

Caring for Records

In caring for your records remember that less is better. Do not do anything that cannot be undone. Use acid-free folders and boxes for all documents. Handle everything with care. Remember that light is harmful to documents and photographs.

1. Unfold all documents to their full size for permanent storage. Folded papers will eventually tear at the fold. A special storage area may be needed for oversized material so that it can be stored flat.
2. Remove rubber bands, which deteriorate over time and adhere to documents, and paper clips, staples, and other fasteners. If fasteners are needed, use plastic or stainless steel paper clips.
3. Do not use tape or any type of adhesive to mend documents.
4. Fragile documents can be placed in mylar or polyethylene folders, which can provide additional support to the paper when handling is necessary. Do not use anything that is made with PVC.
5. Place records in acid-free file folders and store them in acid-free boxes. Do not write on or mark any documents. Write needed information on the folder in pencil. Do not use sticky notes. Remember that archival is a generic description that does not necessarily mean acid free.
6. Do not laminate any records. This method uses heat to fuse a plastic covering to the paper and is irreversible.
7. Make photocopies on acid-free paper of any newspaper clippings you wish to save. Discard the originals or save them in a separate folder to use for exhibits. Never store a newspaper clipping next to a document.
8. Photographs and negatives should be placed in acid-free, mylar, or polyethylene envelopes or folders. Do identify the photos, but write identifying information on the storage envelope, on the back of the photograph in pencil, or on a photocopy of the photograph. Do not use ink to label photographs. Do not place photographs in scrapbooks unless the pages are acid free. Do not place them in albums with sticky pages. Wear gloves when handling photographs.
9. In order to preserve them, have copies made of old and valuable photographs and frame the copies. Use acid-free matting.
10. If papers become water soaked, move them to a dry storage area immediately. Place an electric fan in the area and dry. Papers and photographs can be hung (carefully) from a clothesline. Use paper towels to soak water out of books. Mold grows quickly so fast action is necessary.
11. If you have old audio or video tapes, they should be re-wound periodically.