

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRESERVATION

Library of Congress Binding Market Research

The Library of Congress's primary requirements for binding services derive from its collecting of serial publications, and additional binding services are used to prepare titles for use when their original published format makes them at risk of loss or damage. Individual serial issues are collated within a few years of acquisition and then bound into volumes for their long-term maintenance. Items that are particularly small or delicate may be rebound to ensure they are visible on the shelf and safe to handle.

The Library of Congress refers to this as “aftermarket library binding” to distinguish it from bindings created in the course of initial publication. This process is generally referred to as “library binding” or “commercial binding” in the professional parlance of libraries, and the term “library binding” will be used throughout this document. In contracting for these services, the Library of Congress uses ANSI/NISO/LBC Z39.78-2000, R2018 (hereafter called “Z39.78”) to define the performance requirements for aftermarket bindings.

In response to shortfalls in the availability of the materials that are normally used to meet these requirements, the Library has entered into a one-year trial period for alternate materials, and is conducting market research to help inform the Library's future requests for services and participation in standards-making activities. The topics and sample questions below reflect the Library's market research interests and the reports from both suppliers and libraries that were communicated during discussion sessions hosted by the Preservation Administration Interest Group at the American Library Association 2021 Annual Conference.

Binding Standards

The Library of Congress relies on Z39.78 for its procurement of binding services. In addition, the Library is a voting member of NISO, and Preservation Directorate staff are often involved in review and development of standards for binding, along with other preservation materials and services. The Library is interested in understanding how other libraries and how service providers use this or other measures and standards in procurement and service offerings.

The current binding standard includes the following measures. Some criteria are different for small text blocks, less than 2 lbs, as noted in second level bullets below.

- Abrasion resistance by Fed Test 5302 (ASTM equivalent D3886) of better than 215 cycles.
 - *For small volumes:* better than 100 cycles
- Breaking strength by Fed Test 5035 (ASTM equivalent D5035) of better than 120 lbs. in warp direction and 80 lbs. in fill direction.
 - *For small volumes:* 64 lbs. in warp, 48 lbs. in fill)
- Tear strength by Fed Test 5132 (ASTM equivalent D1424) of 42.32 oz. (1,200 g) in both warp and fill directions.
 - *For small volumes:* 18.05 oz. (512 g) in warp, 15.8 oz. (448 g) in fill
- Colorfastness of “fair” after 40 hours by Fed Test 5660 (carbon arc lamp exposure).
- Endcap strength of better than 240 pounds of force by RIT Spine Pull test.
- Additional, no marked odor or penetration of water (at 10 minutes) or grease (at 5 minutes).

Question: Are all of these elements essential and equally ranked in your view of the needs of your library? Are there elements that are more significant than others?

Question: Do you reference Z39.78 in your binding procurements or service offerings? Are there other standards or measures you reference in your procurement or in your service offerings?

Question: Do you consider the standards well suited to current needs? Do you see value in a new or modified standard?

Question: Are there measurable areas of performance that are not covered by Z39.78 that are important to your assessment of binding services, or your service offerings?

Demand for Materials and Services

The Library acquires current serials from every region of the world, and utilizes binding services to send approximately 50-60,000 serials for commercial binding annually, and the Library as a whole sends approximately 200,000 items per year of all kinds. Setting aside the exceptional impacts of COVID during 2020-21, this level of demand has been consistent for the past five years, and is expected to continue throughout the next year.

Question: How consistent is the need for binding services from your perspective? And to the extent the demand is changing, how rapid is this change?

Question: How quickly do binding services need to be completed for any individual item? Would different schedules for turn time and shipping have a significant impact on your operations?

Supply Chain Issues

Several commercial binders, bindery suppliers, and libraries have reported difficulties in obtaining both finished goods and gray goods required for library binding, as well as other preservation materials. In several instances, it appears that the industry as a whole is reliant on a single manufacturer or supplier for essential materials. Some of these issues have been attributed to COVID but others have been attributed to other factors that may persist into the future.

Question: Do you face difficulties acquiring sufficient quantities of supplies or supplies of sufficient quality?

Question: Are there other supply chain factors--such as storage, transit time, shipping modes, etc. that have a material impact on the way you use binding services or acquire supplies?