)



Micro spatula



Snakes



You may need a cart



Brittle paper & Newsprint:

TIPS FOR HANDLING

- Handle only when necessary (e.g. to move from one place to another)
- Use folder to support and handle brittle paper or newsprint
- Keep paper flat on work surface
- Avoid unfolding if possible; ask for assistance if needed
- Turn pages starting at the top right corner, using your whole hand to turn page rather than grasping just the corner
- Avoid turning the page from the bottom as pages are more likely to tear when turned from the bottom

POINTS OF VULNERABILITY

- Paper itself is vulnerable; handle with care
- Corners, folds, and creases
- Tears or breaks

TOOLS NEEDED



for picking up the corner of the sheet

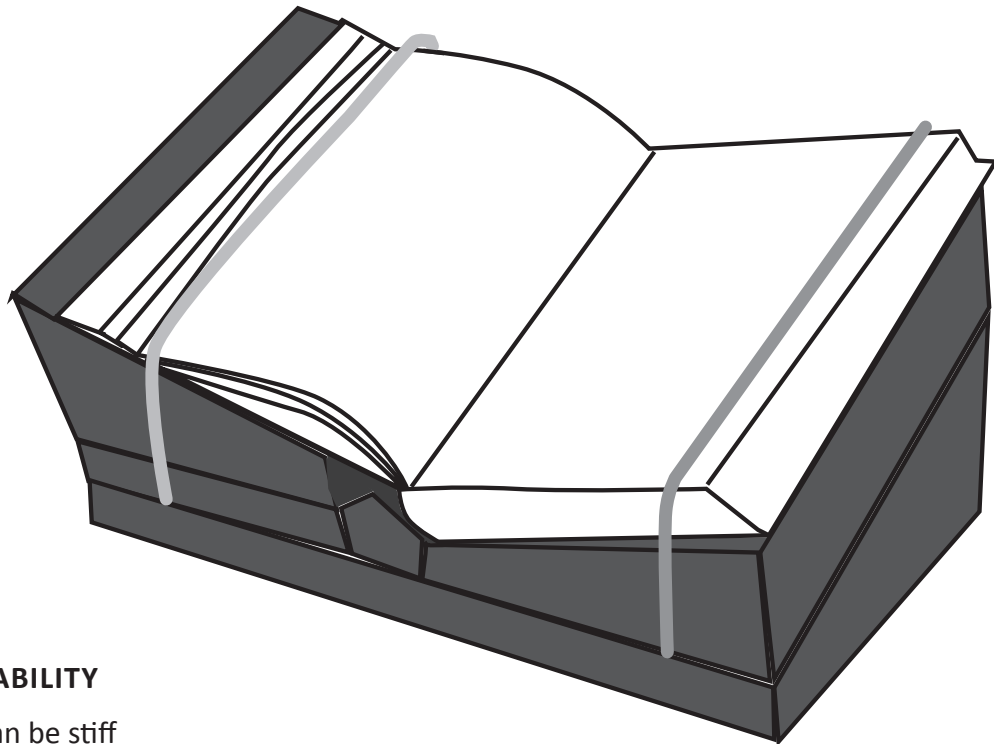
Bound Volumes (paper, leather, and vellum bound):

TIPS FOR HANDLING

- Use book cradles and book foams for all books, but especially to support books that cannot fully open or have broken bindings (e.g. loose boards, loose text block)
- Avoid forcing volumes open that have stiff or tight bindings
- Turn pages starting at the top right corner, using your whole hand to turn the page rather than grasping just the corner. Avoid turning the page from the bottom, as pages are more likely to tear when turned from the bottom

Medieval Manuscripts

- Never touch the illuminations, and avoid touching the manuscript lettering
- Touch only the blank margin area to turn the pages
- Do not attempt to fasten binding clasps



