

Overview of Shelving

1. First, books that have been returned from patrons, books collected from use in the library without being checked-out, and new books that have been processed are collected in a central location. This area is usually referred to as “sorting shelves” or “temporary shelves,” and are a set of shelves where books are arranged in loose call number order by collection. Loose call number order typically means that the books are only sorted by the primary letters of the call numbers. (For example: PQ, B, HD, DA, etc). Sorting books in loose call number order makes it easier to put the books in exact call number order when loading trucks for shelving.
2. Choose a section of the library’s collection to be shelved, and load a truck with the books from that section in call number order. (See *Figure 1*). The books must now be arranged in exact call number order so that the shelving staff can work from one end of the collection to the other without backtracking. Loading the trucks in exact call number order also cuts down on the number of errors committed while shelving.

Book Truck do's and don'ts



DO



DON'T

Figure 1. –ensure that all books are loaded neatly onto a cart to prevent spillage.

3. Begin by loading the books on the truck in an upright position in a single row across the top. It may be possible to load more than one row on each shelf of the truck depending on the model of the book truck, but be sure that the books will not fall while moving the truck. If the row you are loading is only partially full, keep the books vertical and use the last 3 or 4 books as a support by laying them flat at the end of the row. Oversize volumes should be placed flat on the truck. Position books on the truck snugly and standing upright. Leaning a book causes its binding to break down quickly.

Do not stack other materials on top of the rows. Do not shelve books on the fore-edge. Do not jam books tightly onto the shelves of the truck. An even, balanced distribution and normal sized book loads make the truck easier to manage and will prevent it from tipping over (*Figure 2*).

Book Truck do's and don'ts



DO **DON'T**
Figure 2. –Loading books onto only one side of a book truck may cause it to tip over.

Move book trucks carefully on and off elevators, around corners, and in narrow passages. Pay attention for any material that may be protruding from the side of the truck. The books may be damaged if they protrude too far and collide with objects. If a book truck is in bad condition, notify your Collection Management supervisor.

After the truck is loaded, the shelving staff should fill out a shelving slip. Some locations use communal sheets instead of individual shelving slips. Write down the name of the shelving staff, the date, the number of books loaded on the truck, the number of additional books re-shelved (in case the shelving staff finds more books that require re-shelving while working), and the amount of time spent on the task. Similar information may be recorded on a shelving sheet.

Once prepared, the truck is taken to the section of the collection where the first call number on the truck is located. The shelving staff then put the books in their proper location in the collection. Mastery of the Library of Congress classification system is essential to shelving books in their proper location. If the shelving staff finds any books out of order, sitting unused on desks, bottom or top shelves (if they are not normally used), or at the end of the shelf past the book end then the shelving staff should re-shelve those books as well.

4. When shelving an item, always consider the call number elements *individually*.

Compare each element of the call number in your hand with the call numbers already on the shelf. The elements should be considered in the following order: class, subclass, and then the cutter number or numbers. When all other elements are the same, use date, volume or part number as the deciding factor. An item with no date should be shelved before an item with a date as it is most likely the first edition.

Tips and Tricks to Shelving Properly

REMEMBER: A miss-shelved book is a LOST BOOK!

Shelving do's and don'ts



DO

Figure 3. –books without bookends or shelf hooks may become damaged.



DON'T

Books are placed on the shelf so that they stand vertically and upright and are gently supported by the books on either side and are held in place by bookends (*Figure 3*). Books should not be shelved too loosely otherwise the cover or text block may be damaged. Overcrowding should also be avoided because it will make it difficult to remove the books from the shelf. This may lead patrons to remove books by pulling on the head cap of the spine, which may become damaged in the process.

Library bookends should be free of sharp or rusty edges. When possible, they should come up to at least half of the height of the books on the shelf and have a wide profile. When shelving near a bookend be careful not to accidentally "knife" the pages of a book (Figure 4). Damaged bookends should be replaced and given to a supervisor.

