

## Storage of Oversized Books

This information was collected by Alysa Selby, Reference & Adult Services Librarian, Bud Werner Memorial Library, who posted the following inquiry to Libnet on January 5, 2005:

“We are seeking opinions on the best shelving method for oversize books. Does your library prefer laying them flat or standing them upright? If you have the time, we would also like to know your reasoning.”

<b>Suggestions for Oversized Books</b>
From a preservation standpoint, laying them flat is the best bet. Standing them upright contributes to the text block dropping out from the binding...not good. When shelved flat, they should also be only 3-4 deep so that damage isn't done when retrieving them. (Helps if they aren't on a top shelf as well; death by falling oversizeds means lots of paperwork.)
We struggled with this and finally, because of space issues, decided to lay them flat on the bases of the Non-Fiction shelves in their respective Dewey sections. They do not check out a lot, and they get dusty, but they are more available for folks looking for information on a certain topic and we no longer need a separate designated space for them.
We currently shelve our Oversize (nonfiction) books separately from the rest of the nonfiction collection and they are shelved upright. It doesn't work real well, and the books don't circulate as well as they might if they were interfiled with the other nonfiction books.
I'd love to hear the suggestions, too. I'm leaning toward cutting the oversized books in two and shelving the two halves side by side on the regular shelves. But I'm open to other suggestions...
I'm not an expert, but I prefer to lay them flat. I don't have the room to adjust shelves to have them upright (and not enough to dedicate a whole shelf to them). I don't like them on the shelves on their spine or upside down.
Our policy concerning oversized books is to give them their own section. This is for truly OVER sized. They are given OVR call numbers and their own shelf. The books that are barely over-sized, we place spine up if we can't adjust the shelves to accommodate.
We stand them up mostly to conserve shelf space. It also appears to me that stacking them flat puts people off---they don't seem to want to dig through them—at least when browsing.
Here is an academic librarian's point of view, but I think it would also work for a public library. <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) Set your shelves a specific distance apart with special consideration for sections that have a large number of “oversized” items—art, music, and reference for example. The purpose should be to make as few books possible to be shelved out of the normal sequence. At the Academy, we set our shelves 11+” (nominal 12”) with art books shelves set at 14+” (nominal 15). We describe books more than 11” as “oversize”; those above 14” as “folio.” We do have “folio” art books. Our on-</li></ol>

<p>line cataloging system automatically “stamps” either as oversize or folio automatically. For art books we have no oversize books—only regular—up to 14"+; and folio—over 14"+; in other words we have our art books shelves set at 14"+ apart.</p> <p>(2) Do not think of shelving books upright unless you have LARGE book ends and/or built-in shelf dividers. Otherwise, you have books that are self-destructing even as they are shelved.</p> <p>(3) I prefer an oversize/folio section that consolidates oversized/folio books in one section rather than “oversized books at the end of each range.” The latter always results in some “oversized” books being wedged into the shelves because they will fit, even though their cover is being scraped off.</p>
<p>We lay them flat assuming doing so reduces stress on the spines. And because they are sometimes too tall to fit on a regular height shelf.</p>
<p>A great source for these kinds of questions is NEDCC.org on-line publications. The following is quoted from “Care and handling Guidelines”, part of NEDCC’s online preservation course at <a href="http://www.nedcc.org/p101cs/candh.htm">http://www.nedcc.org/p101cs/candh.htm</a></p> <p>“Volumes should be shelved horizontally if:  The height exceeds 40 cm. (16"), and/or the thickness exceeds 8 cm. (3");  The volume is in poor condition or is noticeably distorted; or  The volume is a scrapbook, album, or similar composite structure with mounted elements that can be damaged or lost if they sift to the bottom of the volume during vertical storage.  Volumes shelved horizontally should not be placed in stacks higher than 15 cm. (6") or more than three volumes high. Thus the thickness of the volumes will determine if one, two, or three volumes may be placed in a stack.  Large volumes should never be stacked on smaller volumes. Only volumes of similar size should be stacked on top of one another so that volumes are fully supported and prevented from warping or becoming misshapen.  Volumes should not extend beyond the edges of shelves.”</p>
<p>Cedaredge Public Library stands them up like other books but they are in an “oversize” section. Laying them flat makes getting one out of a stack difficult. Interfiling them where they belong by call number requires having all shelves set to accommodate oversize—a waste of shelving space.</p>
<p>We recently had an elementary and high school/adult library built (Dove Creek), the elementary books seem to be bigger than the high school/adult books. We put as many as we can upright but to conserve shelf space we have to occasionally shelf them face down. For the few “extra big” books we display them on top of our shelves in the elementary library.</p>
<p>We store our oversize items flat (these are almost all scores) because of space limitations. If I had my druthers, I’d adopt the method that I think I saw at the Indiana University music library (a wonderful institution!) and store them upright—but they have a huge space to do this in.</p>