



Genealogy Papers in the Attic



Learn how to preserve old documents and photographs

Why? Why Preserve?

- Discover and add items to your family archives
- Tell a story of your family
- Save for future family generation records
- Story of the community – Family treasures can become the community treasures
- Proof of an event or explanation of the event

What You May Find

- Sentimental treasures
- Historical documents
- Legal and financial documents
- Proof of events
- Photographs
- Clothing, toys, and other goodies (family artifacts)

I.D.O.M.

- **Identify** – find them
- **Decide** – what is important to keep
- **Organize** – sort by type of format (photograph, document, book, etc.); sort by who, what, where, when and sort by year, location, person; **Label items**
- **Make Copies** – on DVD, USB, external hard drives; give a copy to a friend or family member for safekeeping / backup

STOP! Get them out of the attic...and the garage!

Preserving Family Archives

Controlling your storage environment is the most important thing you can do to preserve your collections.

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How do I preserve my archive?

- Control the temperature, humidity, light, dirt, and dust
- Use the right type of enclosures
- Careful, limited handling
- Use your copies instead of the originals

Storage Conditions

Ideal Environment: constant 70 degrees F and 30-50% humidity

- Temperature
 - Heat accelerates deterioration
 - Low temperatures increases chances of condensation
- Humidity
 - High humidity (more than 65%) provides moisture leading to softening and/or swelling of archive materials, and creates environment for mold growth
 - Low humidity leads to drying out and brittleness; increases static electricity, which can damage magnetic media
- Light, Ultraviolet Light (UV)
 - Weakens paper
 - Bleaches
 - Causes dyes to fade and change
 - Damage is cumulative and irreversible
 - Sunlight / Fluorescent light most damaging
 - Incandescent bulbs raise temperature in room
- Dirt and Dust
 - Debris becomes embedded in paper, textiles (cloth), and other surfaces
 - It can scratch
 - Acidic debris with moisture in the air can create deterioration
 - It can attract molds and insects

Controlling the Environment

- Regular housekeeping
- Air filters
- Window screens
- Use low wattage bulbs with dimmers
- Rotate displays
- Display copies and store originals
- Avoid basements, attics, and garages
- Store archives in center of home where temperature and humidity are more stable
- Seal windows, cracks, and crevices
- Keep lights off when not using them

- Use a dehumidifier in damp areas
- Use HVAC system to control temperature and humidity
- Keep archives away from direct natural light
- Be careful and limit handling

What to Do with the Treasures

- Do not use adhesive tapes to repair items
- Separate acidic items from newspaper clippings
- Remove clips, pins, and rubber bands
- When viewing your items make sure your hands are clean and the area is clean and uncluttered

Paper Items

- Paper items stored in acid-free, lignin-free file folders in document boxes
- Separate oversize documents in flat file boxes
- Use polyester, polyethylene, or polypropylene containers when using plastic
- Remove staples, paper clips, strings and ties
- Group items with plastic paper clips or with subfolders

Periodicals & Pamphlets

- Magazines and pamphlets can be stored in folders in a filing cabinet placed spine down
- They can also be stored in flip-top periodical boxes

Photographs & Negatives

- Enclosures should have passed the Photographic Activity Test (P.A.T.)
- Avoid plastic sleeves if storing in high humidity
- Paper enclosures can be used if they are acid-free, archival paper envelopes
- Use mounting corners when using an album
- Preserve albums intact and store in boxes
- Store cased photographs in their original cases
- Wrap broken glass negative plates separately
- Avoid PVC (polyvinyl chloride)... it does smell
- Note: store anything that smells funny separate from all the rest

Books & Scrapbooks

- Photo Albums or Books in fragile condition should be stored flat in archival quality storage box (lay flat or spine down)
- Scrapbooks with loose or detached covers can be tied with flat cotton tape to reduce damage; be careful of where the knot is placed to prevent further damage
- Wrap loosely bound or damaged books with acid-free paper to protect them even if they are boxed or tied
- Interleave acidic items such as newspaper clippings with non-acid (buffered) paper

- Never re-adhere loose items
- Handle with care!
- Scan or photocopy pages for access purposes
- Leave it as it is instead of trying to improve its condition
- Shelf upright and supported; Oversized books can lay flat

Audio Visual Media

- Handle grooved or optical discs by the edges or center hole
- Handle open reel and magnetic tape by edges or outer shell only; Do Not touch the spools
- Handle film only by the edge
- Store all formats upright
- Keep equipment clean and well maintained
- If it is deteriorating, consult a specialist and copy to a new media format

