

Hints and tips on looking after your family photographs, documents and books



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Looking after your family photographs, documents and books

Introduction

We all have precious items that we would like to keep safe. These can be birth, marriage and death certificates, our school reports, certificates of achievement, birthday cards, post cards, love letters, children's drawings, diaries, photographs, photograph albums, cine films and video tapes, CDs and DVDs and books. To ensure your treasured items last for many years and can be passed on to future generations we have put together these handy hints and tips.

General tips:

- Store all items away from direct sunlight and high temperature.
- Place items in good quality storage material – archival quality, (see page 12 for Suppliers).
- Handle with care.
- If labelling use caution. Place information on the wrapper/enclosure and not on the items. Use a 2B pencil rather than a pen.
- Seek professional advice, (see page 11 for Contacts).

Try not to use:

- Polythene bags or A4 stationery plastic pockets as these can stick to paper and photographs.
- Any pressure sensitive tapes (such as sellotape) as these are irreversible and can damage and stain items.
- Staples and pins.
- Elastic rubber bands.
- Post-it notes.
- Biro/ felt tip pens/fountain pens/roller ball pens etc.

We should not:

- Store in high temperature and direct sunlight, as this causes irreversible damage – making items become brittle and information to fade.
- Store in high humidity as this can cause mould/water stains/ attract insects – this damage is also irreversible.



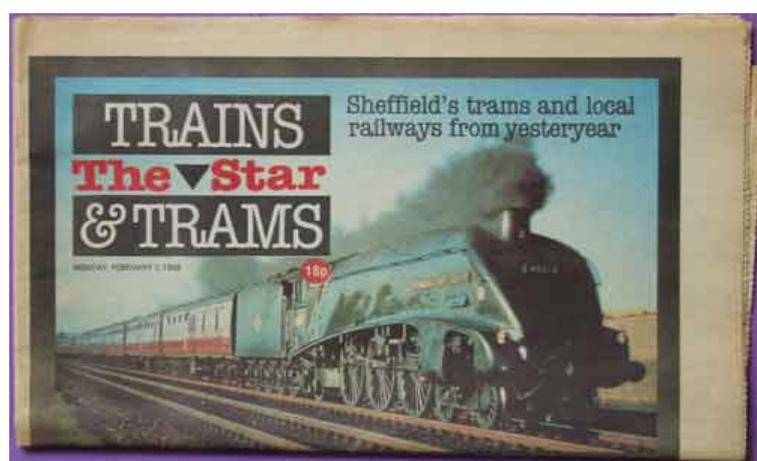
- Do not store in cellars, attics, lofts, garages or sheds as the above can happen.

Paper items



Use:

- Archival envelopes and archival boxes.
- Polyester sleeves – providing the paper is not brittle/ has not been written in pencil/has crayon or chalk or pastels.
- Brass paper clips with a fold of paper.
- 2B pencil for labelling on wrappers. It is advisable not to write on your item as the pressure of your writing can damage the paper.
- Vinyl gloves (beware if you have allergies) as cotton gloves can be difficult to use.
- For newspapers we recommend photocopying or scanning as the originals will not last. Originals turn yellow and brittle very quickly due to the paper being of very poor quality.



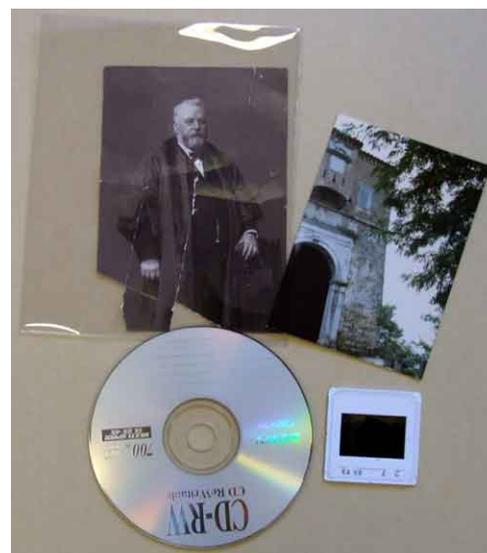
Photographs / 35mm transparencies / slides



- Use archival quality polyester sleeves.
- Place photographs into polyester sleeves and not in self adhesive photograph albums.
- Use cotton gloves to handle photographs carefully.
- Place photograph albums into archival boxes.
- Check colour photographs and transparencies (slides) regularly as colour fades. Re-copy, scan, and back up images if using CDs or inkjet prints done at home etc.

Compact discs (CDs) and Digital Versatile Discs (DVDs)

- If storing documents and images on CDs /DVDs, back up and use the best you can afford. Gold CDs with phthalocyanine dyes last longer.
- Use CD- Rs rather than CD-RWs this will prevent you mistakenly overwriting information.
- Check CDs/DVDs regularly and back up.
- Place CDs/DVDs into archival quality cases made from polypropelene purchased from specialist suppliers, (see page 12 for suggested suppliers). Do not store in standard polycarbonate jewel cases.
- Do not leave CDs/DVDs in machines and remember to clean machines regularly via manufacturers' instructions.



- Handle CDs/DVDs with care, hold through centre hole and edges.



- When cleaning use a lint free cloth and wipe from the centre to the edges. Protect your CDs/DVDs by wearing vinyl gloves.



- 35mm transparencies can be placed into archival quality pockets or into archival boxes.
- Check your transparencies regularly as they can fade. Ensure you either copy or back up on CDs/DVDs and look after as above.

