

Preserving Family History Information

General Principle:

Never do anything to materials that can't be reversed. For example, do not laminate documents.

Storage

- If possible, store materials in archival quality, acid-free boxes, folders, and plastic sleeves. Plastic sleeves should be made of polyester, polyethylene, or polypropylene—never vinyl or acetate. You can find these kinds of archival-quality storage items in office supply stores.
- Store materials in dark, cool, dry areas.
- Avoid areas with sunlight or fluorescent lighting and high or fluctuating temperatures and humidity.
- Avoid areas where water may be a concern, such as near plumbing lines or water heaters.

Organizing

- Remove newspaper clippings, pressed leaves or flowers, staples, paper clips and rubber bands. All of these can damage materials.
- Newspaper clippings are acidic. Separate clippings from other items by using an acid-free plastic sheet or similar barrier.

Photocopying

- Photocopy documents, newspaper clippings, or other materials onto acid-free paper, such as bond paper.

Adhesives

- Use adhesives such as glue sticks or starch paste.
- Do not use white glues, rubber cement, or cellophane tape or other tapes on materials.

Labeling Items

- Label photographs so others will know who the people in them are.
- Use a #2 soft lead pencil, or pens that do not require pressure. Do not use ballpoint pens or similar pens that require pressure.
- Label items in an inconspicuous area, such as on the back or in the lower right margin.
- Do not write on paper that rests on top of precious books, photos, or documents. You could leave pressure marks on these materials.

Photos

- Avoid touching the image side of a photo or the emulsion (dull) side of a negative.
- Wear cotton gloves when handling photos. Dirt, dust, and oils from hands can cause damage.
- Use archival quality albums and pages.
- Do not use glue on original photos. Use photo corners to adhere photos to an acid-free page. For scrapbooks, only glue copies of original photos.
- If you plan to crop a copy of a photo, keep an uncropped copy of the original.
- Many photo shops can create a restored copy of old, damaged photos.

Digital items

- Documents or photos stored on computer hard disks, floppy disks, compact discs, and other digital media will not last more than 5 to 10 years. The programs used to read the files may become outdated. As technologies change, plan to move your information to new storage media and file formats.

Print items onto acid-free paper with a laser-printer or an inkjet printer with pigmented inks..

Remember: LOCKSS Lot of copies keeps stuff safe!