



Tennessee Archives Management Advisory

1999

ARCHIVAL SHELVING AND CABINETRY

Most local archives cannot afford the specialized shelving that meets the rigorous standards of the U.S. National Archives in its new building in College Park, Maryland. Most local archives must make do with what they're able to afford. But they should take some care in the shelving and cabinetry that they acquire if they truly want to make certain that the records last for a long time.

Long-term preservation of permanent records requires not only cleaning, stabilizing, and repairing documents, not only placing them in acid-neutral folders and the folders in acid-neutral boxes, but also placing the boxes on shelving that will not threaten the material integrity of the documents and containers.

Use heavy-gauge steel shelving and cabinetry with stable baked enamel finish for paper and film materials.

The Tennessee State Library and Archives cannot recommend any particular vendor of steel shelving, but 16-gauge steel open shelving (five shelves and a top in units that are 6 feet high, 36 inches wide, and 18 inches deep) can be had from some Tennessee vendors for about \$120 per unit (plus about 5% for on-site erection and installation). The 18-inch depth is required so that standard archives boxes will be recessed and not hang over the front of the shelf. Such units, though not ideal, are better for records durability than wooden or particle board shelving.

Closed shelving (with a full metal plate at the back and at the ends of each unit) are preferred to open shelving, but it is hard to find closed shelving with 18-inch depth at an affordable price.

Cabinets, cupboards, and drawers for paper and film (such as microfilm rolls, maps, engineering drawings, and the like) should be of similar heavy-gauge steel with stable baked enamel finish.

Do not use wooden shelving or cabinetry for paper and film materials.

Wooden shelving, particularly shelving made of particle board and plywood, gives off acidic gases that can contaminate and accelerate the deterioration of paper and film. Paint and shellacs also give off gases that can contaminate documents and hasten their destruction. Moreover, wooden shelving is flammable and that is another great danger to paper and film documents.

Wooden shelving, if properly sealed with an inert polymer finish, is acceptable for magnetic tape storage.

Magnetic tape and the audio or video images on it are unlikely to last for more than 20-30 years, in any case, and metal shelving can convey a magnetic field that can distort or erase the information on magnetic tape. The same is true of other forms of electro-magnetic recording such as computer disks and CD-ROMs. However, restrict wooden shelving for magnetic tape to rooms apart from those containing paper and film records.

SHELVING VENDORS

This information is provided as a general price guide for comparison shopping only. No vendor is recommended over any other.

The following shelving offers by commercial vendors appear from their catalog advertising to be acceptable, although not tested and probably not perfectly suitable, for archival shelving in Tennessee county archives. None of the units described have been tested or examined by TSLA, and none are guaranteed or recommended in any way by TSLA. All vendors require buyers to pay shipping charges. All shelving is shipped unassembled, but assembly seems relatively simple and probably can be accomplished without difficulty.

Traditional steel shelving:

Adirondack Direct

The Adirondack Building
31-01 Vernon Blvd.
Long Island City, NY 11106
info@adirondackdirect.com
www.adirondackdirect.com
(1-800-221-2444)

Reliable Office Supplies

P.O. Box 1502
Ottawa, Illinois 61350-9914
www.reliable.com
(1-800-735-4000)

Russ Bassett Corp.

8189 Byron Road
Whittier, CA 90606-2615
www.russbassett.com
info@russbassett.com
(1-800-539-2445)

TRICOR

Tennessee Rehabilitative Initiative in Correction
240 Great Circle Road, Suite 310
Nashville, TN 37228
www.tricor.org
(1-800-958-7426)
(615) 741-5705

Tennsco

P.O. Box 1888
Dickson, TN 37056-1888
(1-800-446-8686)
www.tennsco.com

Lyon Metal Products, Inc.

Aurora, IL 60507-0671
(1-800-628-6489)

High-Density Shelving:

Spacesaver

1450 Janesville Ave.
Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin 53538
(1-800-492-3434)
www.spacesaver.com
ssc@spacesaver.com

Central Business Group

10839 Indeco Drive

Cincinnati, Ohio 45241

Sales@centralbusinessgroup.com

www.centralbusinessgroup.com

(1-800-582-4667)