

Black Georgetown Community History Project: Family Archive Handout

Levels of Care and Best Practices

1. Do No Harm

- a. Example: Family Bible/*The Underground Railroad Records* by William Still
 - i. Start with a large, clear surface that has been washed and dried. Remove all food and drink from the area.
 - ii. Wash hands and gather supplies: gloves (if desired), plastic bags.
 - iii. Visual assessment: look for signs of wear and damage on the object.
 - iv. Smell test: give it a whiff and note the smell. Breakdowns in chemical compounds, water damage, and pests can leave an odor behind.
 - v. Open book if possible and make note of the title, author, copyright information, publication year, anything written inside, and any items left inside the book.
 - vi. Recommendations: Given the condition and the fact that there are modern copies of this book to read, the recommendation is to secure the book using archival ribbons and place it in storage. Storage should be away from light in a humidity and temperature stable room and could include upright storage on a shelf or in an acid free, archival storage box.

2. Safe Storage

- a. Example: Diplomas
 - i. Check the papers for writing, moisture damage, mildew or mold damage.
 - ii. Try to flatten the papers, only if unrolling it will not break it. When flattening find a clear, quiet space and place the paper on that surface in an acid free folder slightly larger than the paper. Put cardboard over the folder with books on top. Leave this in place until the paper is back to its normal, flat state.
 - iii. Store or display the paper using acid free products- either an acid free storage box or take it to a framer for professional quality framing with appropriate materials.

3. Remove Harmful Elements

- a. Example: Photo Albums
 - i. Make note of the order of the photos: take photographs or scan each page in order.
 - ii. Remove harmful elements: plastics, rubberbands, metal paper clips.
 - iii. Don't remove tape- it often causes more damage to remove it than to leave it in place.
 - iv. Carefully remove photos from albums or sleeves when possible- don't force photos to come out if doing so would damage them.

- v. Put the photos into new, safer storage options: acid free folders or plastic sleeves (avoid polyvinyl chloride plastics-PVC). Use plastic paper clips when keeping things together.
4. Rehousing with safe materials
- a. Example: Scrapbooks
 - i. If leaving the items in their current condition makes the situation worse, rehouse everything. Rehouse if the item has:
 - 1. Failing bindings
 - 2. Failing adhesive
 - 3. Inherent vice damage (different types of materials causing each other to chemically disintegrate ex. newspaper near photos).
 - ii. If you decide to rehouse after inspection, take apart the scrap book as safely as possible, making sure to maintain or take note of the order.
 - iii. Rehouse the items into archival storage options. Add as much information as you feel is necessary and relevant to the outside of the storage container or the back of the photo or document. Avoid adding sticker labels to the items.
 - iv. Store in an archival box, in a room with low light and stable temperature and humidity.

Archival Product Retailers

You can buy photo sleeves and archival folders from places like Staples or OfficeMax. Folders should be made of acid-free material. When buying photo or document sleeves, make sure that they are made from safe plastics such as polypropylene or polyethylene **NOT** polyvinyl chloride (PVC). Some plastics, like PVC, degrade over time, yellowing and emitting gasses (that smell like vinegar) that will harm your documents and photos.

Museum Level Preservation

Gaylord Archival: <https://www.gaylord.com/c/Archival-Storage-Boxes>

Hollinger Metal Edge: <https://www.hollingermetaledge.com/>

Archival Methods:

https://www.archivalmethods.com/?gclid=Cj0KCCQiAvbiBBhD-ARIsAGM48byU3FF4g9V05NFtOgAxOmWEJnsoSsBjd6SY5Vn6uqo3JFPNP3ffD9gaAlZYEALw_wcB

University Products: <https://www.universityproducts.com/>

*Many of these retailers offer discounts when buying in bulk.

Additional links and information:

Keep in mind the 10 agents of deterioration:

<https://postalmuseum.si.edu/collections/preservation/agents-of-deterioration.html>

National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives>

Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/preservation/about/faqs/index.html>

Northeast Document Conservation Center:

<https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preserving-private-and-family-collections/caring-for-private-and-family-collections>

DC Public Library: <https://www.dclibrary.org/>

DC History Center: <https://dchistory.org/>

Humanities DC: <https://humanitiesdc.org/>

DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities: <https://dcarts.dc.gov/>

Georgetown University, Lauinger Library Resources

Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation: Library Resources:

<https://www.library.georgetown.edu/slavery-memory-reconciliation>

Research Guide to Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation at Lauinger Library:

<https://guides.library.georgetown.edu/SMR>

Archives of the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus:

<https://findingaids.library.georgetown.edu/repositories/15/resources/10625>

Georgetown College Financial Records:

<https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/1055374/browse?type=datecreated>

Georgetown Slavery Archive:

<https://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/>

DC History Digital Projects

The Price of Georgetown:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/dd3964df6f424558af3f65748b560e81>

Escaping Slavery, Building Diverse Communities:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/98843655e3474b9ab19a2afe250f0f22>

Slide show from Mary Beth Corrigan and Keith Gorman:

<https://georgetown.box.com/s/6f8hhhemec5o42dnnc7qk0c43xf2j6h6>

If you have any questions, feel free to email the presenters.

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