

Caring for Your Family Records – Helpful Hints

Storage Location:

- Temperature between 15 and 21°C with 30-50% relative humidity.
- Stable temperature and humidity levels (not too much fluctuation).
- Clean air and good air circulation.
- Away from the light (especially ultraviolet light – sunlight, fluorescent lighting).
- Storage location in the central part of your home, away from outside walls (no attics, basements, or garages).

Housing:

- Appropriate size for the items you are dealing with– flat storage is ideal, but if necessary, it is better to roll documents loosely than fold them. NEVER roll or fold a photograph.
- For documents: Acid-free, lignin-free paper and cardboard folders and boxes, coroplast boxes
- For photographs: Material that has passed the “Photographic Activity Test” or PAT including plastic sleeves and photo corners (made from pure polyethylene, polypropylene, polyester, Mylar D, or Mellinex 516) and acid-free, lignin-free paper envelopes (choose those with side seams or no seams).
- Do not use: Paper clips, staples, or elastic bands; Synthetic or white glue, hot glue, rubber cement, pressure-sensitive tapes and films, or adhesives; Lamination; “magnetic” or “self-stick” photo albums; Papers and cardboards containing acids or lignin; Plastics containing PVCs (polyvinylchlorides).
- Store highly acidic papers, like newspaper clippings and cardboard, away from other records.
- Archival Suppliers:
 - Provincial Archives of Alberta <https://sales.ccs.alberta.ca/paa/store/default.aspx>
 - Carr McLean <http://www.carrmclean.ca/CategoryGroupBrowser.aspx?CategoryID=132>

Photographs already in albums:

- Leave photographs in older albums with black, grey, or coloured paper unless they are showing definite signs of deterioration. Make a photocopy of each page before taking apart the album.
- Interleave album pages using high-quality paper or plastic sheets if you are worried about stains and fading from caused by transfer from photographs and adhesives on an opposite page.
- Remove photographs from a self-stick album only if the adhesive is dried out or the photographs come away easily when a thin knife is inserted under the edge of the photo. NEVER try to curl or peel back a photo from a self-stick page.

Captioning photographs:

- Use a soft lead pencil (4B or 6B) on the back of the photograph near an edge. Press lightly.
- If the pencil doesn't work, you can try using a felt tip **film** marking pen, but it may cause staining. Never use a ballpoint pen.
- Alternatively, write the caption beside the photograph in an album or on the envelope containing the photograph, rather than on the photograph itself.

Caring for Negatives:

- Keep the original negatives, if they are available.
- Store film-based negatives separately from other photographic materials
- If negatives are brittle, discoloured, sticky, appear wavy and full of air bubbles, or smell like vinegar, remove those affected from the rest of the negative collection. They are in an advanced state of deterioration and should be scanned before the deterioration proceeds further.

Caring for Film and Video:

- Store film reels flat (horizontally).
- Store videotapes vertically on end, in stable plastic containers, and away from magnetic fields.
- Break tabs off tapes to prevent accidental re-record.
- Rewind tapes after recording or playback. Do not eject a tape in the middle of a recording.
- Convert film to video or DVD so you have a copy for viewing.
- Clean and maintain projectors and playback devices.

Safe Handling:

- Wash your hands and wear white cotton gloves when handling photographs or fragile documents.
- No food or drink. No smoking.
- Use a pencil.
- Don't lick your finger to turn pages
- Handle records as little and as gently as possible. Hold photos by the edges, with support from beneath with your other hand.

Cleaning Documents and Photographs:

- Dust surface **lightly** with a soft brush – brush from the centre of the document outwards. Be especially careful with how much pressure is used on photographs.
- Do not brush documents with powdery, flaking material or sooty or mouldy deposits.
- Do not clean photographs with water-based or solvent-based cleaners.
- Wrap mouldy papers in plastic and contact an expert.
- Do not try to repair torn or damaged documents yourself using tape or glue.
- If a photograph or negative is stuck to frame glass or enclosure materials, consult the Archives or a conservator before trying to remove the photograph.

Displaying Family Records:

- Display originals only when absolutely necessary. Display a copy instead.
- Always use a mat to keep the photo from contacting the glass.
- Use a good quality, non-acidic matboard, which passed the Photographic Activity Test, for both the mat and the backboard. Attach the photo to the backboard using photo corners or edge strips.
- Don't use spray cleaners to clean the glass.
- Don't display photos or documents in direct sunlight or under bright lamps, near heat sources or in damp locations like basements, kitchens, or bathrooms.

Scanning or Digitization:

- Advantages: share with a much wider audience, saves the original from some wear and tear
- NEVER throw out the original
- Be aware that scanning documents and photographs can be damaging to them, so aim to do it only once. Guidelines:
 - Resolution: 3000 pixels along the longest side (scan at about 500dpi for 4x6 photos, 1000dpi for 2x3 photos, etc.). The smaller the original photo, the higher the resolution required.
 - File type: save digitized files as tiffs rather than jpegs.
 - Migrate your digital files into new formats over time.