



Caring for Family Treasures

Agents that deteriorate family treasures -

- Physical forces including handling and use
- Light damage - can lead to fading and sun bleaching; keep items away from direct sunlight or exposure to any light for long periods of time
- Pests - such as silverfish, beetles, mice etc. that eat or burrow into objects; avoid using chemicals and opt for sticky traps if you think you may have a pest issue
- Temperature and Humidity -too high or too low can speed up deterioration or promote mold growth; most objects prefer cooler temps somewhere below 75 and above 45 degrees and between 35-50% humidity
- Other factors to consider: safeguarding against fire with fire-proof boxes/safes; protecting objects from air pollution and contaminants; protection from water damage, including avoiding storing items near sprinkler systems or pipes; security to protect from thieves and vandals.

General Guidelines for All Object Types

- Carefully scan or photograph fragile items to document them. This provides a method to share the item while preserving the original by avoiding having to handle it. As with all digital files, have several backups in case of computer failure.
- Store the originals (photos, documents, textiles, etc.) in an area where you are physically comfortable - not the attic or the basement due to variations in temperature or humidity. Avoid direct contact with

wood which is acidic and will damage items over time. Use muslin or tin foil to create a barrier between the wood and any objects.

- Handle original documents with clean hands and photographs by the edges. Oils from your hands will damage the originals. Use cotton or nitrile gloves whenever possible.
- Use only polypropylene or polyester sheet protectors for documents, letters and photographs (sometimes referred to by their tradename Mylar). Archival quality acid-free storage and scrapbook materials are available online (see resource list below), at office supply stores, craft stores, and from framing shops. Regular manila envelopes and most old folders are acidic and will damage items over time.
- Avoid the use of scotch tape on documents, letters and photographs. If it has been used, contact a conservator to properly remove it. Avoid rubber bands and metal paper clips which will break and rust.
- Do not laminate original items. This is a heat process that seals the original in plastic with adhesives, which will cause it to breakdown faster over time and is very hard, if not impossible, to reverse without professional conservation.

Resources mentioned in the “Ask a Curator!” Webinar and General Resources for Archival Storage Information and Materials

- Gaylord’s Resource pages for general collections care advice
<https://www.gaylord.com/resources>
- Link to Gaylord’s “YourStory” collection of archival material kits
<https://www.gaylord.com/personal-preservation-family>
- Monogrammed and embroidered archival keepsake kits from Foster-Stephens
<https://www.foster-stephens.com/product/archival-storage-boxes-deep-keepsake-kit/>
- Two other museum suppliers that also sells archival storage kits – University Products and Talas

<https://www.universityproducts.com/collectors-storage>

<https://www.talasonline.com/archival-storage/boxes/media-and-specialty>

American Institute for Conservation's Resources

- Caring for your Treasures - collection of .pdf guides for caring for different material types

<https://www.culturalheritage.org/about-conservation/caring-for-your-treasures>

- Find a Conservator - a database of professional conservators that is searchable by zip code and conservation specialty

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

Appraisal Information

- Guide to the "Big Three" Appraisal Organizations and some history of each

<https://www.freemansauction.com/news/understanding-three-professional-appraisal-organizations>

- Appraisers Association of America

<https://www.appraisersassociation.org/>

- International Society of Appraisers

<https://www.isa-appraisers.org/>

- American Society of Appraisers

<https://www.appraisers.org/>