

BEST PRACTICES
Mold & Mildew
In Library Media Collections

Most library media collections probably have some degree of mold and mildew on their books. In some cases, it occurred sometime in the past and has remained inactive. In other cases, it has continued to grow slowly, making it harder to determine when the condition becomes of concern. However, since mold & mildew can develop at a very rapid pace and be extremely invasive, it is important that collections be examined frequently and, when detected, action be taken quickly to salvage damaged materials and prevent additional damage from occurring.

Prevention is understandably the best recourse, but early detection and appropriate responses are equally important in preventing collection loss. When mold and mildew are detected in the early stages, the materials can be salvaged by proper cleaning. If the condition persists or worsens, infected materials will need to be weeded from the collection and their replacement can be extremely expensive.

Step 1: Preventative Measures

- The air conditioning in the media center should remain on during weekends and vacation times. The recommendation to leave the air conditioning unit on in the media center during weekends and holidays is acceptable, if the following criteria are met:
 - The unit servicing the area is working to design performance, and the temperature controls are calibrated at the correct settings.
 - The fresh air intakes are not left opened, introducing huge amounts of humid air into the conditioned area.
- The temperature should be 75° - 78° and humidity between 50-60%.
- Windows and doors should not show evidence of moisture or leakage.
- Dust and dirt must not be allowed to build up on the top leaves of books because moisture gathers under the dust and brown spots appear. Collections should be dusted several times a year or as needed to prevent dust accumulation.

Step 2: Early Detection

- Book collections should be examined on a frequent basis to detect excessive dust gathering on the top leaves of the books.
- Books and other print materials, audiovisual materials, furniture and equipment should be examined frequently for signs of brown spots or fuzzy growth.
- During the school year, this should be done by the media staff as they interact with these materials. When school is not in session, this should be done weekly by the custodial staff.

Step 3: Responding to the Problem

- **Problem:** Air conditioning not left on during nights or weekends. *Check with custodian or Project Manager.*
- **Problem:** Temperature and/or humidity not within proper range. *Check with custodian or Project Manager.*
- **Problem:** Top leaves of books show evidence of dust. *School custodian should wipe or vacuum the dust from the books and consult with the Project Manager to determine source of the problem.*

- **Problem:** Fuzzy growth detected on books, audiovisual materials or equipment. *The principal should call the Project Manager who alerts the Indoor Environmental Quality Assessment Team who arranges for the Assessment Team to make an on-site visit. Refer to the Mold and Mildew Communication Model and adhere to the given time frames since mold and mildew can spread rapidly.*

Step 4: Resolution of the Problem

The Assessment Team will determine the degree of urgency and apply the following guideline:

1. Immediate (3 days)
2. Defer (3 weeks)
3. Abeyance

At the recommendation of the Project Manager, the Indoor Environmental Quality Assessment Team will make an on-site visit to evaluate the collection.

- **Abeyance** will be recommended if the microbial growth appears not to be active. No action will be taken, but the school staff will be asked to insure adherence to Step 1 and Step 2.
- **Defer** will be recommended if the condition is mild and/or in its very early stages and appears in only a small portion of the collection. The Assessment Team will identify the source of the problem, which the Action Team will work to correct. In conjunction with this, the books that exhibit active microbial growth will need to be cleaned. If there are only a minimal number, the school staff will be instructed to do that cleaning. If the condition is extensive, District Maintenance will send a crew to do the cleaning. Books that are too severe to be cleaned should be weeded from the collection. Send the barcodes of the weeded books to Learning Resources & Instructional Materials so they can remove the MARC records from the Library.Solution database.
- **Immediate** will be recommended if the condition is invasive, appears to be spreading rapidly and/or appears in a large portion of the collection. The Assessment Team will identify the source of the problem while the Action Team will work to correct the problem. Barcode information from books that cannot be cleaned and must be removed should be sent to Learning Resources & Instructional Materials for staff to remove their records from the Library.Solution database. District Maintenance will schedule a crew to clean the remaining books as soon as possible.