



A Guide to Assessing Document Condition for Preservation Steward Partners

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Introduction

- Thank you for becoming a Preservation Steward. You and your library have made a significant commitment toward preserving a portion of the National Collection of U.S. Government Public Information.
- This Guide can be used to assess the condition of individual collection volumes when preparing your Preservation Steward Inventory.
<https://www.fdlp.gov/inventory-templates>
- Please note on the inventory spreadsheet the column for indicating condition: “PS Items Fine to Fair” and the separate tab for “PS Items Poor – NEEDS.”



Introduction

- To ensure we have the best copies of record to meet GPO's obligation of permanent access and a minimum of four copies of a title in each of the four [National Collection Service Areas](#), we ask that Preservation Steward copies be in at least **FAIR** condition.
- However, we recognize that some Preservation Steward volumes are more than a hundred years old. The combination of age and use may leave them in **POOR** condition. If the condition of the volumes you are reviewing is poor, please note this in the "PS Items Poor – NEEDS" column. We will try to find you replacement volumes in better condition. If better volumes are found, they will be shipped to you free of charge.



Assessing Condition: Fine, Good, Fair, and Poor

- It's best to lay out a group of Preservation Steward volumes, even if they are all the same title, for review using this condition guide.
- Remember, you are individually assessing each volume's condition.





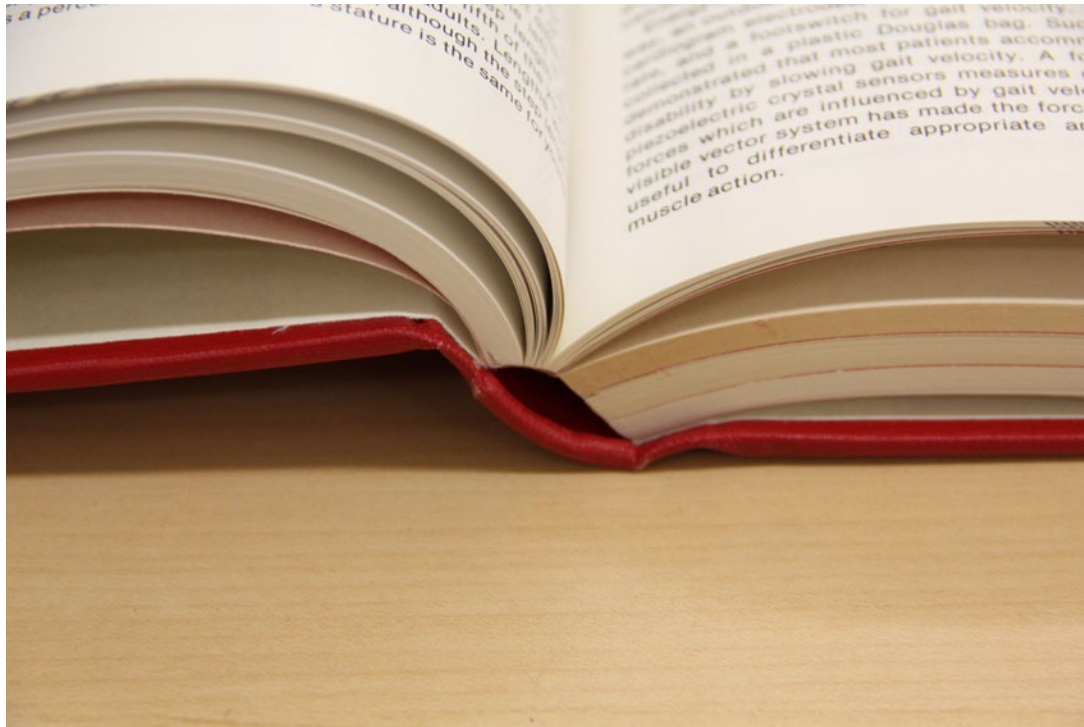
Assessing Condition: Fine



- Books in Fine condition look new.
- This book shows little wear.



Assessing Condition: Fine



- The entire text block in this example is tight with no loose pages.
- The text block is securely held in the case or covers of the book .



Assessing Condition: Good

- The book shows definite signs of use.
- The top of the spine is worn where users have used it to pull the book from the shelf.
- The cover board edges may be bumped and bent.





