

# BOOK & PAPER PRESERVATION

Throughout history the accumulation of human knowledge has been written on a wide variety of materials and structures. Books and paper materials are evidence of this as visible and abundant artifacts. Depending on how these materials were created, in what environment they were stored, and how they have been handled influence the preservation of these materials.

With knowledge and preventative measures, book and paper materials may survive for hundreds of years.

## Storage

Store books and paper materials in spaces with minimal exposure to all kinds of light, with stable climate, and with clean surfaces.

Avoid storing items in attics, basement, or similar locations because of higher risks of environmental extremes, pests, and other pollutants.

Best practices recommend storing materials in a climate of 65-68°F and 35-50% relative humidity.

### *Bound Materials*

Shelve books on appropriately sized shelves made of nonhazardous materials vertically supported by neighboring books or bookends. Improper shelving puts stress on the structure of the book as well as increases that chance of damaging the volumes when using them. If bound materials need to be shelved on their spines, do so with the spine down to support the text block. Oversized volumes should be shelved flat, and only stacked two or three high.

When storing books in boxes, alkaline corrugated cardboard boxes are best—do not use plastic containers, which can seal in moisture or give off harmful gases as they age.

Delicate or fragile books may need to be wrapped or boxed in phase boxes or special enclosures made of archival-quality materials. If a book is falling apart, it may also be tied with flat cloth ribbon (string can cut and rubber bands can break or leave residue). Books with dustjackets may be protected by Mylar covers. Page fragments should be placed in a marked envelope.

### *Paper / Manuscripts / Ephemera*

Unbound or loose leaved paper should be stored in acid-free, lignin-free, buffered file folders, with a maximum of about 15-20 sheets per folder. Folders should be then placed in an archival box with same size folders.

Specific types of paper may need to be stored separately such as newsprint. After 1840, newsprint is highly acid and prone to turning yellow and brittle. Best practices for using newsprint is to make photocopies, digitize, or microfilm for access.

If original paper materials are on display or framed, they should have limited light exposure and placed in an environment with air flow. Photocopies of original materials are preferred for displays.

Paper items should be unfolded or unrolled and stored flat, to minimize tears and breakage as the item ages. If an item needs further protection, encapsulation between two sheets of Mylar and sealing the edges with double-sided tape will protect it during handling and stabilize it. Don't forget to leave the corners unsealed to keep moisture and off-gases from being trapped.

## Handling

When handling materials made of paper carefully hold along the edges with thoroughly washed and dried hands. The oils from human skin will cause permanent damage over time to inks and other ingredients used to create the text and illustrations. Wearing gloves lessen dexterity and may cause further damage.

Book cradles, foams, and pillows are used to support the book during use and display. A fragile to a tightly bound book may benefit from using a book cradle. If the spine, hinges, or other structure parts of the book are weak, the book may need some sort of supports. Do not press a book down to keep it open. To keep the book open, book weights may be used.

Loose materials may viewed on top of an archival board to support it. Book weights may be used to keep materials flat.



## Cleaning & Mending

Never use self-adhesive tape to repair a document. The adhesive can permanently damage the paper leaving residue and acidic transference.

Soiled books and paper may be gently brushed with a clean, soft bristled brush. Work from the center of the document outward toward the edges. Do not clean with water- or solvent-based cleaners. If the book or paper are badly damaged or need special attention, contact a conservator.

### **NEVER LAMINATE ONE-OF-A-KIND ITEMS!**

It may seem like a good idea, but lamination traps moisture and acid—and once your article or certificate starts to fade (or worse, turn green), there is no way to free it from its plastic trap!

If your item will be handled frequently, make a copy of your original and laminate the copy.

## Organization & Description

Depending on which type of storage is selected, the books and paper may be identified on the enclosure, folder, box, or on the item itself. When writing along the edge or on the back of an item, write near the edges with soft lead pencils that will not bleed through or scratch the paper. Do not use ink pens or markers.

A well-organized and properly housed collection will ensure that books and paper items will be preserved for future generations.

*The recommendations in this document are intended for guidance only.*