

in damage prevention. On the other hand (need it be said?), abandoning the new attendant after a few hours' training, and careless handling of library materials by staff, will guarantee future problems. ■■

## Letter

### Moving Collections

To the Editor:

Mr. Amodeo's comments regarding the need for lots of care and plenty of supervision when it comes to moving books are well taken. Documenting the details of the move is another excellent idea. Many library staff members are so happy to dispose of an unpleasant job they are ready to forget it ever happened. In fact, one of the reasons why some library book moving projects go so badly is that they are planned from scratch by people who choose to ignore the state of the art in terms of current practice and instead have a tendency to reinvent the wheel. Investing in a consultant or, at the very least, a literature search for relevant guidelines and time-tested techniques could produce money-saving solutions. That is one reason why we still see examples of students lined up in a human book chain as well as similar quick and dirty approaches to handling millions of dollars worth of books.

One of the biggest problems in a move of any size is the book truck. The commercial models available today are acceptable for shelving purposes, but if they are going to be heavily loaded, moved over a variety of uneven surfaces and wheeled on and off trucks, they present a whole range of serious problems. Many libraries commonly purchase book trucks with swivel casters on all four wheels because they are easy to push. They are also impossible to steer accurately and will upset at the slightest provocation. An upset on a carpeted floor is bad enough, but when the accident occurs during a move between buildings while the load is being maneuvered across a metal ramp onto a truck body, the books may end up in a street which is not carpeted and often in the rain. Book spines which project beyond the edge of the book truck shelf are easily scuffed and frequently removed entirely when careless or accidental handling brings them into contact with brick walls, door jambs, and other stationary objects. To correct the four-wheel swivel stability problem it is possible to have a local welding shop tack weld two swivel casters on one end of each truck. Thus with two fixed and two swivel casters the tracking will be improved dramatically and the potential for upsets will be reduced.

To handle the big moves safely and economically takes a heavy-duty, industrial-type book truck. Because such a truck is not available commercially it has to be custom designed and fabricated locally.

That sounds expensive and beyond the realm of most moving budgets, but it can be a cost-effective alternative if approached sensibly. Most colleges and universities have maintenance crews populated with innovators who can create a book truck from inexpensive materials. Such a book truck can be designed to protect the books from almost all of the usual moving abuse, navigate easily over all sorts of uneven surfaces, remain upright under almost all circumstances, and have an anticipated life expectancy of at least fifteen years under normal use. At today's prices the materials and labor needed to produce such a super book truck with a capacity of between 100 and 150 books will run in the neighborhood of \$400 a unit. That's a small price to pay for a piece of equipment which will serve such a vital role. For plans and a photo consult "A Utility Book Truck Designed for Moving Library Collections," *Library Acquisitions: Practice and Theory* 3 (1979):33-37.

When it comes to moving materials within the library, "super" book truck does an admirable job. More often than not those moves also result in relocating and rearranging the steel stacks themselves. When that happens the traditional approach has been to take the stacks apart, bolt by bolt, and reassemble the structure in a new location. This is a time-consuming, expensive job especially when union labor rates are involved. In worst case situations stack ranges have been dragged by brute force, tearing carpets and damaging the stack structure.

Another relatively inexpensive, homemade device will allow a whole range of steel stacks to be rolled easily from one location to another without removing so much as one bolt. This device is simple to use, requiring little or no technical skills, special physical endurance, or expensive labor. The basic device is fabricated from scrap steel and recreational vehicle jacks which are designed to roll on six-inch casters. Once again, the innovative maintenance crew can easily fabricate the stack-moving device from commercially available components and scrap steel. A typical unit would cost roughly \$400 to manufacture in this manner, and four such units will easily handle most stack-moving jobs. For plans and photographs consult "Moving Steel Stacks With a Special Dolly," *Library Acquisitions: Practice and Theory* 6 (1982):253-57.

As a profession we tend to give little attention to the mechanics of materials handling. We frequently tend to ignore the fine points of moving and often at the last minute give the chore to a commercial mover or, worse yet, a fraternity in need of a fund-raising project. If we take time to consider the value of the collections we possess we will easily recognize the need to devote more effort to developing safer and less costly methods when it comes to moving our stock in trade.—*Brian Alley, University Librarian and Associate Dean for Library Instructional Services, Sangamon State University, Springfield, Illinois.* ■■



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