

# Preserve Your Family's History for Future Generations

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# Environmental Conditions

- Archival conditions: 50% relative humidity and 68 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Avoid large swings in relative humidity and temperature
- Rooms with exterior walls will experience greater swings and should be avoided for storage locations.
- Dark room with shelving off the floor, no exposed pipes or heat sources
- Do **not** store in garage, attic, or basement
- Interior closet (like a linen closet) is a good choice
- Pick a place you will regularly dust and monitor for pests

# Storage

- Archival cardboard boxes
- Archival folders = acid free and lignin free
- Make sure your box size matches your folder size, which should be bigger than your documents
- Number of items in each folder depends on fragility, type of item, and thickness
- Put individual items in polyester/Mylar sleeves
- Label the folders in pencil
- Purchase at: University Products, Gaylord, Hollinger Metal Edge, Container Store
- Be careful - “archival quality” isn’t an enforced standard. Look for terms like “acid-free,” “lignin-free,” and “**passed PAT/Photographic Activity Test**”

# STAY AWAY FROM

- Plastic Bins
- Non-archival cardboard
- Metal, staples, paperclips
- Rubber bands
- Sticky notes
- Common household plastics
- Storing photos and newsprint in the same folder
- Lamination
- Sticky tape - Scotch tape, masking tape, duct tape, etc.
  - *even if the manufacturers claim that the product is "archival"*
- Anything that you can't **undo**

# Books and Paper

- Store books upright on a shelf. Use quality bookends. Large, over-sized books are best laid horizontally in stacks of no more than two or three high.
- Books with weak bindings/covers can be stored in a clamshell box or four-flap enclosure. If you don't want to get a custom box made, tie with twill tape to keep the cover attached to the pages. When opening/using a book, support the spine with a hand or book cradle; do not lay an open book flat on a table.
- Paper documents - If ripped, keep pieces together but do not attempt to reattach with adhesive or tape. Use Mylar sleeves to avoid directly handling fragile paper.
- Paper documents - Matboard or another stiff piece of archival folder/board can be placed inside the sleeve to provide further support for a fragile document.

# Photographs – Handling and Storage

- Scrapbooking will shorten the life of your photos – it's difficult to properly
- Buy plastic sleeves and enclosures that have passed the P.A.T., or Photographic Activity Test
- Wear white cotton or nitrile gloves when handling photos where fingerprints will leave permanent smudges.
- If photograph is fragile or torn, place in a Mylar sleeve with an archival board support.

# Photographs – Dirty, Torn, or Rolled

- Do not clean photographs with erasers.
- Brush soiled photographs carefully with a clean, soft brush.
- Most methods of cleaning dirty photos and negatives requires chemicals too caustic for amateurs to use safely.
- Improper cleaning of photographic materials can cause serious and often irreversible damage.
- Do not use tape to repair torn photographs.
- Rolled photos: <https://thefamilycurator.com/photo-tutorial-how-to-relax-and-rehumidify-old-rolled-photog/>
  - This method is risky and should be undertaken with patience and caution.

## Other Materials

- Newspapers and clippings: ISOLATE – do not store in the same folder as other types of items. Store in Mylar sleeves like photographs and DO NOT use adhesives to attach to other materials.
- Negatives: If film-based negatives are brittle, discolored, sticky, or appear wavy and full of air bubbles, OR SMELL LIKE VINEGAR, separate the negatives from the rest of the collection and consult a conservator.
- Audio/Video: Use a vendor for digitization – Mr. Cassette in Austin is good



## Who to Contact for Help

- Austin Private Conservator Directory
  - <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/conservation/resources/directory/>
- American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works
  - Referral Services
- The Northeast Document Conservation Center Preservation Center

## Contact Me

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