

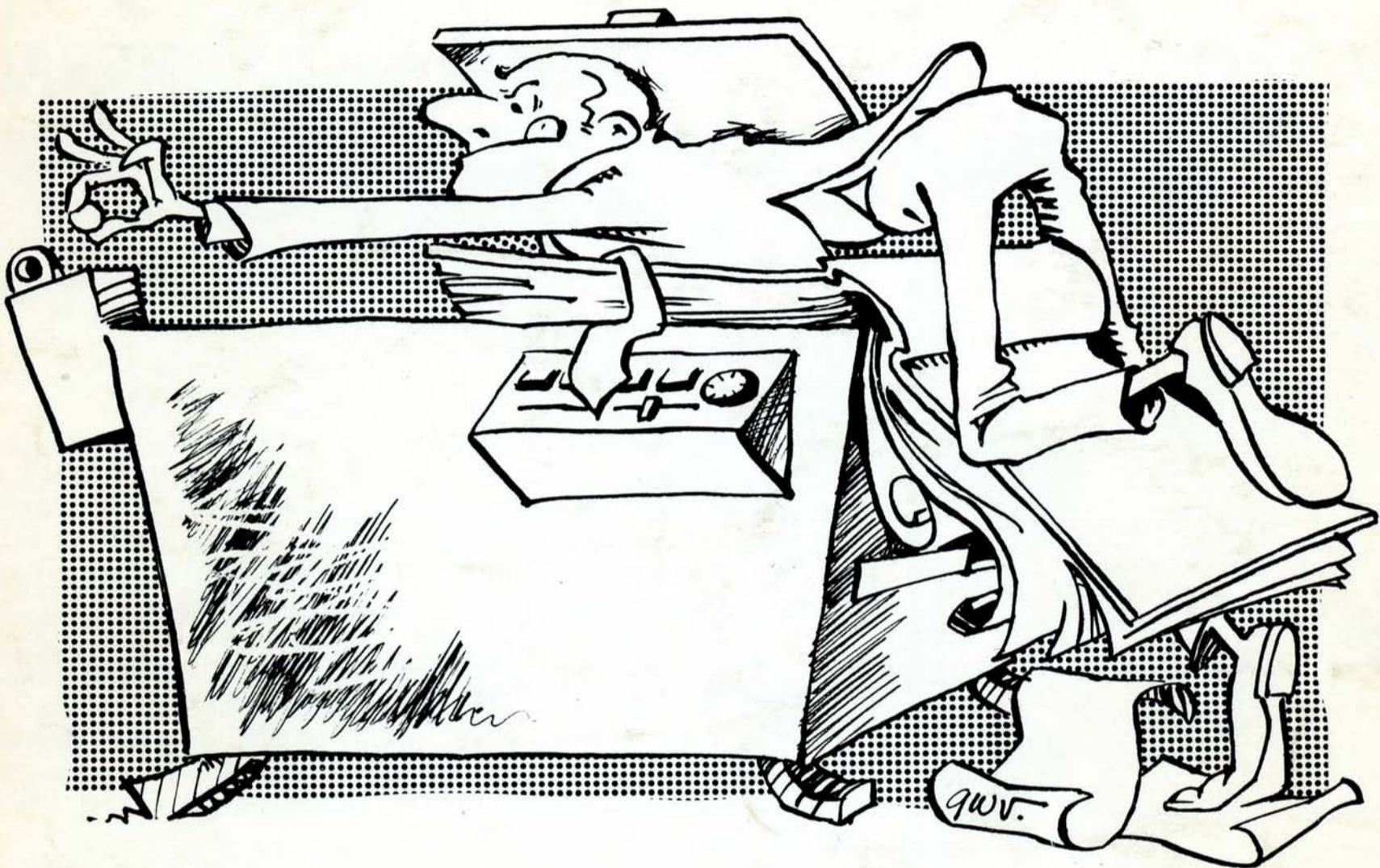
COLLEGE & RESEARCH LIBRARIES NEWS

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Photocopying Without (Much) Damage

