

How to handle books in the Reading Room

- Consult items on the table – do not hold them in your hands to read them.
- Secure and support all books with supports or cushions, and secure pages with the snake weights provided. Weights should be placed lightly on the blank areas of the page, horizontally or over the corners, and gently removed before turning the page. If you are unsure, the staff supervisor will be happy to help.
- Turn pages slowly and carefully from the centre of the page, and avoid touching printed areas. Please take care to not crease, lean on, fold over, write on or rest anything on top of the books whilst using them.
- Consult one item at a time, retaining the order of loose documents.
- Books not in use should be laid flat on the table and not stacked. If carried, take one at a time, supporting the spine and holding the covers closed.
- Acid-free card bookmarks are provided for you to mark your place: do not use any other materials, such as sticky notes, or leave books open page down. The reader will not remove any items from the work, mark or alter it in any way.
- Any books with foldout pages, such as maps or table of contents, must be carefully unfolded and re-folded along the existing folds. Refold these pages as you found them – please do not be tempted to straighten or re-crease them.
- If a book has a loose item inserted inside it, take care, and always return it to the place in the work where you found it. Some works have tissue paper interwoven between pages; this can be carefully turned like a page.
- If an item is particularly delicate, you will be shown how to handle it. Always ask for help if unsure. In some instances, an item may be handled for you. If you are concerned about the condition of any material you consult, please notify a member of staff.
- Some books are stored in boxes, or held with cotton ties. These items must be treated as part of the book and kept alongside them at all times. Take note of any instructions indicated on the enclosure.
- When you are finished with the work, a trained member of staff will return the work to its enclosure.
- Never open a book past the point of resistance – regardless of its age or perceived value. If you need help to support the book, a member of staff will be happy to assist you. In general, a book should be opened at a maximum to 120 degrees, or 90 degrees for a delicate or tightly-bound work. A smaller opening angle is always recommended for large or fragile books.
- If you accidentally damage an object, it is imperative that you highlight this immediately to a member of staff. This enables all steps to be taken to stabilise the object and limit the effects of any damage.