



Tips for Preserving Scrapbooks and Photo Albums

Handling

- Wash hands regularly.
- Do not use lotion, hand sanitizer, or anything advertised as an aid in handling items.
- Clean hands when handling books and documents. Wear gloves when handling photographs, film, metal items, and textiles.
- Do not force bound books open.
- Carry fragile items on rigid supports.

Environment

- The cooler, dryer, and more stable the environment is, the better. Keep the temperature and humidity stable.
- Keep items out of basements, attics, garages, and barns.
- Take items out of storage for only short periods of time. Avoid natural and fluorescent lighting.
- Monitor pest activity and contact a conservator if it becomes a problem.
- Dust is damaging. Wipe your items clean with lint-free rags and consider storing them in appropriate boxes.

Safely mounting items in albums or scrapbooks

Avoid mounting with the following materials: white glue, rubber cement, pressure-sensitive tapes and films, staples, or hot glue-gun adhesives. These materials do not age well and can physically damage and/or discolor paper and photographs. Avoid albums with self-stick pages (“magnetic pages”) as well, because of the adhesive used on the mounting page.

Do use:

- Envelopes and sleeves made of stable plastics such as polyester, polyethylene, and polypropylene to hold the materials and as album pages.
- Corners made from the stable plastics or paper.
- Materials that have passed the Photographic Activity Test (PAT). The PAT is a test that determines whether a storage material will cause fading or staining of photographs. The PAT test method is outlined in the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) standard named ISO 18916:2007, Imaging Materials— Processed Imaging Materials— Photographic Activity Test for Enclosure Materials. Many manufacturers test their products with the PAT and advertise storage materials that have passed the PAT.
- Paper should also meet the standard for permanent paper ANSI/NISO Z39.48, Permanence of Paper for Publication of Documents in Libraries and Archives. This standard specifies the characteristics of paper that is long lasting and will not harm other documents with which it is in contact.

Removing photos from a magnetic album

The Smithsonian Institution provides a video on removing photos from sticky magnetic albums:

<https://siarchives.si.edu/blog/how-get-out-sticky-situation>

Words to know

Archival: Often used in product descriptions but has no manufacturing standard. On its own, it can be misleading.

Acid-free: Has a neutral pH at time of manufacture. Users need to be aware that all organic materials will become acidic over time.

Lignin: Found in the wood used to make paper. If left in, lignin will become acidic over time and cause the paper to discolor and become brittle.

Interleaving: A thin paper or tissue used to separate items, such as two pages in a book or album, to protect from abrasion or transfer.

Buffered (also found as alkaline reserve): Product made with the addition of an alkaline, often calcium carbonate, which will neutralize acids as they form. Can be used with most papers, black-and-white photos and negatives, cottons, and linens.

Unbuffered: Products without an alkaline reserve that may be safely used in contact with blueprints, cyanotypes, color photographs, color negatives, silk, wool, or leather.

Where to go for assistance

- Preservation Programs at the National Archives and Records Administration:
www.archives.gov/preservation
Email: preservation@nara.gov
- American Institute for Conservation (AIC): <http://www.conservation-us.org/>
- In the event of a disaster:
 - <http://www.conservation-us.org/emergencies/national-heritage-responders#.WWPErpIrJIY>
 - <https://www.archives.gov/preservation/records-emergency>

Selected Sources of Supplies—General

Archival Methods, www.archivalmethods.com

Archival Products www.archival.com

Gaylord, www.gaylord.com

Hollinger Metal Edge, www.hollingermetaledge.com

Talas, www.talasonline.com

University Products, www.universityproducts.com

Selected Sources of Supplies—Custom Boxes

Conservation Resources International, www.conservationresources.com

ECS Conservation, <http://ecsconservation.com/services/archival-enclosures/>

HF Group, <https://archival-boxes.com/products/kaseboxes/>