GWENANNE EDWARDS

TIP: TEK-WIPE IN CONSERVATION

Tek-Wipe, a nonwoven, hydroentangled fabric composed of 55% cellulose and 45% polyester, is an inexpensive and sustainable alternative to cotton blotter. The fabric is currently available in heavy and light weights (122-126 g/m^2 and 64-69 g/m^2, respectively). Tek-Wipe is highly absorbent and strong when wet, unlike blotter, which has no wet strength. Tek-Wipe is also reusable: It can simply be rinsed with deionized water or rinsed, with no detergent, in a washing machine. This releases the discoloration and soluble degradation products that may be transferred from an object to the fabric. Tek-Wipe is also more dimensionally stable than blotter and does not distort when wet. The amount of moisture is easily controllable to match the needs of a given object. Tek-Wipe can be misted with water or wrung or brushed to remove excess moisture. Tek-Wipe is also significantly less expensive than blotter.

The most common use of Tek-Wipe is for capillary washing, so that instead of changing and discarding discolored blotter throughout the washing process, conservators can simply rinse and reuse the fabric. This is especially useful for objects with a large amount of discoloration, as there is less waste, and objects with sensitive media, as only slightly dampened Tek-Wipe will still pull a significant amount of discoloration from the support. For especially fragile and sensitive objects, stacking sheets of Tek-Wipe increases the capillary action and decreases the frequency of rinsing, thereby reducing handling of the object. It is also possible to capillary wash large objects, such as wall maps, by using a few long, overlapped strips of Tek-Wipe.

Tek-Wipe is also used instead of thin blotter as a support for washing objects on the suction table. Because it swells less, Tek-Wipe allows for greater suction than blotter. Tek-Wipe can also be used instead of Paraprint OL 60, a nonwoven fabric of viscose fibers in an acrylic binder, for slant washing. Paraprint wets unevenly upon reuse, while Tek-Wipe, which has no binder, does not.

Due to its absorbent properties, Tek-Wipe can also be used to dry and flatten paper objects. Bill Minter (2002) introduced the idea of using Tek-Wipe to dry wet books, using a modified interleaving system. In a similar vein, Tek-Wipe can be used as interleaving for water-damaged books in emergency-response scenarios.

Because it has a smooth surface and is chemically stable, Tek-Wipe can also be used for surface cleaning glass plate negatives, whereas cotton often leaves small fibers behind. Tek-wipe can also be used for dry cleaning some paper objects, humidification like Gore-tex, and calcium bicarbonate and phytate treatments.

REFERENCES

Minter, B. 2002. Water damaged books: washing intact and air drying - a novel (?) approach. *Book and Paper Group Annual* 21: 105-109.

SUPPLIERS

Heavyweight Tek-Wipe
36 in. wide, by the yard or 100-yard roll
Polistini Conservation Material LLC
www.polistini.com
conservation@polistini.com

Lightweight and Heavyweight Tek-Wipe
36 in. wide, by the 100-yard roll
William Minter Bookbinding & Conservation, Inc.
wminter@pennswoods.net

Texwipe Techincloth® (lightweight)
Packs of 4-12 in. square cloths
www.texwipe.com

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