*Anthony J. Amodeo
Glenview, Illinois*

One of the purposes of having electronic photocopying machines in libraries is to provide an alternative to those selfish but unfortunately numerous souls, bereft of patience and/or moral fiber, who prefer to take pages rather than notes from library materials. Whatever inroads have been made in the fight against such obvious mutilation, the very real threat of unintentional damage by the very process of photocopying itself continues today, as it has since the introduction of those clumsy machines some two decades ago. Librarians have been aware of this problem for years; witness Richard D. Smith's warning in 1970: "Although the ubiquitous photocopying machine has proved a boon to library pa-

(continued on p. 368)



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Photocopying, cont'd

trons, the past and current generations of these machines have not been designed for copying books... (and the) backbones of weakened and embrittled bindings may break or be damaged when they are forced down flat into the position which single sheets naturally assume."¹ More than a dozen years have passed, yet the problem remains.

PROBLEMS

Photocopying currently involves the turning (often, the slamming) of an open book onto a glass or plastic platen. Whether or not the bookleaves get scrunched or creased, the binding is subjected to an abnormal strain. Add to this the extreme pressure often applied to the book's spine by patrons (yes, and staff) to capture the full text from the ever-narrowing gutters (inner margins) of modern book production, and one can see one reason rebinding costs form such a formidable part of library budgets. And rebinding usually narrows the gutter margin even more, produces a tighter binding, and thus assures that the new binding will serve for a relatively short while if the book is copied often.

Some damage to photocopied books results from the use of an inappropriate machine. Often copy machines designed for quick single-sheet feeding have various projections to guide the originals, sense the presence of following sheets, and halt moving materials. These "teeth" can really wreak havoc with bookpaper, especially brittle or oversized paper. Heavy light-blocking covers meant for use with single sheets are often erroneously pressed over bindings. Some machines have mobile platens, which increase the risk of tearing and dropping materials. Even the momentary heat and intense light of some machines contribute to the further deterioration of fragile old paper.

The rapid pace and concomitant carelessness common to both hurried patrons and harried staff are a source of much unnecessary damage. So too is the excessive number of pages copied by the enthusiast in these days of unbridled (copyright law or no) reproduction. The very nature of certain paper formats make them totally inappropriate for safe copying: sheer size and weight, tightness of binding, deteriorated condition, fragility, cultural or monetary value, or irreplaceability dictate against photocopying some books, maps or even bound serials. One might declare, "Let them take notes!" yet that art seems to have vanished in one generation; who but a reincarnation of Marie Antoinette would chance such an anachronistic solution in this age of total access and risk a fate hardly less harsh for proposing it?

SOLUTIONS

While academic libraries are not exactly rare

¹Richard D. Smith, "The Extension of Book Life," *The Library Binder* 18, no.2 (December 1970):37-39.