POINTS OF VULNERABILITY

- Vellum bindings can be stiff
- Watch for brittle paper, tears, and breaks in the page
- Boards may be partially or fully detached from text block
- Parchment is stiff
- Painted surfaces are inflexible, especially on parchment and vellum

TOOLS NEEDED



for turning brittle or fragile paper

Foldouts:

TIPS FOR HANDLING

- See how the item is folded up before attempting to unfold it
- Unfold slowly and carefully
- Use a horizontal support card for large foldouts and place behind an adjacent page, rather than directly behind the foldout
- Weights and snakes may be used to keep foldouts open, if needed
- *Work with a partner; sometimes more than two hands are needed*

POINTS OF VULNERABILITY

- Watch the area where the foldouts attach to the book — tears often start here from mishandling
- The folded areas of the foldout may be weaker than the rest of the sheet due to repeated unfolding and refolding
- Foldouts are not always printed on the same type of paper as the textblock — some can be very lightweight and delicate, while others may be heavyweight and stiff

TOOLS NEEDED



large enough to support the foldout



for turning brittle or fragile paper

Oversized maps, posters, artwork, and broadsides:

TIPS FOR HANDLING

- Use a support board and/or cart to transport item from storage to reading room
- Lift oversized paper from corner to corner on a diagonal, using two hands and opposite corners

POINTS OF VULNERABILITY

- Damaged or weak corners
- Torn or brittle paper
- Look for loose pieces on collages and other multimedia works
- Avoid touching image area; some media can be smudged when touched (e.g. charcoal, soft pencil, chalk, and pastels)

TOOLS NEEDED



Photographs on Paper:

TIPS FOR HANDLING

- Always handle with nitrile gloves (if photograph is not in Mylar sleeve)
- Never touch the surface of a photograph: handle the item by its edges
- Always lift item with two hands, holding its opposite edges
- Photographs should not be removed from Mylar sleeves
- When carrying large photographic prints, make sure the print is fully supported by carrying it on a board, folder, or inside a box

POINTS OF VULNERABILITY

- Brittle mounts or paper, especially on corners
- Photo surface is prone to abrasion
- Do not bend or fold — paper/board may be more brittle than image surface or vice versa
- Photographs can crack if folded or tightly rolled — this is because they are made up of multiple layers of different types of material

TOOLS NEEDED



*for photographs
not in Mylar
sleeves*

Cased Photographs:



TIPS FOR HANDLING

- Handle cases with each hand supporting each half of the case
 - Avoid placing weight directly on the hinge
- Do not close clasp or fastener when returning case to its housing container
- Handle on or directly over a soft surface
- Do not remove glass photograph package from case
 - Glass photograph package removal requires curatorial permission and conservation intervention for removal and documentation

POINTS OF VULNERABILITY

- Cover glass is fragile — it may be cracked or broken
- Hinge may be fragile or broken
- Clasp or fastener may be fragile or loose
- Deteriorating, flaking leather or cracked plastic case

TOOLS NEEDED



Glass Plate Negatives:

TIPS FOR HANDLING

- Wear nitrile gloves when handling
- Always handle glass on or directly over a soft surface
- Handle one plate at a time
- Do not stack plates on top of one another
- Handle plates by two opposite edges; never hold them by one edge, or by the corners
- Place glass plates emulsion side up when you lay them flat on a surface
 - Check for glass reflectance to find the non-emulsion side of the plate
- Do not press, lean, or write on top of the glass plate



POINTS OF VULNERABILITY

- Flaking or lifted emulsion layer (the dull, top layer that holds the image)
- Glass may be chipped, cracked, or broken

TOOLS NEEDED



Lantern Slides:



TIPS FOR HANDLING

- Wear nitrile gloves when handling
- Always handle glass on or directly over a soft surface
- Handle one plate at a time
- Do not stack plates on top of one another
- Handle plates by two opposite edges; never hold them by one edge, or by the corners

POINTS OF VULNERABILITY

- Black tape along edges may be peeling, cracked, or missing
- Glass may be chipped, cracked, or broken

