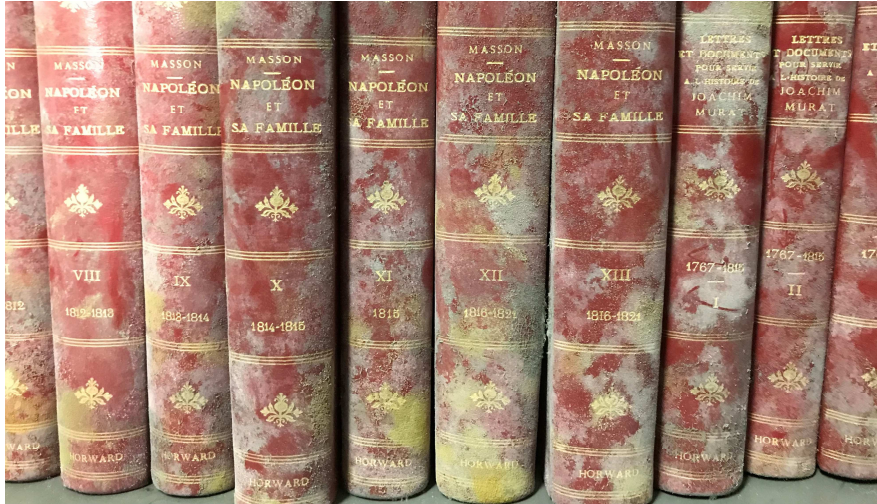

BECAUSE WE CARE: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH PRESERVATION

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THE PROBLEM



In fall 2018, we received a call from one of our longtime friends and donors that his house had suffered a severe mold outbreak. Doc and his wife were out of the state for six months, and returned to their home having been completely devastated by mold. All of their belongings had been covered – clothing, appliances, family heirlooms and scrapbooks, as well as his long-curated collection of books.

His collection, which totaled around 2,000 volumes, was the culmination of his 50+ years in academia, including rare books bought around the world, decades of journals from various publications in his field, and most importantly, the theses, dissertations, and books written by his former students.

Doc is a collector. While working in the house, it's hard to ignore the three foot tall beer steins that adorn his living room and office, collected during his travels. More importantly though, Doc collected memories and experiences of shepherding new historians into the next generation of academia. Doc's relationships with his students are paramount. During our time working on his books, Doc would tell me stories about his students, including tales about his yearly slide parties. Once a year, he would host a party for his students at his home, which included pizza, beer, swimming in his backyard lap pool, viewing slides of Napoleonic art, and the gifting of beer steins that he had lovingly hand picked for each of his students.

WHY HELP?

- Doc has played an integral part in the development of key collections in FSU Special Collections
- His personal collection contains many 17th and 18th century first edition texts documenting the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Era
- His role in developing the FSU History Department
- It's the right thing to do

Doc has played an integral part in the development of key collections in FSU Special Collections

- Doc's donations and active development of the Napoleonic Collection at FSU will ensure the scholarship of French History research in the future

His personal collection is worth saving - it contains many 17th and 18th century first edition texts documenting the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Era.

This was our opportunity to give back to someone who has given so much to the FSU Community during his tenure as a professor

It's the right thing to do! As archives professionals, we have specialized knowledge and training that should be utilized during environmental catastrophes. Even if the collections don't belong to your institution, we have a duty to protect cultural heritage collections, and help our community when they are in a time of need.



STAGE I:

PREPARATION



GATHER SUPPLIES

- N95 respirator masks
- Paper towels
- Disposable gowns
- Nitrile gloves
- Shoe covers
- 2" soft paint brushes
- Moving boxes
- Packing tape
- Fold up tables and chairs
- Hand sanitizer
- Sanitizer wipes
- Metal carts
- Tarps
- Trash cans
- Trash bags
- Buckets

The first steps I took to prepare us for this massive undertaking was research exactly what supplies we'd need. I'm not going to read every supply to you, but wanted to point out some of the most important items we brought.

N95 respirator masks, nitrile gloves, and disposable gowns, are a cheap way to prevent mold-related health problems. Because I was prioritizing the safety of our team, these items were the most important addition to our mold kit.

