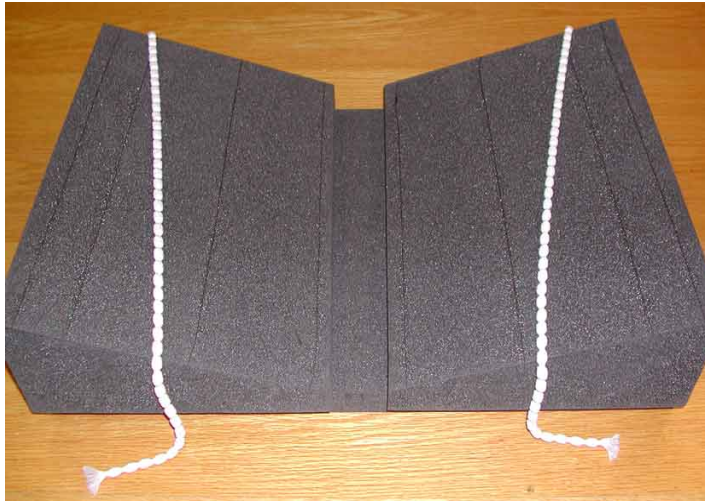


Using the Collections- Handling Books

By Jane Pimlott, Preservation Coordinator at the British Library

The image below shows an example of a typical book support and weights available for use in the British Library Reading Rooms.



The Library encourages readers to use book supports when consulting books in the Reading Rooms and these are available either on open access or from staff at the enquiry desk. In addition to book rests staff can issue weights that can be used to lightly restrain pages to keep them open. No other items should be used to keep books open during use

Most books are not designed to open flat and many will not easily open more than 120 degrees. Using the correct type of book rests helps preserve the book and reduces the stress to the spine and binding. Tightly bound books should not be forced to open more than they can open comfortably. Forcing a book will damage it, straining the spine and weakening the binding structure leading to it splitting into sections.



Above: Example of a book weight



Above: A book placed on a book rest and being held open with weights

Our aim in encouraging the use of book rests is to help preserve collection items and minimise the cumulative effects of wear and tear through general use. An item that is damaged may have to be replaced or repaired which means it may not be available to readers when they need to see it. To replace or conserve a book is very costly.

For more information on the use of books and other collection items, please go to the 'Caring for the Collections' video at the following location:

<http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/ccare/collectioncarevideos/index.html>

Here you will find 9 videos showing the best ways to use a variety of collection items including books, papers, folded items, maps as well as some less common items.