Assessing Condition: Good

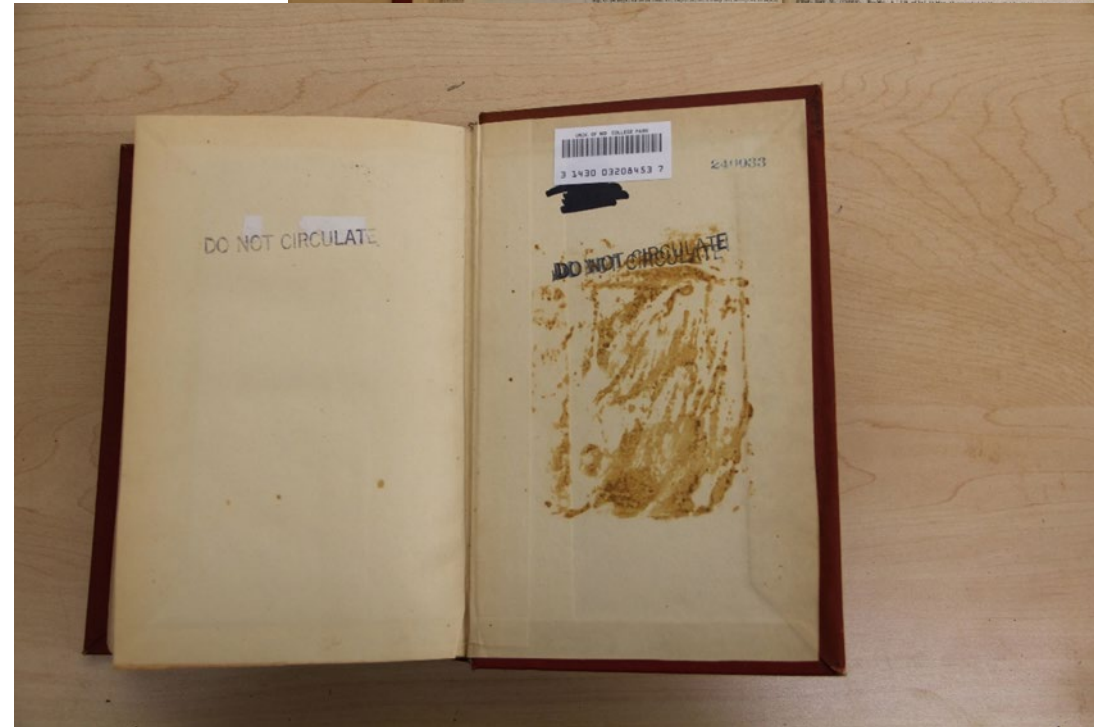
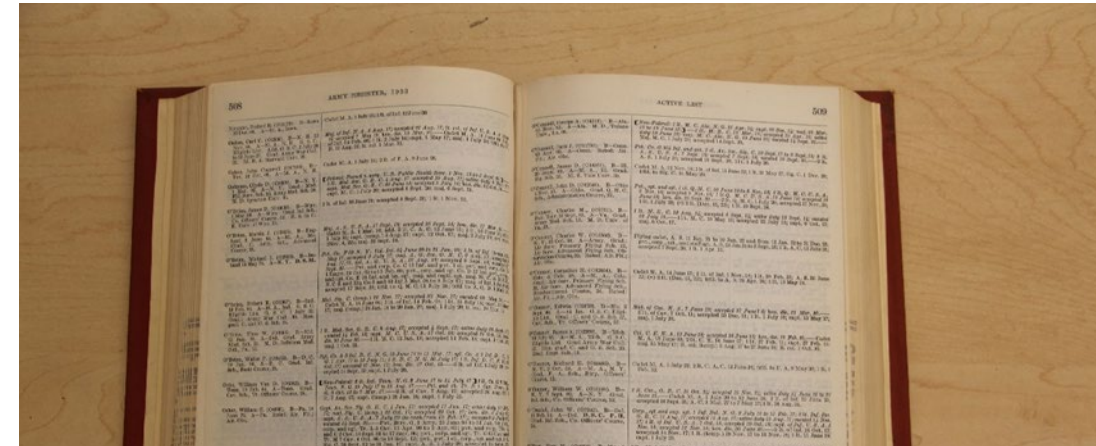
- In this example, the cloth at the top of the spine is broken where readers used it to pull the volume from the shelf.
- This is damage to the outer case only and can be easily repaired.
- This volume is still in Good condition.





Assessing Condition: Good

- Though the binding may not be tight and shows signs of wear, the pages are firmly attached, and no foldouts are damaged.
- Old property stamps or glue from old card pockets do not affect condition.