TOOLS NEEDED



Rolls & Scrolls:

TIPS FOR HANDLING

- Make sure there is sufficient space to unroll the item safely
- Check for damaged or weak edges
- *Slowly* unroll item and use weights to hold down the free exposed edge of the roll

POINTS OF VULNERABILITY

- Edges may be damaged or weak
- Media may be cracked or friable
- Use caution when placing weights on object; avoid vulnerable areas
- Tightly rolled papers may be difficult to lie flat; use caution when unrolling, especially brittle, fragile items

TOOLS NEEDED



Framed Works, Paintings, & Two-Dimensional Artwork:

TIPS FOR HANDLING

- Always carry framed work vertically, unless item is damaged or vulnerable - then use a flat cart
- Lift with two hands holding the top and bottom of the frame, OR
 - For large pieces, use two people to move painting from stacks to reading room, using an A-frame cart, or a flat cart, image side up
- Avoid touching image area (if no glass); some media can be smudged when touched (e.g. charcoal, soft pencil, chalk, and pastels)
- If parts of the image have become detached, ensure that loose pieces are returned to the enclosure

POINTS OF VULNERABILITY

- Glass/ glazing on framed item is fragile
- Some frames can be fragile, especially older ones or heavily adorned/ gilded frames
- Watch for saggy or loose canvas on paintings
- Look for loose pieces on collages and other multimedia works
- Watch for hanging hardware as it may be loose/ brittle and/or catch on clothing or scratch

TOOLS NEEDED



Objects & 3D Works of Art:

TIPS FOR HANDLING

- Handle metal objects with nitrile gloves
- Handle carefully, holding and lifting the object by the base or by its strongest point
- Lift from the base of the object; avoid lifting object by any available handles
- Move heavy or awkwardly-sized objects with two people

POINTS OF VULNERABILITY

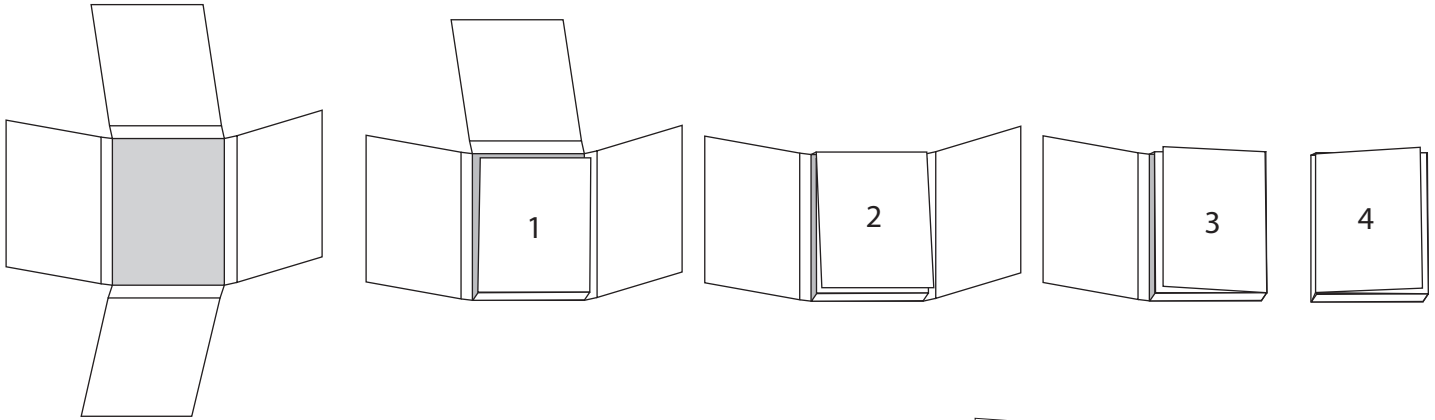
- Glass, ceramic, and stone can have slick, polished surfaces — use a cart to reduce risk of dropping objects
- Cracks, breaks, and chips
- Watch for small, fragile pieces or protrusions on object

