

## *Guidelines for Drying Wet Books*

Liquids trigger book damage by warping pages and bindings, dissolving glue, causing inks to run, and causing coated (glossy) papers to stick together. Wet books are also highly susceptible to mold, which can begin to grow within 24-48 hours, particularly in warm environments. Once a book has been wet, it will most likely retain some of the signs of damage. However, books that are dried quickly will have minimal damage.

The Preservation Department assists Stanford University Libraries with all water-related collections issues, including the drying of wet books. Please call Preservation immediately if you have more than a few wet books, a dripping wet book, a muddy book, or if you have wet materials with clay-coated paper. Clay-coated paper has a smooth, glossy surface and is commonly found in magazines, text books, art books, and other books with many images:



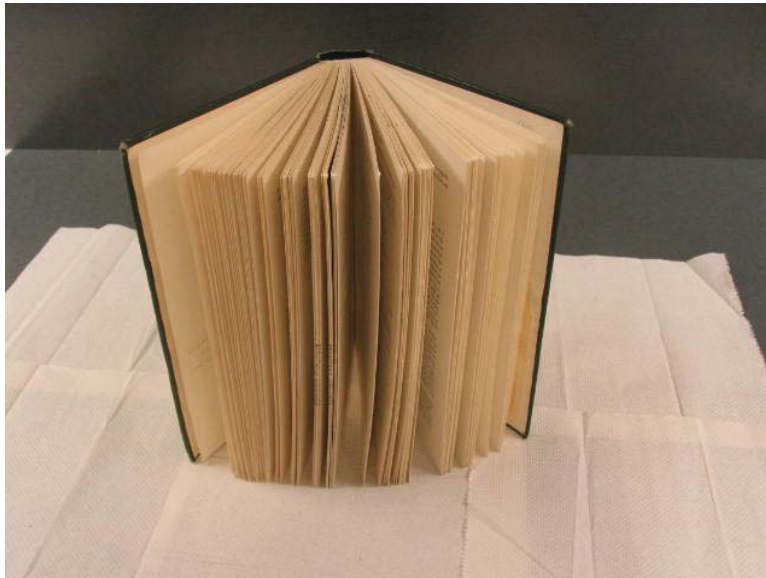
*Examples of coated paper*

Wet books can be placed in a re-sealable plastic bag and stored in the freezer until Preservation is able to retrieve the item(s).

If your department has a few wet books printed on uncoated paper, the following guidelines can be used to dry them. Please keep in mind that a wet book usually takes at least 24 hours to dry, and that it requires intermittent attention. If you have questions about wet books, please contact Mary Miller at 721-1612.

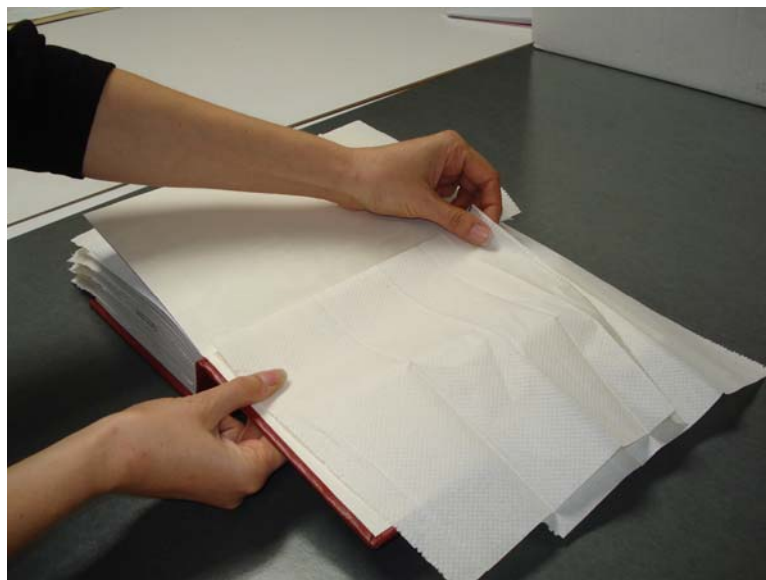
Begin by selecting a table in an open area to use as a book-drying station. Lay several layers of paper towels onto the work surface. An electric fan can be used near the book(s) to increase air circulation.