Assessing Condition: Good

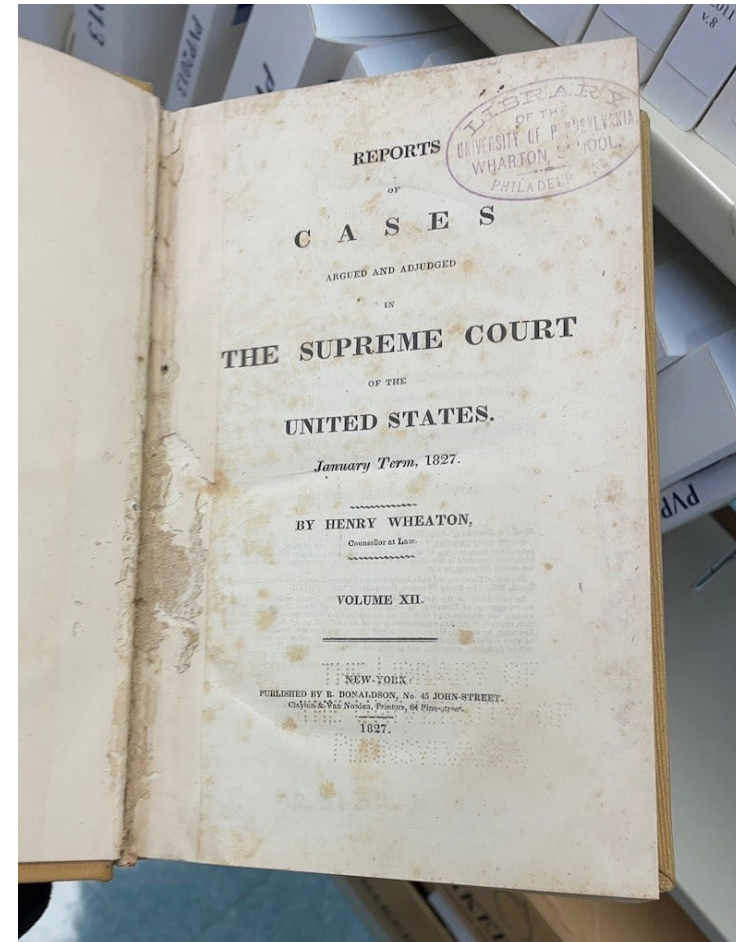
- This is not mold. It is foxing, a condition where pages of a book are covered with tan to brown spots. It is believed to be caused by the oxidation of iron, copper, or other substances in the pulp from which the paper was made. It appears most frequently in 19th century publications.
- Since the pages are firmly attached, and the binding intact, this volume would be assessed as Good.





Assessing Condition: Good

- This is an example of old insect damage more commonly found in 19th century publications.
- No live insects were found in the volume.
- No information has been lost
- The binding is intact, and all pages are firmly attached.





Assessing Condition: Fair



- The paper hinge is torn, and the text block has pulled away from the case or cover boards.
- The book is still bound, but the loss of the case can quickly lead to a failure of the adhesive or the sewing that holds the block of pages together.
- Repairing this book would improve the condition to Good.



Assessing Condition: Fair

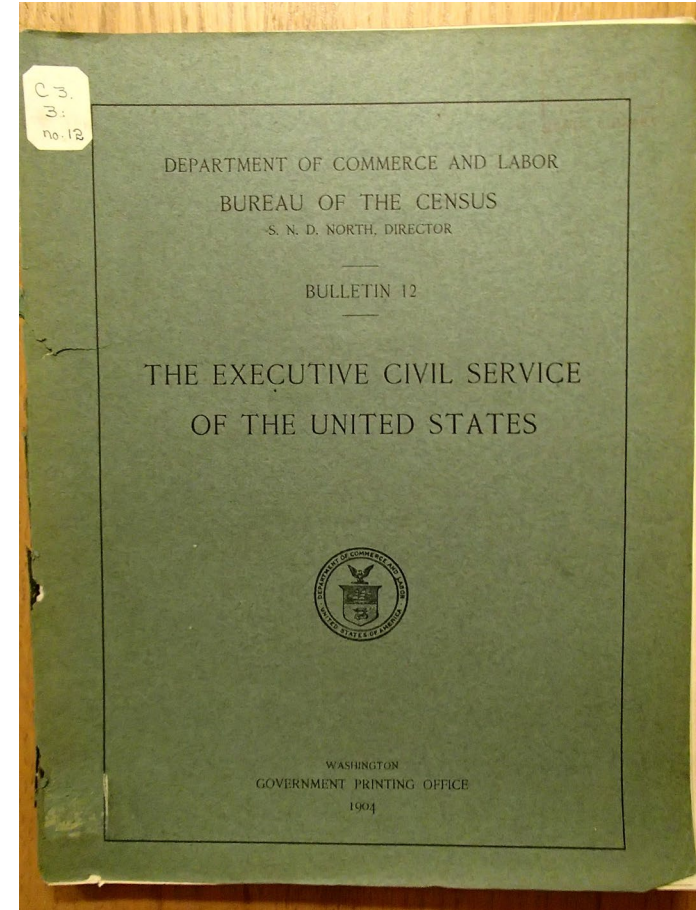
- The front cover board on this 19th century volume has detached. However, the combined pages or text block is still firmly bound together.
- The cover board can be temporarily tied on with cotton tape until repairs can be made.





