

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR HANDLING ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

In addition to the Guidelines for an Area Archives, these suggestions may prove helpful to the archivist in performing his/her duties to the area. A list of archival supply resources is listed at the bottom of this page. Also contact your library.

We don't realize how damaging handling valuable old documents with our bare hands can be. Our skin gives off an acidic gas, which could badly damage photographs, slides and negatives. It is recommended that these items only be handled while wearing white cotton gloves designed for this purpose. Archival supply businesses and supply stores carry these.

1. Scotch tape is very damaging to papers and records. Try to obtain archival tape (2-way tape will work) from the sources mentioned below. When mounting something, using white (not clear) glue sticks are better. While it may not say, "acid-free", most white glue sticks are safe.
2. Metal staples may rust and therefore damage old documents; they may also tear the paper if removed carelessly. You can obtain archival-quality staples, but plastic paper clips are also suitable for this purpose. (Actually, with the advent of stainless steel staples, I use those.—mbs)
3. Different inks have acid-causing properties/chemicals in them. When writing on the folders or the back of the document or photograph, always use a pencil or archival pen.
4. Above all, use NO rubber bands to hold anything! Rubber is especially dangerous to old documents; it can melt in high temperatures, disintegrate and stick to your papers.
6. When you have something on display, a book, old letters, photographs, try to rotate the time out in the open. Light is often the worst enemy of archival materials. It is recommended that you make copies of the documents you want to show and display the copies only. This way, you can extend the life of the valuable items in your collection.

Resources: Society of American Archivists, 17 North State Street Suite 1425, Chicago, IL 60602
University Products, P. O. Box 101, Holyoke, MA 01041-0101;

Archive supply catalogs you may access on line:

- Hollinger Metal Edge <http://www.hollingermetaledge.com/>
- University Products (Holyoke, MA) <http://www.universityproducts.com/>
- Paige Company (boxes)
- Gaylord Archival (Storage and Preservation) <http://www.gaylord.com/c/Preservation> We order acid-free, lignin free corrugated manuscript boxes from Gaylord. We also purchase acid free folders. We buy acid free paper (for interleaving documents) at Staples.