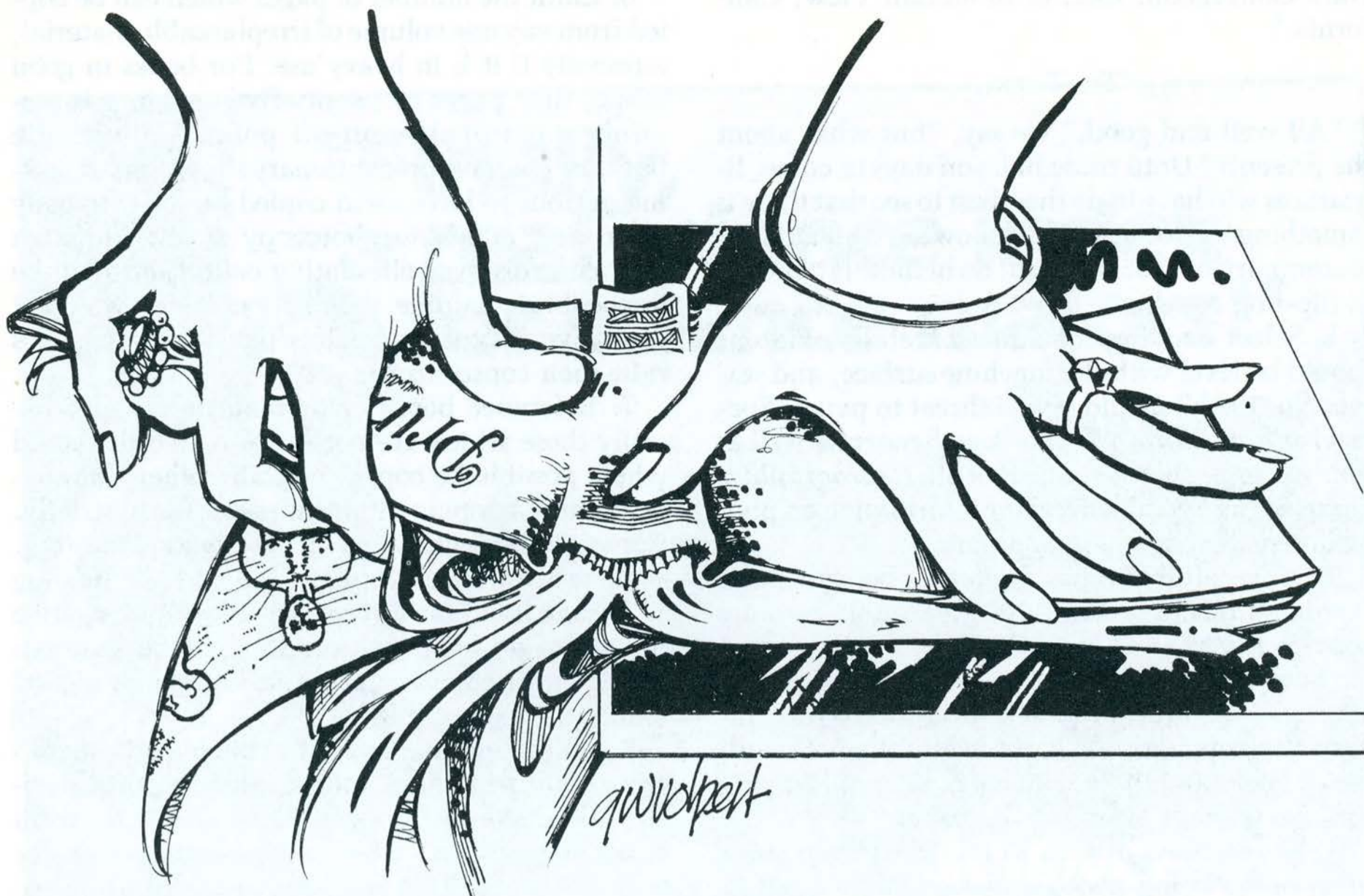
book libraries, they do contain a goodly percentage of very real research materials of more than passing value. The loss of these materials for any reason diminishes the library and access to research information. Easily identified rare or valuable materials may be pulled into a special collections department or treasure room, but even ordinary government documents collections of a few decades back contain some very desirable and highly priced items.

Special collections librarians and archivists have had to come up with solutions somewhat faster than their colleagues. Such policies as allowing photocopying to be done exclusively by trained staff, cognizant of the boundaries of safe copying methods and able to judge which materials ought not to be photocopied; limiting the number of openings to be copied per "healthy" volume (about 25 in libraries of record); and making hard (paper) copies from negative microfilm for large numbers of pages to be copied from a given volume, or for fragile materials. Practically speaking, such precautions are not within the bounds of possibility for the vast majority of materials in academic libraries, which are largely uncontrolled except at the circulation or reserve desk. Far from having trained staff perform all photocopying, the normal situation is to have the photocopying machines as far from any staff station as possible; who can put up with all that noise and those people constantly asking for change? Yet clearly it would be desirable for at least some of the most heavily used materials of permanent value (say, certain volumes in the reference collection) to be photocopied at least within the viewing range of the staff on duty.