Assessing Condition: Fair

- This is a thin staple bound pamphlet in a cardboard cover.
- Due to its age, the paper is very brittle.
- Shelved in open stacks with no restricted access, the potential for damage and lost information is great.
- Putting this publication in supportive enclosure would improve its condition to Good.





Assessing Condition: Poor

- Mold on volumes automatically excludes them from being a part of a Preservation Steward collection.
- If you find mold on volumes in your collection, please contact us through askGPO and use the Preservation category when submitting your inquiry.





Assessing Condition: Poor

- Mold inside of a book is usually caused from the moisture left by food or drink spilled on the pages.
- A volume with mold like this would not be included in a Preservation Steward Collection.
- If you find mold on volumes in your collection, please contact us through a and use the Preservation category when submitting your inquiry.





Assessing Condition: Poor

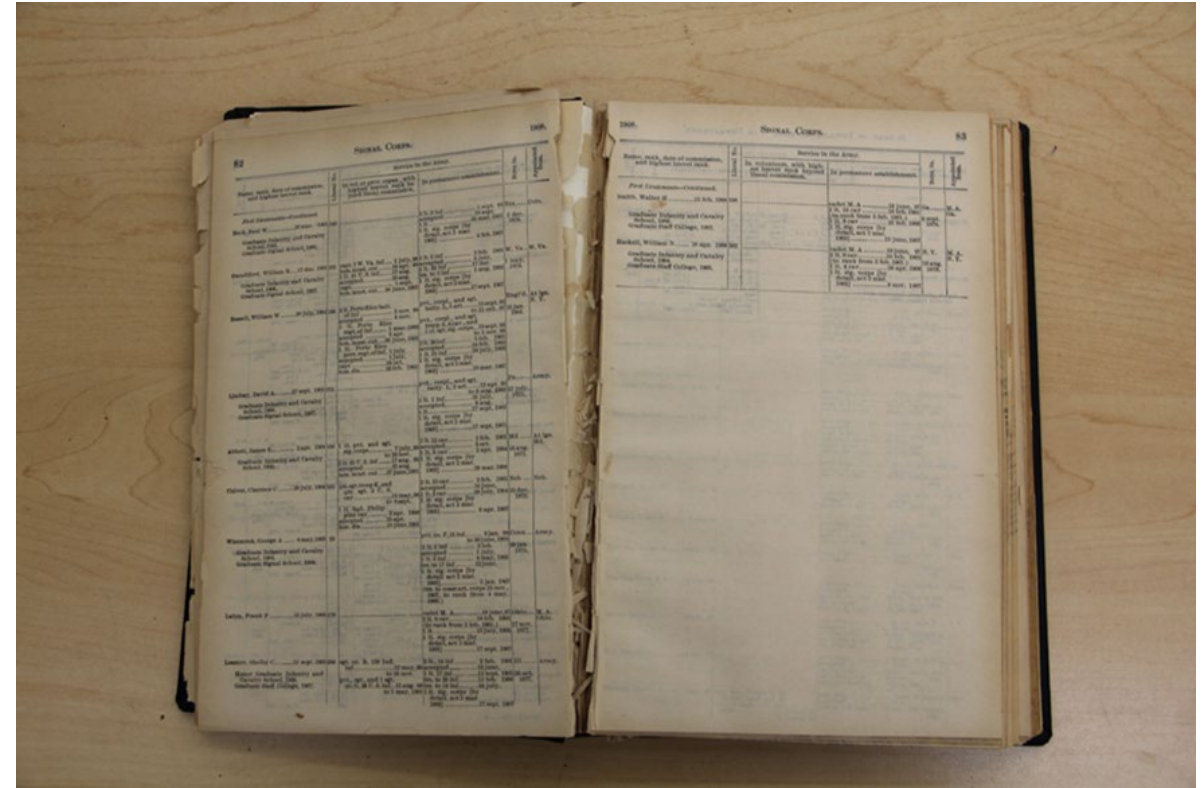
- Even though this volume is not old, the adhesive binding has failed and the pages are falling out. Due to the potential for lost information, this volume would be in poor condition.
- If your library has the ability to repair or rebind this volume, the condition would likely be Good after repairs are made.





