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Archival 101 & Working with Vendors



An ALCTS Webinar by:
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May 11, 2010

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What Does Archival Mean?

- ◆ Not Quantifiable.
- ◆ Can mean different things for different materials
- ◆ Storing / treating an item with the most sound appropriate material in the proper environment.
- ◆ Implies long term storage

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Types of Materials

- ◆ Manuscripts: Letters, documents...
- ◆ Photographs / Prints / Maps
- ◆ Books / Pamphlets
- ◆ Ephemera: Broadsides, announcements...
- ◆ Textiles: Quilts, clothing...
- ◆ Objects: You name it.
- ◆ Records: official records with retention period. Discarded thereafter.

Issues & Problems

- ◆ Poor environment (too hot / humid...)
- ◆ Poor storage materials
- ◆ Handling
- ◆ Disaster preparedness
- ◆ Quality of artifacts: Acidic, brittle, torn, fragile, sensitive

Solutions

- ◆ Proper storage
 - “Archival” materials appropriate for artifact.
 - ◆ Boxes, folders, binders, albums, enclosures, raw materials...
- ◆ Proper environment
 - ◆ UV filters, desiccant, hygro-thermographs to monitor
- ◆ Repair / Conservation
 - ◆ adhesives, tapes, papers, board, cloth, erasers, tools

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Acid-Free

- ◆ All paper / paper board products will be acid-free
 - Some buffered (alkaline, pH 8 - 9)
 - Some unbuffered (neutral, pH around 7)
- ◆ pH will be acid-free/alkaline at time of manufacture
 - Will become acidic over time as dust and other degradation products are absorbed from air and artifacts

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Acid-Free

- ◆ Wait! Does this mean that I need to replace all my boxes...
- ◆ No – boxes still protect artifacts from light, dust, handling
 - No feasible for just about any organization to deacidify all documents and replace boxes / folders on regular schedule
- ◆ But, replace if breaking down or real deterioration noted.

Buffered / Unbuffered

- ◆ Buffered vs. unbuffered vs. acid-free
 - Buffered preferred for most materials except some photographs and textiles.
 - Buffered materials will absorb acids from air/dust/... for a longer period of time than unbuffered. Eventually will become acidic though too.
 - Have higher pH and CaCO₃ Reserve (ca 3% reserve).
 - Acid-free means neutral pH (7.0ish) at time of manufacture. Generally has no buffering.

Lignin free

◆ Lignin free

- Lignin is part of the plants used to make paper.
- Can be removed when pulp is extracted chemically but remains in groundwood papers such as newsprint.
- Responsible for rapid aging and yellowing of newsprint.
- Lignin is not desired.

Lignin free

◆ Lignin free

- All archival paper products are lignin free.
 - ◆ Blue/grey
 - ◆ Tan
 - ◆ Corrugated
 - ◆ ...
- Tan boxes cost more than "blue/grey"
 - ◆ Unbuffered likely to be tan only

Plastics

- ◆ Plastics safe for “archival” storage.
 - Mylar: Crystal clear, rigid, inert film.
 - Polypropylene: Like Mylar but not as stiff.
 - Polyethylene: Inert, but less clear and stiff.



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Plastics

- ◆ PVC and Acetate: BAD!!! PVC will off-gas chlorine which forms hydrochloric acid and will cause serious damage. Common in cheaper sleeves / albums. Can become brittle/break.



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Newspaper



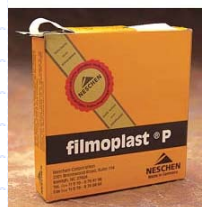
- ◆ Newspaper
 - Made from poor quality groundwood paper.
 - Very acidic.
- ◆ If in good condition deacidify and store in buffered enclosure or sleeve.
- ◆ If in poor condition, make photocopy onto acid-free paper and deacidify original before putting into sleeve if need to keep.

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Adhesives I

- ◆ Tapes / Glue sticks...
 - Objects can be difficult to remove and tape/glue can cause damage
 - Try to avoid if possible. If you have to use tape use Filmoplast. Has buffered paper carrier with acrylic based adhesive.

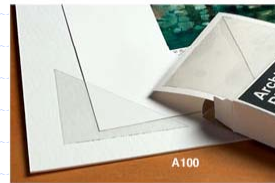


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Adhesives II

- ◆ Instead use archival photo corners or strips.
 - Inert materials won't react with photos...
 - Easy to remove, no adhesive touches materials
 - *They're not just for photos...*



PASSED
PHOTO ACTIVITY TEST

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How long do they last?