TOOLS NEEDED



*if object needs to
rest on its side*

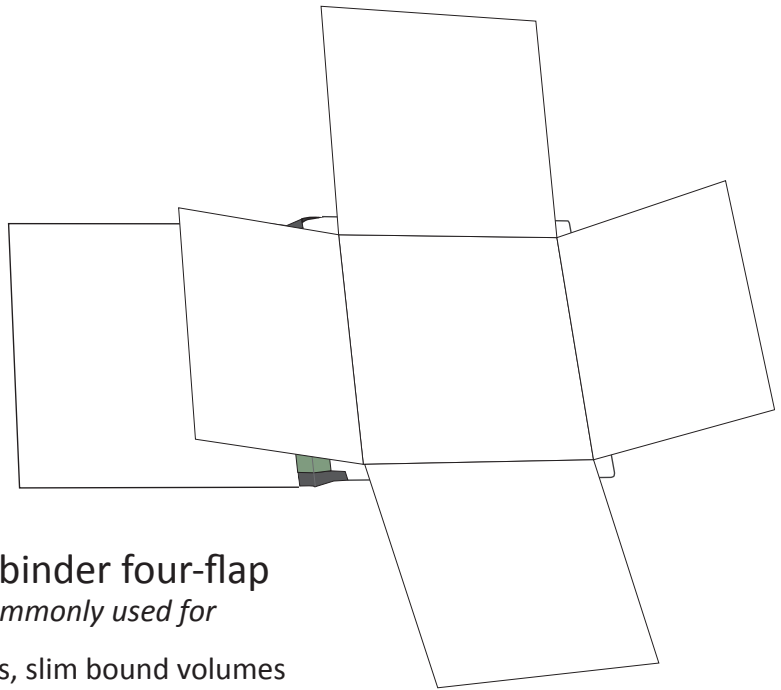
Guide to Common Enclosures
used for
Beinecke Library collections



Four-flap enclosure
commonly used for

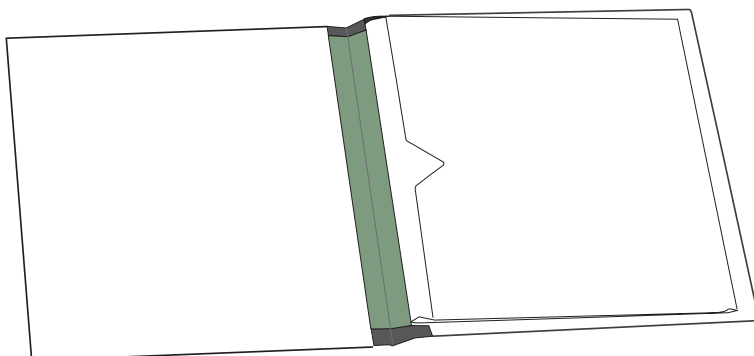
Pamphlets, slim bound volumes,
glass plate negatives, lantern slides

Tips for using four-flaps:
Open flaps following the order above.
The bottom flap is the last to uncover
the item when opening and the first
to cover the item when closing.