Shelving do's and don'ts

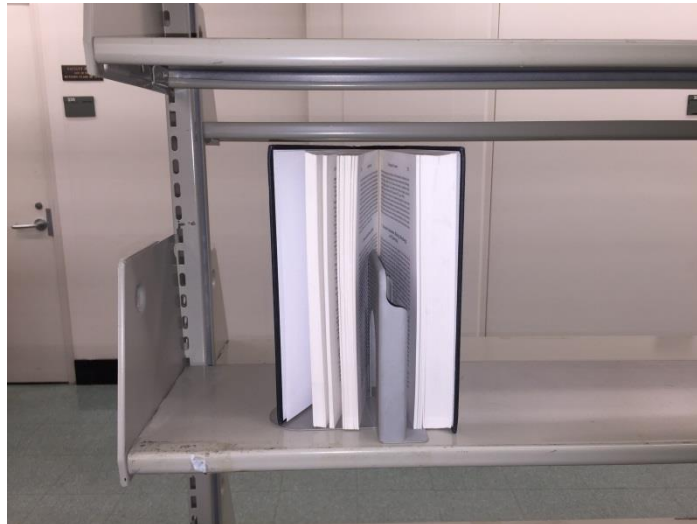


Figure 4. –a book that has been “knifed” by a book end seen from the opposite side.

If space runs out on a shelf, the bookend should not be removed. Instead, a “mini-shift” should be performed to re-allocate unoccupied space from nearby shelves to the shelf where it is needed. If there is not enough empty space available in the section where the shelf is located the shelving staff should note the beginning and end of the call number range affected and pass this information on to the supervisor.

If a volume is too large to shelve vertically, it is preferable to shelve on its spine rather than its fore-edge. Fore-edge shelving is unacceptable because it can cause the text block to loosen from its cover (Figure 5).

Shelving do's and don'ts



Figure 5. – this book will become damaged due to improper shelving.

When removing a book from the shelf or book truck, never pull it by the head cap. This may cause damage to the head cap or spine. Instead, slide the two adjacent volumes slightly to either side. Then grasp the book firmly by its sides and remove (*Figure 6*).

Shelving do's and don'ts



DO

DON'T

Figure 6. –removing a book by the head cap can cause damage to the material.

Shelving or removing books off the top shelves can be difficult. Always use a footstool to reach an overhead shelf, so that the volume can be properly replaced or removed (*Figure 7*). Do not use a chair to reach top shelves.

Book do's and don'ts



Figure 7. –using a foot stool will help prevent book related injuries.

If the correct location for a book cannot be determined, the shelving staff should bring it back and request help from a supervisor. Accuracy in shelving is the highest priority and shelving staff should not guess where to shelve a book if they are uncertain about its location in the LC classification.

All shelving staff should wear their library ID tags while working in the collection. Although assigned to a particular task, shelving staff are also required to be accessible to patrons for assistance. If a shelving staff is unable to assist a particular patron, they should direct or bring the patron to a service desk or staff member who can help them.

After shelving the books on the truck, the shelving staff should report their statistics to the member of Collection Management or supervisor in charge of recording them. All shelving staff should also pay attention to the general condition of the collection. Any observed problems should be reported to a supervisor. Examples of problems can include space concerns, incorrectly shelved items, potentially moldy items, incorrect or illegible call number labels, ceiling leaks, flooding, or damaged/bent shelves.

Unique Sub-collections

Although most of the shelving done by Collection Management is in the general circulating collections (Stacks), there are several other sections that Collection Management is responsible for as well. Also, there are collections that other departments shelve on a day to day basis. It is important to be able to recognize these collections, their locations, and the shelving systems for those sections should the need arise for Collection Management to shelve them. Here are a few examples of other collections common to the libraries.

Bound Periodical Collections

Bound Periodicals are shelved exactly like the regular collection with one important difference: Bound Periodicals have no call numbers. Instead, Bound Periodicals are shelved by title in alphabetical order according to the shelving title, then by volume, number, and year.

Oversize Collections

The Oversize Collections at each location are separated out due to the size of the book and the original shelving collection that the item belonged to (i.e. Stacks, Reference, and Periodical). This material will be shelved in the same order that the original shelving location is shelved in, but in a separate area. Folio Collections should have the items in the collection shelved standing up, while an E-Folio Collection should have the items in the collection shelved lying flat.

Reference Collections

Each library's Reference Collection should be shelved in LC Call Number order. Reference books do not circulate must remain inside the library in which they reside.