Soft paint brushes and paper towels were used in the actual cleaning of the books. I recommend having one paintbrush per person, and lots and lots of paper towels. If you think you've bought enough paper towels, buy one more pack just to be safe.

TRAINING THE TEAM

- Provided mold remediation training before we arrived
- Emphasized their safety when handling moldy materials
- Set clear expectations about the schedule for the day

Due to scheduling conflicts, mold allergy exemptions, and parental leave, many from our division were unable to help with the project, so an open call for volunteers was sent to the whole library. We had five people from various departments respond, including our Collections Access, Security, and Arts, Science, and Humanities departments.

I held a one hour training session prior to the actual event. Most of the folks helping with the remediation had never done this kind of work before, and to ensure the success of our work, I felt training was imperative. Also, Doc was nervous about anyone handling his collection, and he did not need to know that members of the group coming to rescue his books were actually inexperienced.

The training also served as a way to emphasize the team's safety when handling moldy materials. I set guidelines for what we had to wear – long sleeves and pants, keeping hair up. I also stressed the importance of wearing respirator masks, gloves, and gowns when handling materials and entering the house.

Set clear expectations about the schedule for the day to keep us on track, including when we take donut and lunch breaks. The schedule also laid out parameters for how long anyone could spend inside the house, because we didn't know if we were walking into an extremely toxic environment.



STAGE II: THE REMEDIATION

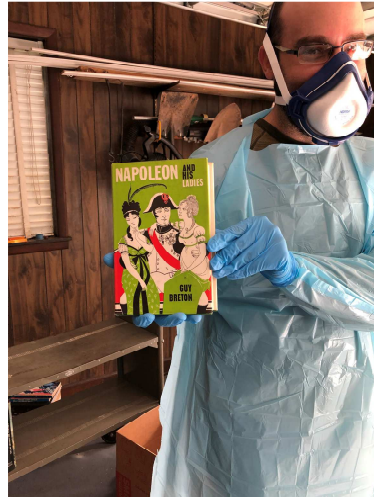


STEP 1: OBSERVE BOOK - IF YOU NOTICE ANY ACTIVE MOLD, PLACE ASIDE TO BE PUT IN COLD STORAGE



When we were first preparing for the remediation, we were unsure if the environment in his home had been stabilized, and for how long. Fortunately, Doc had been running dehumidifiers and turned down the AC, so most of the mold had been deactivated. There were only about 50 books that had to be set aside to put into cold storage.

STEP 2: USING SOFT PAINT BRUSH, BRUSH OFF THE MOLD INTO THE TRASH CAN USING LIGHT, UNIFORM STROKES



Using soft paint brushes, we brushed off all visible mold from the spine, foreedge, end bands, and inside covers and dust jackets. We took extra precaution not to scratch or damage the covers, which were made from materials varying from Portuguese leather, buckram and cloth, to paper.

Our work situation was not ideal – we ended up working in Doc's garage. Since we did not have a fume hood or enough vacuums for several people to use, so we settled on brushing the mold off into giant trash cans. Because of how easily mold particles travel through the air, wearing a mask during the process was non-negotiable.

STEP 3: WIPE DOWN BOOK WITH DRY PAPER TOWEL TO REMOVE ANY LAST REMNANTS OF MOLD AND THEN PACK INTO BOX



After brushing off the mold, we gave each book an additional wipe down and then packed them into moving boxes. The boxes were carefully packed, with paper towel lining to provide extra cushion.

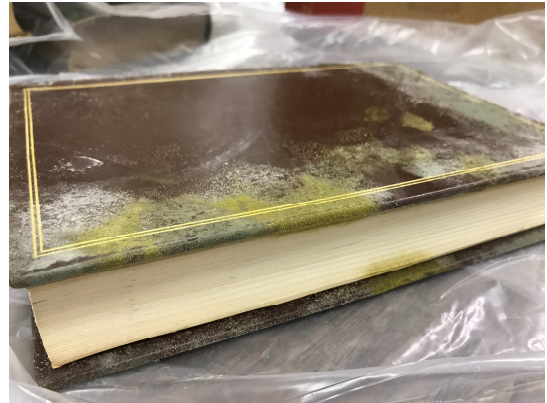
STEP 4: WIPE DOWN GLOVES WITH ANTI-BACTERIAL CLEANER EVERY FEW BOOKS



Every few books or so, we used hand sanitizer to clean our gloves to try cut down on cross contamination.