Pocket binder four-flap
commonly used for

Pamphlets, slim bound volumes



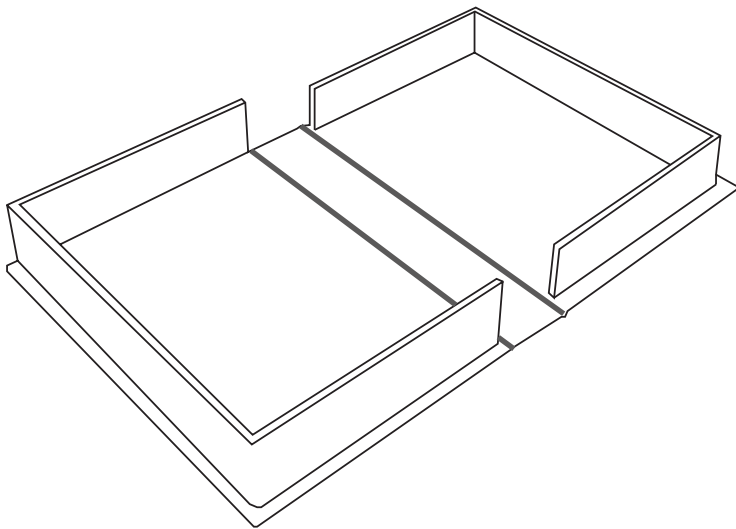
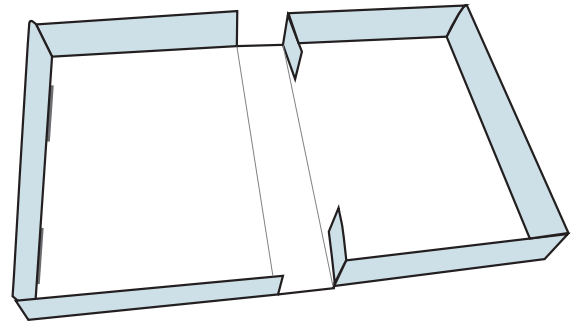
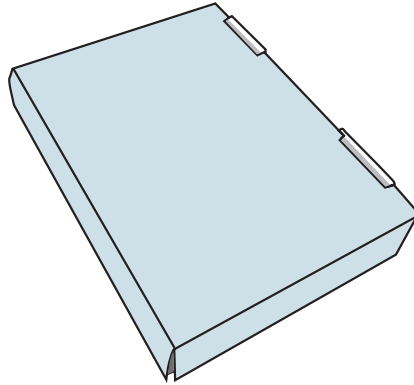
"Gaylord" style pocket binder
commonly used for

Pamphlets, slim bound volumes

CMI blue corrugated

commonly used for

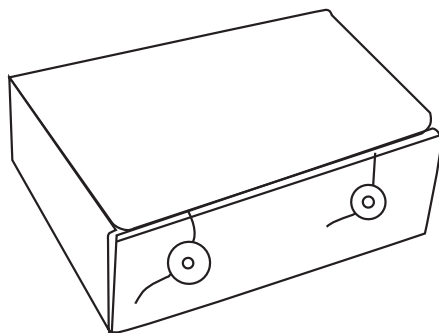
Volumes with seperated boards,
volumes sent to LSF, albums



Cloth-covered clamshell

commonly used for

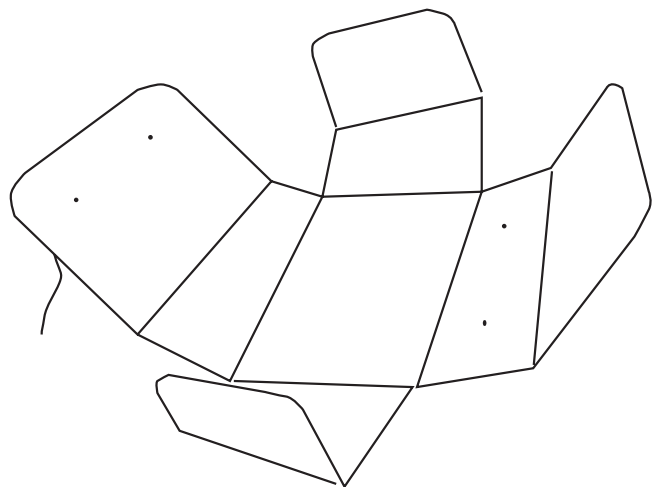
Volumes, sets of matted or mounted
prints or photographs, printed sets