The situation is not as bleak as it might seem. More good photocopying machines are available than heretofore and some of the manufacturers have made concessions to library use, including machines with edge-flush platens. (This does not solve all problems, however—see below.) Consciousness-raising about proper bookhandling has begun, however long the road to profession-wide acceptance. Some libraries use the Himmelsbach and Smith-recommended book-dowels for photocopying and microfilming problem books.²

Of late, technological solutions to the problems of book-photocopying have been sought, and there are encouraging reports of progress on innovations which specifically address these problems. A Swiss firm, Wagner & Cie AG, has already marketed an overhead copier capable of reproducing book pages with the book "face-up." Their machine, the Varioprint W1001, can print from flat paper or partially open books, taking the image from above

²Richard D. Smith, "Extension," p.39, has an explanation of this method, in which round-ended wooden dowels are inserted in the spiral between textblock and cover to provide an even pressure for better copying of tightly-bound books. Use this method with caution, and only after reading the article.



as in microfilming, but producing electrostatic copies. The standard Varioprint can at present handle originals of up to 23.3 by 16.5 inches, but a proposed new model will both handle larger originals and be able to reproduce from microfilm. As with most new technologies, the Varioprint W1001 is neither cheap nor streamlined: it weighs in at about 1,325 lbs., stands about six feet nine inches, and carried a price tag of about \$25,000 in the fall of 1982. It is at present in use in at least five European research libraries.³

The British Library is in the midst of bringing out two separate alternatives which bode well for safe photocopying of books. The first involves the use of a device which, with the use of mirrors, enables a photocopy machine to perform face-up copying; the book rests in a V-shaped holder, thus allowing tightly-bound volumes to be better dealt with. Predictions place this device on the market in the United Kingdom towards the end of 1983 or early in 1984, at the cost of between \$13,000-\$17,000. The prototype has been around for a while, but the final production model will be geared to the present generation of photocopy machines.

The second British Library innovation is an image digitiser, which enables a visual image to be scanned with a resolution of 200 pixels per inch,

³"Upside Down Copier from Swiss Company: A Boon to Libraries?" *Reprographics Quarterly, the Journal of NRCd* 15, no.4 (Autumn 1982):132. Published by the National Reprographic Centre for Documentation, the Hatfield Polytechnic, Hertford, Herts SG13 8LD, U.K.

thus allowing a clear image to be transmitted by computer, by telephone line, by satellite, onto an optical disc, or even, more pertinent to this article, into a neighboring or remote printer.

The clarity is said to be such that 6-point type is legible; the possibilities for higher resolution and the introduction of color in future models depend on demand more than on technological feasibility. An interfacing unit capable of linking the digitiser with computers, various kinds of printers, digital facsimile machines, and a host of transmitting equipment, has also been designed. The image digitiser and printer will soon be available in the U.K., according to Hugh Wilman, the New Reprographic Technologies Officer for the British Library; the price for both is predicted to be £30,000, or about \$49,500. The interfacing unit will be available before very long. Coupled with the Library of Congress' Optical Disk Pilot Project and transatlantic satellite transmission, the exponential potential for information access boggles the mind.

After several years' groundwork by a conclave of the Preservation of Library Materials Section (PLMS) of ALA/RTSD and the staff of *Library Technology Reports*, an NEH grant of \$64,000 has been secured for a project designed to develop a non-damaging book-copying device which could be attached to a commercially available plain-paper photocopying machine. Headed by Howard S. White, editor of *LTR*, the grant program is aimed at producing a device that would copy books at no more than a 90-degree opening, for an add-on price that libraries might be able to afford. The engineering and prototype contract went to Morgan

Data Conversion, Inc., of Mountain View, California.⁴

'TIL THEN...