If the book is only slightly damp, carefully separate the pages and fan out the text block. If only one end of the book is damp, place the book on the table dry-end down.



If the book is moderately wet, you can interleave paper towels between some of the pages to wick water away from the paper. You can use either roll paper towels or the C-fold towels that are available in the bathrooms. If you use the C-fold towels, simply flatten them out first.

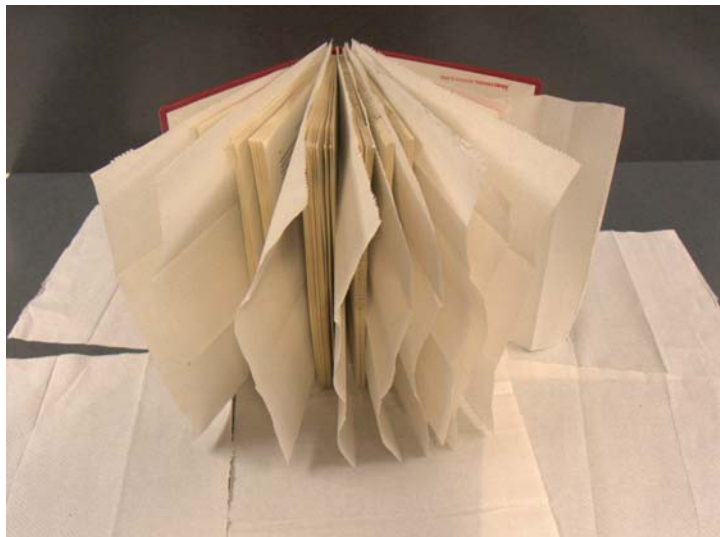
With the book lying flat on the table, place a layer of paper towels inside the front cover. If the book is large, 2 or more paper towels can be overlapped to cover the entire surface of the page.



Insert a layer of paper towels approximately every 30 pages. The edge of the paper towel should meet the gutter, or center of the book, because that area tends to remain damp the longest. At the back of the book, place a layer of paper towels inside the back cover.

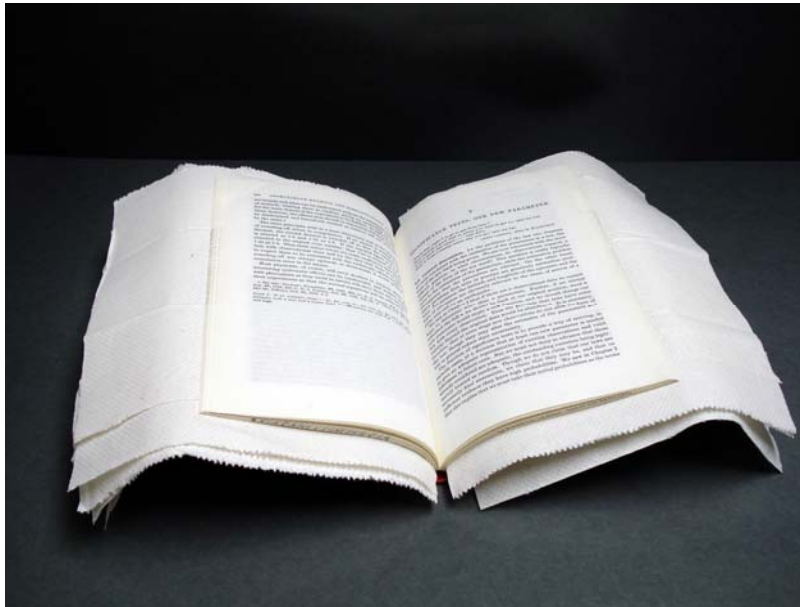


Next, stand the book upright with the pages in a fanned-out position.



The paper towels must to be changed at least once in a 24 hour period. It may be necessary to change them more frequently, depending on the amount of moisture in the book. Check the paper towels intermittently. Once they are damp, it is time to replace them with fresh paper towels. Repeat the process of layering paper towels every thirty pages, but each time lay the towels between different pages to promote even drying. Alternately turn the book right-side up and upside-down to further promote even drying.

If the book is too damp to stand upright, it can be dried flat on the table with paper towels until it is dry enough to stand upright.



When the book is almost completely dry (after at least 24 hours), place paper towels between the front and back covers only, and lay it flat on the table. Place a weight on top of the book to flatten the pages, such as several large phone directories.

