

"PERMALIFE"

Modern book paper withers so fast that nine out of ten books will crumble in only fifty years.

A Virginia librarian, however, has now come up with a durable and unexpensive book paper he says will last for 300 years or more.

William J. Barrow, chief of Document Restoration at the Virginia State Library, worked with a group of chemists for several years to develop a new chemical wood pulp formula called permalife.

Permalife is now being produced by Standard Paper Manufacturing Co. of Richmond, Virginia. Competitors are expected to start turning out their own versions soon, however, because the state library has published the basic formula.

In seeking a long-lasting paper, Barrow and the others found that aluminum sulphate caused most book paper to dry up, become brittle and then crumble.

They sought a way to reduce this acidity built into the paper. They dismissed rag fiber, which withstands acidity, as too costly.

Finally, they discovered the material they needed in acquapel, a commercial product developed by Hercules Powder Co. Acquapel is reportedly similar to nylon although its formula is a secret.

One of Barrow's collaborators was A. L. Rothchild, Standard Paper's chief chemist. Thus, the company was able to jump into permalife production almost immediately.

Standard Paper officials acknowledged that permalife is unlikely to capture even one per cent of the mammoth paper market since the biggest paper consumers, such as newspapers and magazines aren't concerned with the longevity of their paper.

But Charles Beckler of the company's sales force declares that "whenever books of lasting value are published, this will be the logical choice."