"All well and good," we say, "but what about the present?" Until those halcyon days to come, librarians will have to do their best to see that there is something left to copy. The following is an attempt to summarize what we might do in these latter days of flip-flop copying.

1. Select copying machines carefully. Platens should be level with the machine surface, and stable. No "teeth" should pose a threat to paper. Special issues of *Library Technology Reports* as well as publications such as the British *Reprographics Quarterly* are good sources for information on photocopy machines and innovations.

2. Always fully support materials being copied. If using a machine which allows for 90°-opening copying (such as the Xerox 4000), be sure no part of the book is allowed to hang over the edge, or damage may be as great or even greater than with ordinary flat copying; this is especially the case with heavy books and those with weak hinges. Hanging can also damage oversized flat paper.

3. Never allow a book to be flexed over 180°; some books being photocopied resemble birds in flight; sure damage will result.

4. For oversized materials, such as large atlases, maps, oversized, very thick, or heavy books, or books with fragile paper, photocopying at all may be questionable. Paper copies from microfilm (yours or someone else's) may be a solution. If copying must be done the standard way, two persons should perform the copying, preferably one of them a trained staff member. One person supports the item to be copied with both hands, while the other aims the material on the machine, steadies it with one hand and pushes the print button with the other. If a large book overhangs the machine, or if a folded map bound into a book must be copied, the use of two persons is especially important if tears (pronounce that either way) are to be avoided.

5. Be especially vigilant, whether copying is by patrons or staff, about undue pressure being exerted on materials to "get good copy." Use signs, posters and word-of-mouth to educate patrons and staff in this regard.⁵ Tightly-bound books are especially liable to be damaged in this way, including bound periodicals which have been guillotined at the spine and oversewn, rather than sewn through the folds.

⁴"Grant to Develop Photocopy Device to Protect Books," *RTSD Newsletter* 8, no.4 (July/August 1983):47.

⁵The 1982 photocopying poster cautioning against the use of undue pressure is still available from the Illinois Cooperative Conservation Program, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale IL 62901 for \$4, postage and handling included.

6. Limit the number of pages which can be copied from any one volume of irreplaceable material, especially if it is in heavy use. For books in good shape, fifty pages or twenty-five openings is certainly a reasonable cut-off point. Problematic books might have precautionary slips inserted, asking patrons to have them copied by staff, to copy with care, or not to photocopy at all. Although such controls over circulating collections may be impossible to enforce, their very existence would at least give photocopy zealots pause, and perhaps raise their consciousness.

7. Reference books of permanent value, especially those which are not easily replaced, should where possible be copied by staff rather than patrons, and a copying limit imposed fairly strictly. For materials which have very heavy use (e.g. those articles which faculty have on their reading or reserve lists year after year), having a negative microfilm on hand or a master photocopy from which paper copies can be made might be a good solution.


8. Space should always be available adjacent to photocopy machines for the safe holding of materials which have been copied. This can be in the form of an empty shelf, table or bookcart, preferably with bookends. This receiving area should be policed often, with the materials removed, or left in an orderly condition to encourage users to follow suit. The piling of books on floors or in tall or haphazard stacks should be actively discouraged.

It would be a good idea to include some pointed remarks on proper photocopying, perhaps with a demonstration, in library orientation classes or during bibliographic instruction; proper bookhandling in general would also be an appropriate topic. Such coverage would save the library much in the way of rebinding expenses and books prematurely used up, for it has been shown time and time again that, once convinced of the importance of conservation, patrons do become conscientious about photocopying, shelving, and general handling of library materials—provided, of course, that the librarians and staff set a good and consistent example. ■■

Awards Reminder

December 1 is the deadline for nominations and applications for the following ACRL awards: the Academic or Research Librarian of the Year Award; the Samuel Lazerow Fellowship for Outstanding Contributions to Acquisitions or Technical Services in an Academic or Research Library; and the ACRL Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship.

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