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# COLLECTIONS

## Advisor



Martin Collection, Indiana Historical Society, cropped from original

Issue 19, May 2013

### Tips on Caring for Documents and Photographs

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#### **Handling**

Wash your hands. And don't use lotion before you work with your photos and documents.

Avoid touching or rubbing the image.

Consider wearing white cotton or disposable gloves.

- Use your judgment – gloves that don't fit tightly can cause damage.
- If you use gloves, be sure they are clean. Change them often and wash cotton gloves with a scent-free, dye-free detergent.

#### **Storage** **Books**

Never use rubber bands or string to hold books together. Use flat cotton or linen tape.

Store books in acid-free boxes if possible. This will protect them and help keep the edges, bindings and pages clean.

Books can also be stored in acid-free paper or wrapped in cotton or unbleached muslin. A clean, white cotton pillowcase will work.

Store books upright on shelves so that they don't lean. Leaning can cause permanent warping of the bindings and pages.

Don't store paper and cloth bindings in contact with leather bindings. Leather can deteriorate and debris may rub off on other books.

#### **Papers**

Remove all fasteners from the paper.

Unfold documents if possible. If the documents crack or tear while you're unfolding them, stop immediately to prevent further damage.

Separate poor-quality and high-quality papers to avoid acid burn.

Lower quality papers have a higher acid content. As they deteriorate, they may damage other documents and photos.

Store papers in acid-free folders.

- Store as few items in one folder as possible.
- Extremely fragile, important or valuable papers should be stored individually.

### **Photographs**

The best way to store photographs is in separate envelopes, folders or sleeves.

Paper enclosures should be acid- and lignin-free.

Storing several photos together can cause damage to the images. As the photo touches other photos, the image can be abraded and become scratched.

### **Display**

Expose paper to light as little as possible. Light damage is cumulative and irreversible.

When possible, use high-quality copies to replace the originals.

Newspaper and color photographs are very sensitive to light. Newspaper will discolor and become brittle. Color photographs will change color and fade. Black-and-white photos will also fade, but at a different rate from color photos.

Use acid-free mat board when framing documents.

Be sure that the photo or document doesn't touch the glass. Images and documents can adhere to glass over time and removal is difficult. Removing paper from glass may cause permanent damage. Using an acid-free mat will create space between the photo and the glass.

### **Documentation**

Remember to record the date, place, event and names of people pictured.

If you are using a database to keep track of your documents and photos, develop a cross-referencing system so that it is clear which record belongs to which photo or document. **MAKE BACK UPS OF THE INFORMATION AND STORE THEM OFF-SITE.**

If you choose to write on the photo or document, use a soft lead pencil and write on the back.

Never use stickers or ink to mark an image.

Never write on the image itself.

### **Resources:**

*Caring for Photographs: General Guidelines*, National Park Service Conserve O Gram, Number 14/4, June 1997

Indiana Historical Society Conservation Lab

[www.indianahistory.org/our-services/conservation/conservation-lab/conservation-lab](http://www.indianahistory.org/our-services/conservation/conservation-lab/conservation-lab)

Minnesota Historical Society

[www.mnhs.org/preserve/conservation/index.html](http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/conservation/index.html)

National Archives

[www.archives.gov/preservation/conservation/](http://www.archives.gov/preservation/conservation/)

Nebraska State Historical Society, Gerald R. Ford Conservation  
Center

[www.nebraskahistory.org/fordcenter/index.shtml](http://www.nebraskahistory.org/fordcenter/index.shtml)

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*This publication from the Indiana Historical Society  
is a service of the Hoosier Heritage Alliance*



*This project is made possible by a grant from the  
U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services*