PRESERVATION CHECKLIST

LEARN THE STEPS TO BETTER PRESERVE NEWSPAPERS, PHOTOGRAPHS, DOCUMENTS, ARTWORK, AND BOUND MATERIAL

Paper-based objects fade, yellow, and weaken in time, and require a little extra care to preserve them. This checklist suggests small steps you can take to extend the lives of collection material.

☑ **Paper and books are stored in a cool and dry place**

Attics and basements are not recommended. They tend to be damp, stuffy, dusty, and depending on the season, too hot or too cold. This type of setting attracts insects and mold and promotes chemical deterioration.

☑ **Collections are kept away from heating sources such as radiators, heating vents, fireplaces, and windows**

Heat can speed up chemical deterioration and insect activity. Finding a spot away from heating sources and windows will reduce yellowing, distortion, fading (form sunlight exposure), and possible adhesion of your material.

☑ **Books, photographs, and documents are not stored in shelves along outer walls**

Placing your shelving and selected storage against walls that face into interior spaces on either side of them is safer than propping them against outer walls as outer walls (those that face outdoor spaces on one side) experience temperature changes and rapid fluctuations.

☑ **Collections are not stored near water sources or areas prone to leaks and dampness**

Inspect your storage areas for cracks and leaks often and make sure to remove objects from spaces prone to condensation and leaks. These include drains, bathrooms, outer walls, and areas near rainwater collection.

☑ **Ensure that bottom shelves are four inches off the floor**

Flood and leak damage is less likely on materials stored higher off the ground.

☑ **Make sure that dust does not accumulate on material or shelves**

Good housekeeping practices discourage pests from destroying paper-based materials. Keeping a regular cleaning schedule and strict rules in areas where these objects are stored and viewed is recommended.

☑ **Winter heat is kept low**

Relative humidity (RH) tends to decrease as temperatures rise (check out the RH video I made for more info). When outdoor temperatures are low and indoor temperatures are high, the RH inside will decrease. This can lead to cracking, flaking and dehydration of material as the air will essentially rob the moisture contained in papers and books.

☑ **Windows and doors close properly and are weatherproofed**

Refer to the explanation above.

☑ **Cracks and leaks are sealed**

Refer to the explanation above.

☑ **Smoking, eating, or drinking is not allowed near collections**

The same applies for cigarette smoke, photocopying machines, some construction materials, paints, sealants, and wooden storage/display materials as these emit harmful substances that affect your objects. Eating near paper-based objects will attract pests that will eventually consume areas of paper, books, leather, adhesives, etc...

☑ **Albums, scrapbooks, sets of documents, and delicate or rare volumes are stored in preservation quality boxes**

Preservation quality (acid-free, lining-free, and alkaline buffered) enclosures provide protection to objects without causing acid migration from the box onto the paper.

☑ **Valuable paper and books have minimal exposure to light and no direct exposure to sunlight**

Light exposure causes fading and yellowing. Installing blinds and curtains will prevent sunlight from affecting collection material. Boxing objects is another way to protect material from artificial lighting (these can emit UV light as well) and sunlight.

☑ **Maps, documents, plans, and letters are stored flat or rolled (in the case of oversized material)**

Storing these items flat prevents handling damage that could take place when unfolding. If oversized materials are to be rolled, place tissue paper on the outside of the tube to protect the paper from the possible acids emited from the tube before rolling the material on it. In addition, place acid-free paper between the roll and the material used to keep the roll closed (rubber band, staple, string, etc.)

☑ **Yellow, cracking, brittle (acidic) paper is stored separately from other documents and books to prevent their inherent acid from attacking nearby paper.**

Acidic paper can be stored in buffered folders, which provide contact with an alkaline material and slow down the acid degradation of the object.

☑ **Suitable enclosures are used for photos and negatives**

Paper enclosures that are acid-free and lignin-free are recommended. You'll notice that some storage supplies state they pass the PAT test (ANSI Photographic Activity Test), these are the best products for photos. Alkaline buffered enclosures can be used for brittle prints but are not recommended for color photos or blueprints as they can cause damage to these objects.

