

University of Iowa

From the Selected Works of Sidney F. Huttner

June, 2006

Nelly Balloffet & Jenny Hill. Preservation and Conservation for Libraries and Archives

Sidney F. Huttner, *University of Iowa*



SELECTEDWORKS™

Available at: <https://works.bepress.com/shuttner/17/>

Review for the Guild of Book Workers *Newsletter* 166 (June 2006).

Nelly Balloffet and Jenny Hille, *Preservation and Conservation for Libraries and Archives* (Chicago: ALA Editions, 2005). 240 pages. \$125.00. ISBN 0-8389-0879-9.

Reviewed by Sid Huttner, The University of Iowa Libraries

That this new manual by two active GBW members is first reviewed here nearly a year after publication must be laid entirely at my feet (shuffle, shuffle). Balloffet and Hille promptly provided a review copy, I was excited to read and write about it, but over the course of several unpredictably hectic months, I was unable to follow through. *Preservation and Conservation for Libraries and Archives*, however, merits your close attention now as it deserved mine months ago.

Although there are historical antecedents back to the 19th century and arguably much earlier, the genre of manuals that comprehensively set forth best practices for the storage, use, and repair of library materials dates primarily from the 1970s. These books have tended to take one of two forms, either being authored by a single person (or, as in this case, two people working in close collaboration) or assembled by an editor who collects chapters written by specialists in a variety of areas. The latter usually attempt to deal with the entire range of library materials, not only paper-based materials but sound recordings, moving image collections, and all the other products of 20th century technology that now nestle cheek by jowl with books on library shelves. Next generation manuals are certain to contain long chapters on preservation of digital formats.

Since one (or two) individuals rarely have the range of knowledge and experience to attempt comprehensive treatment, their books are generally more focused, and this is the case with *Preservation and Conservation for Libraries and Archives*. While the initial chapter, "The Basics of Preservation," discusses topics such as environmental controls and disaster planning which have more general application, the bulk of this 240-page book is directed straight-forwardly at the hands-on care of paper and books. There are introductory essays on a comprehensive range of materials (paper, cloth, adhesives, etc.) and techniques (testing pH, mending edge tears, building a variety of enclosures, and many more). The book ends with a 30-page section on exhibition management, followed by a brief look at care of photographs and bits of apparatus (lists of vendors, glossary, bibliography, index).

While the authors share credit for the writing, Hille is given full credit for the dozens of effective drawings, often as many as four to six per 8 ½ x 11 inch page. There are also numerous, well chosen, black and white half tone illustrations scattered through the text. The book is well designed with generously-sized type faces in a two-column format that results in lines of comfortable length. An attractive design detail is section title combined with page number at *bottom center* of the page. Inner margins are generous and the paper of a weight that drapes comfortably: openings stay in place as the book lies beside you while you work through a technique. In the brief moments I gave over to the task I could find no sewing, so I suspect the block is glued; it nonetheless seems quite durable in cloth covered boards (though ALA may want to consider a wrapped issue that non-institutional buyers might find as useable and slightly more affordable).

While our universe expands digitally, the roles of paper and books are hardly threatened and seem, indeed, increasingly stable and certain to persist. This book therefore brings together a vast amount of "state of the art" information that is likely to prove of lasting interest, usefulness, and value. Balloffet and Hille are to be commended for a thoughtful, focused, roundup and a stylish presentation. This is a book libraries and archives will need in their collections and that students and beginning conservators will put to hard use over a goodly number of years.