Video tape, cine film and audio cassettes

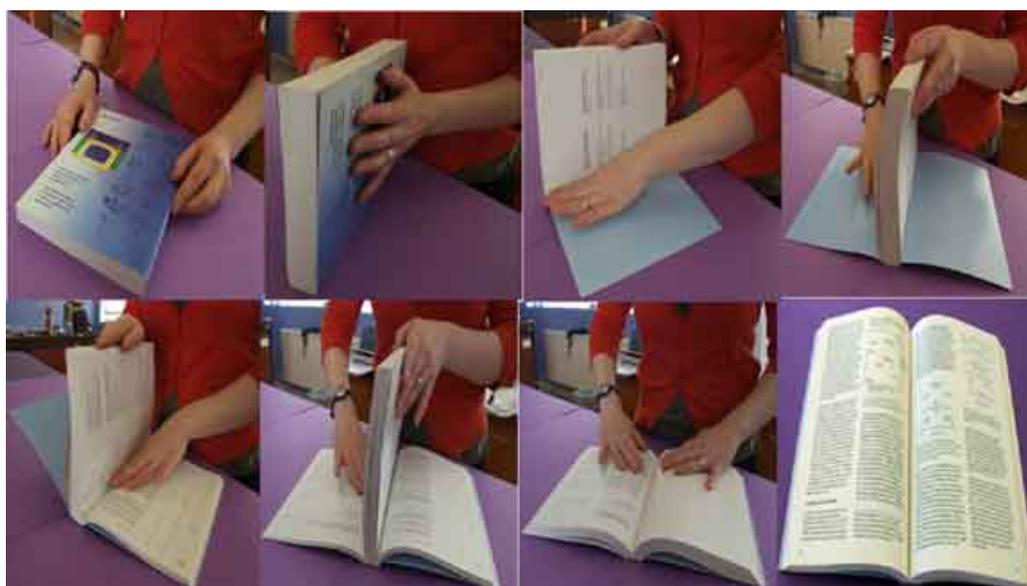
- Ensure you wind these through at regular intervals and do not leave them in their part wound state as this will cause the tapes and film to stretch.
- Ensure your equipment is regularly cleaned to manufacturers' instructions.
- Remember to remove your tape/film from your machine.
- Consider having these transferred to DVD or CD, (but always keep the original video tape or cine film).



Books



- Store books on your book case either upright or flat depending on size and weight.
- Do not overfill the book shelf as this makes it difficult to remove books and can damage spines.
- Avoid eating and drinking whilst reading.
- Try not to leave books open as this will damage the spine and can cause pages to fall out, especially if they are paperbacks.
- Use a book mark instead of folding back the corner as this can cause the paper to crack.
- (New) books can last longer by opening them as follows:



- Try not leave books in direct sunlight.
- Store books away from direct heat and light as this can cause damage.
- Do not repair with any pressure sensitive tapes (such as sellotape) as this causes further damage.
- Use archival quality boxes.
- Protect fragile books by folding an acid free/pH buffered artist paper around the cover.
- Fragile books can be placed on to a cushion when reading This will help in opening the book and protecting the spine.
- Do not photocopy books as this damages the spine and can cause the pages to fall out. Consider using a digital camera instead.



Further reading and contacts

Reilly James M. *Care and Identification of 19th century Photographic Prints* (Kodak 1986)

Coe, Brian and Mark Haworth-Booth *A Guide to Early Photographic Processes* (Victoria and Albert Museum 1983)
(*Sheffield Archives: COE/ART*)

Taylor, Maureen *Preserving your Family Photographs : how to organize, present and restore your precious family images* (Betterway Books 2001)
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: 779 SQ; copies available to borrow from Manor and Ecclesfield libraries, 771.46Q*)

Martin, Elizabeth *Collecting and Preserving Old Photographs* (Collins, 1988)
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: 779 SQ*)

The National Preservation Office has various publications/leaflets on their website

- Looking after CDs/DVDs
- Understanding and Caring for Bookbindings
- Preservation of photographic material
- Photocopying of library and archive material
- Good handling principles for library and archive material

www.bl.uk/npo/publicationsleaf.html

Yorkshire Film Archive - provide advice on film care and preservation. Specialist staff can advise on the care and handling of film and moving images.

www.yorkshirefilmarchive.com

The National Archives – can offer advice on the preservation of digital images.

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/preservation/digital.html

Conservation Unit , Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information – offer free advice and may be able to take on conservation work.

www.sheffield.gov.uk/archives

Suppliers

The following list is a suggested starting point. The Conservation Unit does not favour one supplier in preference to another. Users should check suitability of materials for themselves. Other suppliers are also available.

Secol Ltd– polyester sleeves, archival quality photographic storage systems:

www.secol.co.uk

Conservation Resources UK Ltd – archival quality papers, tissues, wallets, boxes:

www.conservation-resources.co.uk

Conservation by Design Ltd – archival quality papers, tissues, wallets, boxes

www.conservation-by-design.co.uk

Preservation Equipment Ltd - archival quality papers, tissues, wallets, boxes:

www.preservationequipment.com

I Waterman boxes storage boxes suitable for family papers, documents, photographs www.memories-nostalgia.com

Pinders Ltd – local Sheffield art supply shop – supply art quality/acid free papers, pencils, colour photocopying service: www.pindersofsheffield.co.uk

Peak Professional – local Sheffield photographic processing and printing service :

www.peak-imaging.com

Institute of Conservation – www.icon.org.uk – then click on Find a Conservator/Restorer www.conservationregister.com

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Sheffield Conservation Unit specialises in the conservation and preservation of archive and library material which includes books, documents, manuscripts, maps, seals, photographs, films, and prints. These can date from 12th century to present day. All practical archive conservation is visible, reversible and sympathetic to the original item's format according to British Standard 4971.

Our facilities include: • expert staff to offer advice on how to look after your books, photographs and documents • conservators work to and maintain accreditation • archives are stored to British Standard 5454 • fully equipped conservation studio.

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