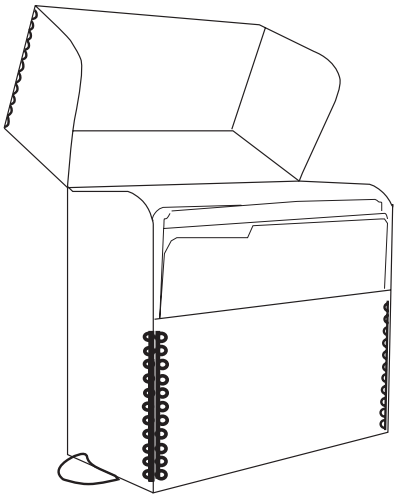


Corrugated phase box

commonly used for

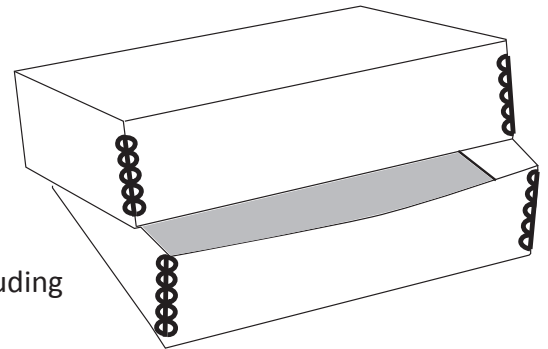
Volumes with seperated boards,
volumes sent to LSF, albums





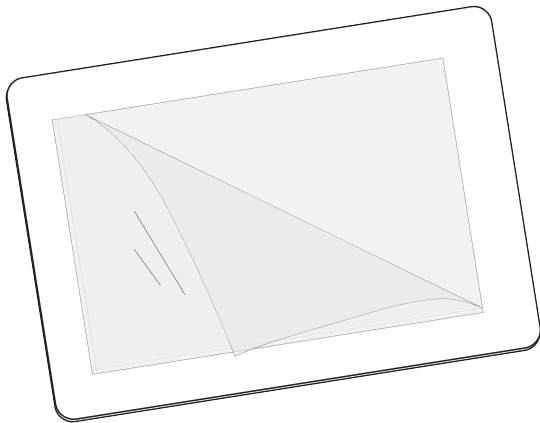
Document box or “Hollinger Box”
commonly used for

Manuscript material, serials, etc.



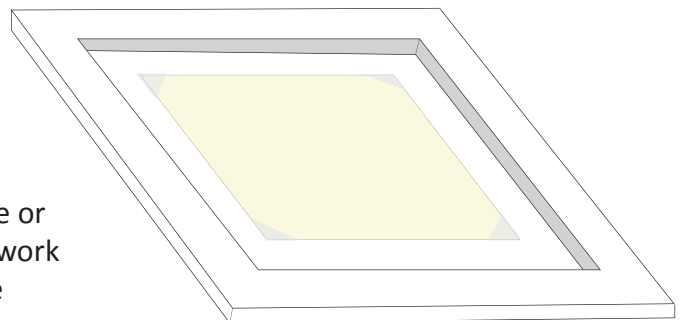
Oversized or portfolio box
commonly used for

Manuscript material, serials, visual material including photographs, prints, drawings, and paintings



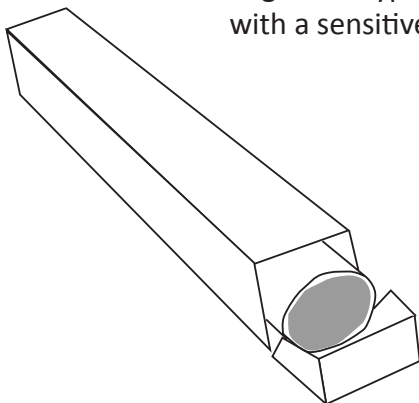
Mylboard (board with Mylar folder)
commonly used for

WA photos including large photographs and panoramic photographs



Sink mat
commonly used for

Uncased (or repaired) ambrotype or daguerreotype photographs, artwork with a sensitive or fragile surface



Long box with interior tube
commonly used for

Anything rolled, including maps, posters, broadsides, etc.