☑ **Soft pencil is used to label the backs of photographs, documents, and books**

HB or #2 pencils are used to mark objects. Write on the back of the material, without pressing hard on it. When handling a soft, light paper, use a softer pencil.

☑ **Books are shelved upright or flat and leaning is avoided**

Shelve books of similar sizes together and prevent sagging or leaning by using bookends. These actions avoiding distortions and broken book joints.

☑ **Acid-free, lignin-free, and buffered materials should be used for storing documents**

Paper enclosures that are of archival quality, acid-free and lignin-free are recommended. Beware of enclosures that state they are 'acid-free', at times this does not mean that they will not become acidic. By purchasing from trusted sources such as Talas, Gaylord Archival, and University Products to name a few, you will ensure that the material obtained will be of preservation quality.

☑ **Preservation-grade polyester (Melinex or Mylar), polyethylene, or polypropylene are used as enclosures for paper objects**

These types of plastics are the safest as they are of archival quality and inert. They do not deteriorate over time which makes them perfect for storing collection material.

☑ **Facsimilies of newspaper clippings are displayed instead of originals**

Newspapers produce harmful acidic compounds that affect surrounding material. Displaying copies will extend the life of the original newspaper piece as well as the objects surrounding it. The original clipping should be placed in a buffered, acid-free, and lignin-free enclosure by itself.

☑ **Separate harmful objects from collections**

Acetates deteriorate and affect the appearance of the objects within them. Melinex or Mylar are the most stable and recommended plastics for enclosure material, but polyethylene or polypropylene can be used as well. As in the case of photographs, ensuring that these materials pass the PAT test will guarantee collection safety.

☑ **Ensure that there is good air circulation where paper and books are stored**

Creating space in between the back of the shelves or walls and your objects promotes good air circulation in cabinets and shelving. Cover objects exposed to open-air (and therefore pollutants) with a breathable material such as Tyvek or Gore-Tex. Objects should also be covered if they are in proximity to cellulose nitrate film or hardwoods like oak, beechwood, birch, particleboard, plywood, and veneers.

☑ **When viewing valuable material ensure that your hands are washed and lotion-free**

Lotions stain paper and gloves are not recommended for handling. Ensuring your hands are clean is the best policy for your objects. Conservation research shows that cotton gloves are cumbersome and cause more damage than they prevent. **Note:** photographs and negatives should always be handled with gloves, as fingerprints can cause damage to their surface. Latex or nitrile gloves are ideal for these situations.

WHERE TO BUY ENCLOSURES, TOOLS AND MATERIALS

HOLLANDERS
https://hollanders.com/collections/bookbinding-supplies

HIROMI PAPER
https://store.hiromipaper.com/pages/online-store

CONSERVATION SUPPORT SYSTEMS
http://www.conservationsupportsystems.com

CONSERVATION RESOURCES INTERNATIONAL
http://conservationresources.com/

GAYLORD ARCHIVAL

https://www.gaylord.com/

TALAS

https://www.talasonline.com/

UNIVERSITY PRODUCTS

https://www.universityproducts.com/

CONSERVATION SERVICES & ADVICE

AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION

Local conservators search. Conservation and preservation-related publications.

https://www.culturalheritage.org/

CONSERVATION CENTER FOR ART AND HISTORIC ARTIFACTS

Conservation and preservation-related publications.

https://ccaha.org/getting-started

NORTHEAST DOCUMENT CONSERVATION CENTER

Conservation and preservation-related publications. Conservation treatment.

https://www.nedcc.org/

WHERE TO FIND A CONSERVATOR FOR YOUR PERSONAL COLLECTION

https://www.culturalheritage.org/about-conservation/find-a-conservator

REMEMBER

- If you need to hold off on sending material out for repair, further damage can be prevented by storing it in a suitable enclosure and environment.
- An acid-free enclosure is the best storage solution even if you have already had the book repaired and returned to you. Talas sells a number of suitable options (see link below) and offers fast shipping from their Brooklyn, NY location.