CHALLENGES

- Unsure of the extent of damage prior to remediation
- Had to improvise the process
- It was very emotional
- Took longer than planned



Unsure of the extent of damage prior to remediation

- Before we got to Doc's house, none of us had seen the extent of the damage. We went in totally blind and unsure if all of the books were going to be like the fuzzy loaf of bread pictured on the screen.
- Because we weren't sure how bad it is, we were extra cautious about wearing protective gear and limiting the amount of time actually spent in the house.

Had to improvise the process because we were not working in an ideal environment. We had no fume hood or HEPA vacuum on site and were working in his garage without air conditioning and a relatively cramped space.

It was an extremely emotional process. Throughout the day, Doc regaled us with stories of his students and travels, where he acquired many of his books. It dawned on me that Doc watching us remove mold from his books was not unlike an anxious parent watching their child receive invasive surgery.

Despite our original meticulous schedule, the process took much longer than we planned for - we thought we could get it done in one day, but it took a total of four days. Because of the extra time required and limiting schedules, we had to train new volunteers on the fly



STAGE III:

THE AFTERMATH



AFTER THE REMEDIATION

- Transported books to our remote storage location where they were unpacked and vacuumed
- Placed books with active mold into cold storage and cleaned later
- Repacked books into bins



Once everything was packed, we took it to our remote storage location and vacuumed the spines and foreedge. All of the books that had been flagged with active mold were double bagged and popped into cold storage for a couple of weeks. Later on, I vacuumed off the mold, and then everything was repacked into bins.

ONE MINOR HICCUP

Efforts were made to keep multi-volume sets together during remediation, but they started to migrate apart during the process...



- Efforts were made to keep multi-volume sets together during remediation, but they started to migrate apart during the process
 - Order of books was lost during the several transports – by the end of the process, we had moved the collection three separate times; the first time was out of his house, the second time out of our remote storage, and last, was of course, back to Doc's home
 - Because the boxes we originally packed in were potentially contaminated with mold, the books were immediately unpacked from the moving boxes and discarded. However, during this process, speed of unpacking was prioritized over keeping original order.
 - The mold removal coincided with a major move out of our remote storage (which is a whole other presentation unto itself), so books were re-packed into grey bins.
 - Because we didn't want to re-pack books again, our Rare Books librarian and student assistant worked for a week to reunite multi-volume sets by using a system of codes and a spreadsheet to collocate the sets across 70 boxes

RETURNING THE COLLECTION

- Two day process to return the books
- Many books exhibit damage from mold
- Reunited and it feels so good



It took us two trips to return all of Doc's books – 70 boxes in all. We helped him unpack the majority of the collection, but he was anxious to return to normalcy and ended up unpacking it all before we could schedule another trip to his house. That was probably for the better – he had a vision of where everything was supposed to go, and we were just getting in his way. *Anecdote about shelving a book properly*

One of the things Doc was most disappointed about is that we couldn't 100% eliminate all traces that the books had mold. Many of the books had stained leather and still carried a moldy smell.

However, at the end of the day, Doc was extremely pleased with the outcome of the remediation work, and felt a wave of relief once all of the books were back on his shelves.

I was also relieved by the end of the remediation. I was relieved that we were able to save this collection of rare books, relieved that the process had worked so seamlessly, and relieved that we were able to help a community member in a time of crisis. I

RESOURCES

- Center for Conservation of Art and Historic Artifacts. “Managing a Mold Invasion: Guidelines for Disaster Response.” 1996.
<http://dhpsny.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/CCAHA%20Managing%20a%20Mold%20Invasion%20Guidelines.pdf>.
- Florian, Mary-Lou E. *Fungal Facts*. Archetype Books, 2007.
- Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation. “Brush Vacuuming For Archival Collections.”
<https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/grimwade-centre-for-cultural-materials-conservation/cultural-conservation-channel/videos/brush-vacuuming>.
- Northeast Document Conservation Center. “3.8 Emergency Salvage of Moldy Books and Paper.”
https://www.nedcc.org/assets/media/documents/Preservation%20Leaflets/3_8_SalvageMold.pdf.

Q & A

THANK YOU!