Framing & Display Options

- Framing
 - Use 100% cotton mat and mounting boards
 - Always use a window mat
 - Acid-free backing boards
 - Consult a conservator for design options, mounting, installation, and other care
- Display
 - Interior rooms are more stable
 - Do Not store or display above or immediately adjacent to heat vents, radiators, or fireplaces
 - Use spacers between frame and the wall to provide air circulation
 - View a copy and store the original

Scanning & Digitization

- We create digital copies to help preserve originals
- Make duplicates and store in safe place
- Create high quality display prints
- Create to share! (You might have materials that no other family member has seen)

Scanning & Digitization Basics

- Keep the scanner clean
- Remove paper clips, staples, tape (if you can), and other items
- Remove dirt or smudges
- Black & White (Bi-tonal) – best for printed text in a book or document
- Grayscale – best for black & white photographs, handwritten text, and black & white illustration
- Color – best for color photographs, color illustration, diagrams, or any documents with color

- DPI (Dots per Inch)
- PPI (Pixels per Inch)
- More Pixels equals higher resolution
- Scan photos and documents smaller than 5x7 at 300 dpi/ppi for general purposes; scan at 400-600 dpi/ppi if you plan to enlarge the photos
- **Note:** items larger than 5x7 may need to scan at higher dpi/ppi for general purposes depending upon their size
- Scan as a TIFF or PNG format for archival; JPEG for general photo use (documents can be saved as a PDF for general use)
- Give the scanned items descriptive file names to help you identify them
- Create and organize folders-within-folders
- Create backup copies and store them in different places
- **University of North Texas – Best Practices**
 - Scanning Standards – <http://www.library.unt.edu/digital-projects-unit/standards>
 - Scanning Your Materials – <http://www.library.unt.edu/digital-projects-unit/about-scanning-your-materials>

Emergency Preparation

- Protect your legal records, historically important records, health and financial records
- Make duplicates and store in safe place outside of your home
- Make a “Grab and Go” packet with really important documents or records

Salvage

- Safety first (Get out of the house!)
- Prevent mold – first 48 hours is crucial
- Air Dry – you can use a fan
- Freeze papers or books if completely soaked and cannot dry within 48 hours
- Clean gently
- Focus on what’s important to you, if you cannot save everything
- Freeze and thaw (air dry) later
- Do not repair items until completely dry
- Rinse mud off photos gently
- Do not wipe CD/DVDs going around the disc; wipe from the center towards the outer edge with a soft cotton cloth
- Use conservation services when you need it

Additional Information

Explore additional resources on our [website](#) and blog [Plano Library Learns](#), including information about library [databases](#)

Conservation /Archival Supply Companies

Talas

330 Morgan Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11211
Phone: 212-219-0770
<https://www.talasonline.com>

Conservation Resources Int'l

5532 Port Royal Road
Springfield, VA 22151
Phone: 800-634-6932
Phone: 703-321-7730
<http://www.conservationresources.com>

Archival Products

1801 Thompson Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50316-2751
Phone: 800-526-5640
<https://www.archival.com>

B&H Photo

420 9th Avenue
New York, NY 10001
Phone: 800-894-9703
<https://www.bhphotovideo.com>

Benchmark Tools

P.O. Box 214
Rosemont, NJ 08556
Phone: 609-397-1131
<https://www.benchmarkcatalog.com>

Consolidated Plastics

4700 Prosper Drive
Stow, OH 44224
Phone: 800-362-1000
<https://www.consolidatedplastics.com>

Hollinger Metal Edge

6340 Bandini Blvd.
Commerce, CA 90040
Phone: 800-862-2228
<https://www.hollingermetaledge.com>

Gaylord Archival

P.O. Box 4901
Syracuse, NY 13221-4901
Phone: 800-448-6160
<https://www.gaylord.com>

Masterpak

145 East 57th Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10022
Phone: 800-922-5522
<https://www.masterpak-usa.com>

Museum Services

2921 Como Avenue SE
Minneapolis, MN 55414
Phone: 612-378-1189
<https://museumservices.org>

National Bag Company

4700 Prosper Drive
Stow, OH 44224
Phone: 800-247-6000
<http://www.nationalbag.com>

University Products

517 Main Street
Holyoke, MA 01041-0101
Phone: 800-628-1912
<https://www.universityproducts.com>

Spacesaver (Viking Metal Cabinets)

1450 Janesville Avenue
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538
Phone: 800.255.8170
<http://www.vikingmetal.com>

Brodart (Archival Supplies)

500 Arch Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
Phone: 888-820-4377
<http://www.shopbrodart.com/archival-supplies/>