UNIT 6 PHYSICAL PROCESSING

Structure

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6.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- explain the meaning of physical processing;
- identify the various stationary items required in carrying out physical processing work;
- highlight the functions of the stationary items applied to a book; and
- describe the changing situation in relation to stationary items use in libraries.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit introduces you to physical processing procedures for books. Acquisition is the first step that library takes to make books available to users for reference and use. After acquisition, library carries out few additional procedures before books are ‘shelf – ready’. Some of these relate to assigning a location to the book in the stack as per its subject matter and preparing tools that help confirm its holdings status in the library. These routines fall under the domain of technical processing. The other routines in physical processing entail adding spine labels, date due slips, circulation cards and pockets, bar codes and security strips, ownership markings, protective cases and covers and/or reinforcements.

6.2 PHYSICAL PROCESSING BASICS

6.2.1 Purpose of Physical Processing

Before books and other library items can be shelved and then circulated from the library, they need to be physically prepared. Physical processing is mainly about getting books ready for shelving so that they can be located, used and returned to the library from which they originated. Each item in the library must go through physical processing. Physical processing therefore refers to all such routines that libraries undertake to make books ready for circulation and to take steps to prolong their shelf-life.

6.2.2 Steps in Physical Processing

In manual circulation system physical processing procedures are performed mainly by
semi professional or unskilled staff. The basic steps involved in manual physical processing are as follows:

1) **Inspection**
   The books should be examined for any physical defects such as e.g. damaged covers, tight binding or folded pages.
   a) **Easing Tight Book Binding**
      Certain books have a very tight binding, that is, the book will not open easily and generally such books do not remain open to any given page for long. However, as the book is used, gradually its binding starts becoming loose until a well-used book may lay flat and remain open to any page in the book. Sometimes tight binding is also due to excessive use of glue in spine. Such books should be eased before they leave physical processing area. For easing work the book should be opened from the centre and put on a flat platform in reverse position. The spine should be gently pressed from above. This process should be repeated with each section of the book till the tightness is eased.
   b) **Opening Uncut Pages**
      Traditionally, books are printed on large sheets of paper. The sheets are then folded and bound together to form the entire book. When the sheets are folded, there will be folds at the fore and top edges. Usually, these are trimmed before the book is bound, but sometimes the trimming does not cut deep enough to open all the folds. Therefore, books should be checked for uncut pages and wherever necessary these should be first cut before books are released for circulation and use.

2) **Reinforcing Paper Books**
   Books acquired in libraries are both hard cover type and paper cover/machine stitched type. Paper cover type books get damaged due to their high circulation volumes and rough handling in the libraries. Therefore, to ensure their longer shelf life soft cover type books are to be segregated for reinforcements such as simple paperboard binding. Some publishers take special care to provide well designed jackets to their books. These designs often reflect the conceptual ideas in the book. It may be worthwhile to protect such jackets by putting a cellophane sheet around them.

3) **Identification**
   Most libraries label their materials with some form of permanent identification that gives the name of the library and its address. Identification is done to discourage theft and to ensure that lost library materials are returned to the library from which they originated. As well, identification is relatively inexpensive means of publicising the library.
   a) **Stamping Books as Proof of Ownership**
      Stamp books for identification and as proof of ownership. When stamping a book, do not cover any information that may be on the page. Ownership stamps are usually applied in all of the following places in books:
      - Along the top, front or bottom edge of the book:
        Stamps in these locations are easily seen and cannot be erased or torn out easily.
      - Title page, inside front cover, or inside back cover except spine, books are to be stamped with black ink on ALL sides.
      - Stamp periodicals with red ink PERIODICAL stamp.
   b) **Labelling Books**
      Libraries label books for identification and ownership. The library generally contains
name of the library, library emblem or institution’s emblem. The label, (3×2.5” in size), is pasted to the verso of the front cover at upper half left corner. Some libraries print library name on the book pockets and do not use library label for the purpose. Some labels also have one or two important library rules printed just below the library’s name.

4) Preparation for Circulation

a) Book Cards

Book cards are a key component of manual circulation systems to identify who has borrowed material and when the material is due for return to the library. Book cards contain call number, author, title, accession number and copy number. The lower section of the circulation card is used when the item is checked out in order to record borrower information and due date. Book cards come in a wide variety of colours, paper weights and sizes.

b) Book Pockets

Both Newark and Browne circulation systems need book cards for keeping physical record of books issued to members. A book pocket is required to keep a book card while the book is in the library. Book pocket is pasted on the verso of the front cover at the lower half on the left side. Large size book card will need bigger book pocket. Book card has ceased to be of any use in computerised circulation system and with it has gone the need for book pocket. As noted earlier, pockets can be printed with the library’s name and address.

![Fig. 6.1: Book Card](image1)

![Fig. 6.2: Book Pocket](image2)
c) **Due Date Slips**

Due date slip is to provide space for recording due date of return of the loaned book. When a book is issued a date of its return to the library is stamped on the due date slip. The top portion of the slip has space for writing call number and accession number of the book. The slip is also used to print rules about late fee charges.

5) **Preparation of Call Number Tags**

Book Tag/ Book label/Spine label is an oval or rectangular shape label of about 1.25" diameter. It is pasted at the lower part of the thick spine about ¼ inch to ½ inch up from the bottom. The white of the label can bend over the side of the spine, but the numbers have to be totally visible on the spine. If the spine is not wide enough for the call number, then put the label on the lower left corner of the front of the item. Place the label about 1 inch up from the bottom and 1.5 inch in from the spine. Try not to hide information that may be on the cover. Cover the label with clear protective cellophane tape. If the book has a jacket or dust cover over book, then the tag/label is also pasted at the same location on the dust cover. The tag is required to write call number and sequence indication and is used in shelving of books.

6.2.3 **Materials Required for Physical Processing**

The following stationary and other items are required to carry out the work of physical processing:

- Cellophane paper
- Library label
- Library property stamp
- Inkpad (black and red)
- Book Pocket (3"×2.5" size or 5"×3" size)
- Book Card (2"×2.5" size or 2.5"×4.5" size)
- Book tag/Book label/Spine label (1.25" diameter)
- Due Date slip/Date Due slip of 6"x4" size.

**Self Check Exercise**

*Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.
ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.*

1) Explain the term physical processing.

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2) Identify the place for book pocket in computerised circulation method.

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6.3 **SUMMARY**

In this Unit you have learnt the procedures for physical processing of books. Physical processing is about making book shelf-ready. The steps for physical processing of books include: a) inspection, b) reinforcing paper books, c) identification, d) preparation for circulation and e) preparation for call number tags. You have also learnt that you require stationary and other items to carry out the work of physical processing.

6.4 **ANSWERS TO SELF CHECK EXERCISES**

1) Physical processing is about procedures that library undertakes to make newly acquired books shelf-ready for circulation and use. The steps in physical processing include: a) inspection, b) reinforcing paper books, c) identification, d) preparation for circulation and e) preparation for call numbers.

2) In computerised circulation methods there is no need for book pocket as issue and return transactions are duly recorded automatically by the circulation module.

3) Reinforcing paper cover books include examining each book to ascertain if it needs binding or provision of protective cellophane covering.

6.5 **KEYWORDS**

- **Physical Processing**: All such routines that libraries undertake to make books ready for circulation and to take steps to prolong their shelf-life.

- **Book Card**: A key component of manual circulation systems where they are used to identify who has borrowed material and when the material should be returned to the library.

- **Book Pocket**: A component of manual circulation system where they are used to hold book cards.

6.6 **REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING**

