Packing and Shipping Guidelines
for Library Materials

The risk of damage to library materials is highest when items are in transit, thus how materials are packaged can make all the difference in ensuring that they arrive safely. The following guidelines include strategies to minimize jostling and allow easy and safe opening of packaging.

- **Only use boxes that are sturdy enough** to support the weight of their contents. While it is good practice to reuse boxes when possible, boxes should be strong enough that they do not require extra tape for support. Boxes that have become soft and flexible with use should be retired and replaced. Keep within the established weight limit of 40 lbs. and ensure that the chosen box appropriately supports the contents.

- **Pack books flat or spine down.** If packing books vertically, make sure they are well supported on either side to reduce stress on the binding and prevent shifting during transport.

- **Separate fragile items and add additional sturdy layers of protection.** When shipping LPs, CDs/DVDs, etc. make sure to reduce the risk of items being crushed by other materials by adding additional layers of cardboard or foam to absorb shock and shipping more fragile formats in separate containers.

- **Always use packing material** (paper, plastic, foam, etc.) to fill in any dead space inside of packed boxes. Some extra space typically remains when boxes are loaded with library materials. Filling this extra space with packing material prevents items from shifting and jostling during transport, which is one of the major culprits in damaging collections. Keep packing material on hand and reuse as needed.

- **Add an extra layer of packing material on top** before sealing the box to prevent damage when cutting open the lid. Safety cutters are preferred for cutting open boxes, as box-cutters can easily slice through the covers of books that are nested directly against the box lid. Using safety cutters instead and adding a buffer layer will provide needed protection. If using a standard box-cutter use particular care, retracting the blade to the shortest position to minimize cutting depth.