Assessing Condition: Poor

- The binding has failed, and the pages are detaching.
- Due to the potential for lost information, this volume would be marked as Poor.
- In some circumstances the GPO Preservation Librarian may make exceptions for Poor volumes in Preservation Steward collections when items are boxed and kept in closed stacks or special collections.





Assessing Condition: Poor

- A view of this volume from the top shows brittle pages detached in sections. The pages become damaged at the top when moved above the text block.
- Due to the potential of lost information, this volume is in Poor condition.





Assessing Condition: Poor

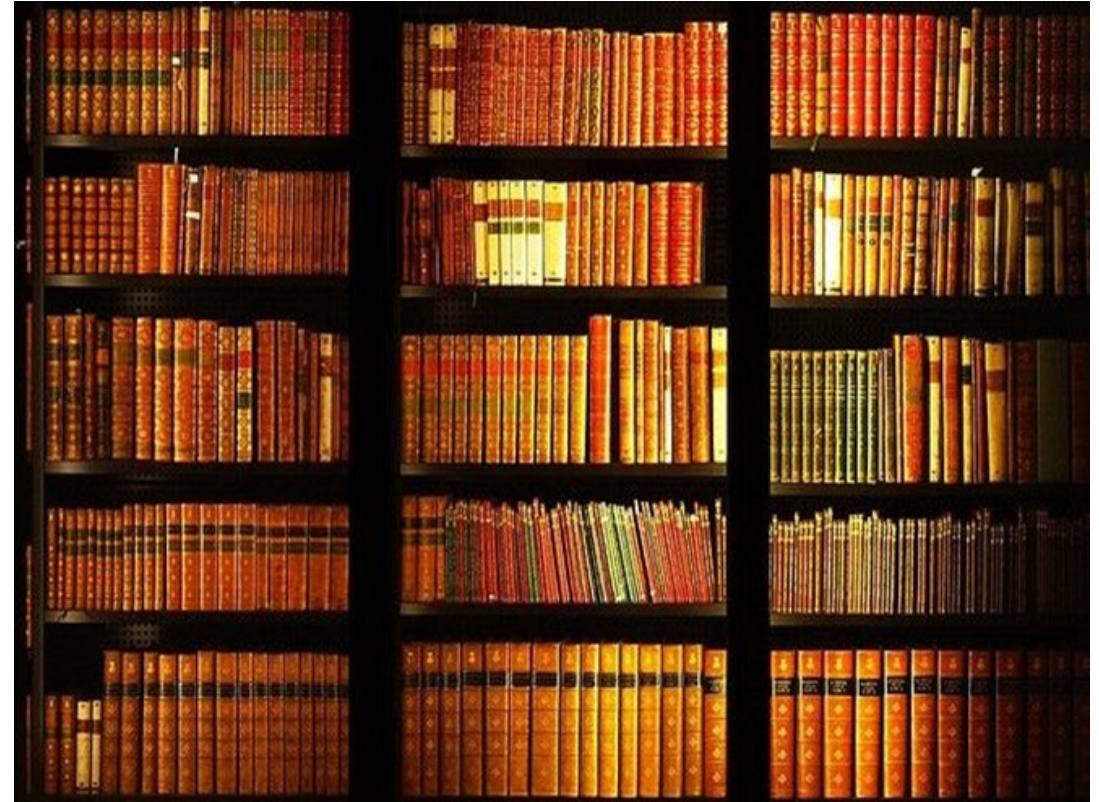
- Brittle, unsupported items in open boxes are also in Poor condition.
- If you have items like this in your Preservation Steward collection, please contact us through askGPO and use the Preservation category for your question.





Assessing Condition and your Inventory

- Assessing the condition of your Preservation Steward collection and completing an inventory helps GPO keep track of the condition of collections that our library partners have committed to retain.
- If you have questions or would like assistance in completing your inventory, please contact us through askGPO and use the Preservation category when submitting your inquiry.





Questions?

For questions on filling out your Preservation Steward Inventory contact us through askGPO. <https://ask.gpo.gov/>