

TECHNICAL BULLETIN #13

PRINTING AND HANDLING BOOK COVERS

It is highly recommended that any cover be varnished or coated to provide adequate protection from abrasion during storage, shipping, and handling. Perfect bound and laminated book covers present unique situations that sometimes result in unexpected problems. Because of the heavy weight of books, rubbing, marking, and scratching are obvious potential problems.

Even varnished book covers can present problems. There is another prevalent problem that occurs with varnished perfect bound covers particularly. A shipment of books looks perfect when they are packed, but when the books get to their destination they are badly scratched and there are spots that look like “sticking” scattered across the covers.

In many cases this is not a problem with blocking or sticking at all. During the printing process weak spots in the coating are mildly de-laminated. This results in spots where the ink and varnish are well bound to the coating but the coating is now poorly bound to the base stock. During shipping these spots can rupture. The loose pieces of ink and coating break up into small particles that act like coarse sandpaper resulting in severe scratching and abrasion. The thin film of ink and varnish is not capable of maintaining the integrity of these weak spots in the coating.

There are several ways to control this type of problem. Packing the books in a way to minimize shifting and movement during shipping is a primary key. It is the shifting and rubbing action during shipping that initially ruptures the spots. Small tightly wrapped stacks are best. If the book is extremely heavy, individual wrapping may be a consideration.

Aqueous or UV curable coatings may give better results than varnish due to better flexibility and film toughness inherent in these coatings but will not necessarily eliminate the problem - especially if attention is not given to the method of packaging the books for shipment.