- ◆ How long will items last when put in archival materials?
 - It depends. Variables such as chemistry of artifact, temperature, humidity, condition, and usage will make a difference.
 - Most archival paper materials designed to last 500 years under optimal conditions.
 - Plastics can last almost forever.

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PAT: Photo Activity Test

- ◆ Tests the reactivity of materials with photographs.
 - Performed on paper, board, plastics...
 - Usually requested by mfg. or seller.
 - Indicates that material is safe for use with photographs, though caution is called for.
 - PAT should be indicated in catalog.
 - Most paper/board/plastics sold by archival vendors safe, though not always indicated.

Expensive?

- ◆ Why so expensive?
 - Cost of raw materials. Archival quality materials cost more to produce as “ingredients” have to be of a higher/purer grade.
 - Market forces and perception.
 - ◆ Made for a select group. This is changing as more vendors begin to make and label products as archival. Costs will go down, as “archival” becomes a commodity.

“Undifferentiated” Product

- ◆ Archival supplies have become commodity items.
 - Products come from the same range of suppliers.
 - Composed of same raw stock and made with same equipment.
 - All geared towards same standards.
 - Quality relatively uniform, though some vendors better at some things than others.

Differences

- ◆ May be some visual/tactile differences between boards. DO NOT affect performance.
- ◆ COST
 - shop around.
 - request catalogs from others.

Vendor Provided Guides

◆ Vendor Information:

- Gaylord
 - ◆ [Tips and guides](#)
- University Products
 - ◆ [Resources](#)
- Hollinger – Metal Edge
 - ◆ [Guide to products](#)
- Creative Memories (Scrapbooking)
 - ◆ [Tips and techniques](#)

Be Flexible & Creative

- ◆ Materials can often be adapted for different purposes.
 - Use slide/photo pages for ephemera like buttons.
 - Put clippings in photo pages rather than adhering to album pages (back with acid-free paper).
 - Look at North American Permanent Papers. The copier/printer paper you're using may already be permanent. (Abbey pH pen helps).
 - ◆ <http://cool.conservation-us.org/byorg/abbey/napp/>
From 1998...

Be Flexible & Creative

- ◆ Glue-in binders problematic.
 - Hard edge of cloth can cause problems with brittle or valuable materials. Solution: Fold piece of good paper around pamphlet, sew, then glue in.
- ◆ Make own envelope binders by sticking archival envelope into glue-in binder.
- ◆ Make own “envelope sling.”
 - Fold piece of paper around brittle material, then insert.

Buying Tips I

- ◆ Compare pricing!
 - Pay attention to quantity price breaks.
 - Sales flyers. Most archival vendors now offer promotions.
 - Request bid pricing rather than ordering straight from catalog.
 - ◆ Requires larger quantities.
 - ◆ Combine orders with other organizations / bulk buying.
 - ◆ Check with purchasing on contract/bid pricing.

Buying Tips II

- ◆ If you have questions about:
 - Specific product: ask customer service.
 - Pricing : customer service / bid department / your sales rep.
 - Usage / specifications...
 - ◆ Regional preservation colleagues
 - ◆ NEDCC, CCAHA, Lyrasis...

Buying Tips III

- ◆ Read the catalog.
 - Catalogs have “tech tips” in relevant sections.
 - ◆ Show how to use.
 - ◆ Indicate for what types of materials suitable.
 - ◆ Most by preservation professionals.
 - Most product specifications indicated next to product.

Custom Orders I

- ◆ Most vendors happy to make custom sizes
 - Binders / folders / enclosures.
 - Boxes more complex.
 - ◆ require dies or now box cutting machines.
 - ◆ Can be worth it for large quantities.
 - ◆ Ensure "perfect" fit.



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Custom Orders II

- Many items in the catalogs are made to order due to low sales volumes.
 - ◆ If you need a special size, ask for it. There may be minimums, but new tools make it "easy."
 - ◆ If it's made with one board, can be made with others.
 - ◆ Metal-edged designs ok as well as some ship-flat.
 - ◆ Corrugated cheaper than blue/gray, than tan...

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Learning More

- ◆ A wealth of information is to be found on the Internet:
 - Conservation OnLine
 - ◆ <http://cool.conservation-us.org>
 - ◆ Northeast Document Conservation Center
 - ◆ <http://www.nedcc.org>
 - Conservation & Preservation at Syracuse
 - ◆ <http://researchguides.library.syr.edu/preservation>

Thank you

- ◆ Thank you for attending this webinar and please consider registering for others in the ALCTS series.
- ◆ I will work to answer as many of the questions as I can and post them online. An email will be sent to all those who registered announcing this.

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