

CARING FOR YOUR FAMILY RECORDS

HAWKESBURY LIBRARY SERVICE - LOCAL STUDIES FACT SHEET

Caring for your family records

Many of us are custodians of our family records, looking after photos, documents, maps and books for generations to come. Preventative measures will help you prolong the life of your materials. Disasters such as bushfires and floods may also damage items in your collection. We have put together some hints to help you preserve and prolong the life of your family mementoes.

Storage

- When storing your family history, think cool, dry and dark. High temperatures and light speed up the decaying process. Humidity over 70% encourages the growth of mould. Avoid basements or roof spaces where the temperature fluctuates. Choose a space near the centre of your home.
- Do not store material directly on the floor in case of flood. Use metal open shelving if possible.
- Dust your storage area periodically and ventilate.
- Keep free of clutter and food.
- Inspect regularly for pests and mould activity.
- Read fact sheets and watch online videos to learn more about storage issues and prevention Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM) fact sheets at <https://www.aiccm.org.au/>



Packaging

- Photographs should be housed in enclosures that have passed the Photographic Activity Test (PAT). Plastic pocket pages have the advantage of not needing an adhesive and plain paper albums are suitable utilizing photo corners. A list of materials that are PAT tested can be found at on the National Archives of Australia website at www.naa.gov.au/records-management/faq/pat.aspx.
- Materials such as polypropylene, polyethylene and polyester film (Mylar®) are considered stable and will not damage photographs. A list of suppliers can be found under **More Information** overleaf.
- Stay away from self adhesive "Magnetic" albums. If you have photographs in these albums, carefully remove as soon as possible, if any difficulties see fact sheets for more information.
- Avoid PVC plastic sleeves, folders or albums as they give off damaging vapours.
- Newspapers can be wrapped in acid free paper and kept in a box. Scan or photograph articles to ensure their preservation.
- Large maps and documents should be stored flat in PAT approved folders.
- Valuable books and books needing repair can be stored in archival boxes, use acid free paper to wrap these items. Shelf books upright so they are supported and have air circulating around them.
- Documents can be packaged in sleeves and folders that have been PAT tested, this also makes them useful for display and handling.

Handling and use

- Make sure your hands are clean, dry and free from moisture and oils especially when handling photographs. It is best to wear cotton gloves or latex disposable gloves, either can be purchased from the supermarket.
- Support items at all times, taking care with the weak areas such as the spines of books and the joins in objects. If records are fragile make sure they are well supported on a table or stiff cardboard.
- Moving large and or heavy objects should be planned with care.

Common mistakes

- Never use sticky tape. The adhesive on sticky tape will cause tacky yellow stains.
- Do not use metal staples and paper clips as these can rust and stain paper.
- Do not laminate the heat and adhesive will cause deterioration.
- Do not use adhesive "Magnetic" albums. The adhesive will cause deterioration. If you have photographs in these types of albums, carefully remove immediately.

Safe storage of digital images

- Copy images to new media every couple of years.
- Produce multiple copies that can be distributed among family members.
- Produce multiple backups of all records, including images onto different types of media e.g. USBs, portable hard drives or online cloud storage. Keep a copy offsite at work and among family members.
- Ensure any copies, photographs or scans of your precious material is done at the best standards.
- Scan photographs at a minimum resolution of 300 DPI, we recommend 600 DPI and save in TIFF format. This will create large files, but is worth it if your originals are lost or destroyed. Think of these as your master files. Save images on a hard drive and ensure multiple copies are distributed amongst family. You can create low-res copies in JPEG or PDF, to use in your everyday research.

Display

To display archival records and photographs it is better to copy them and display the copies. Light and moisture will cause damage. If originals must be displayed choose the location carefully e.g. away from light and moisture, not above a fireplace where there is heat and soot, and have them mounted and framed by a reliable conservator.

Disasters

These days we need to be aware of any impending disasters. It may be a leaking water pipe at home or the repercussions of a wild storm or a weather incident. A number of residents in the Hawkesbury live in high bushfire risk areas or on the floodplain. It is not always possible to take your precious material with you when there is an impending disaster.

The State Library of QLD have some excellent videos and fact sheets on how to recover damaged materials see <https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/how-do-i/preserve-my-collection/salvaging-damaged-collections> Check the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM) helpful fact sheets at www.aiccm.org.au Also read the section on **Safe storage of digital images** above, and make sure you make copies using the best practices and produce multiple copies and distribute.

Handy hints



Create copies of your precious photographs and unique material through some form of reproduction (such as scanning or re-photographing) Make copies of these available off site with family and friends. Store originals carefully and use copies, not originals, when doing research.

Do not undertake restoration work yourself, always seek professional advice.

More information

State Library of NSW Fact sheets on caring for photographs, paper-based materials, mould and wet books www.sl.nsw.gov.au/about/collections/preservation

Collection Preservation Branch, State Library of NSW list of suppliers www.sl.nsw.gov.au/about/collections/preservation/suppliers.html

National Archives of Australia www.naa.gov.au

National Library of Australia Preservation guides www.nla.gov.au/pres/conver/

Aust Institute for Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM) Fact sheets & professional help www.aiccm.org.au

State Library of Victoria Conservation guides www.slv.vic.gov.au/explore/conservation-guides

Australian War Memorial fact sheets on various topics including medals, textiles, paintings and dealing with damaged materials www.awm.gov.au/collection/conservation/

Preservation of family history collections www.archives.qld.gov.au/government/faq.asp

Research related to permanence of colour photographs and digital prints www.wilhelm-research.com/

Other related websites www.sl.nsw.gov.au/about/collections/preservation/preservation_websites.html

Cyndi's List of Genealogy sites on the internet various preservation & conservation sites www.cyndislist.com/preservation.htm

Prepared by Hawkesbury Library staff from notes by C. Robinson from Preserving your Family History course run by the State Library of NSW and presentation by M. Nichols, entitled Caring for your Family Records & updated 28/4/2020

Contact Information

ADDRESS

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Hawkesbury Central Library
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WINDSOR NSW 2756

HOURS

Monday to Friday 9am - 7pm
Saturday 9am - 1pm
Sunday 2pm - 5pm
Closed Public Holidays

LOCAL HISTORY CONTACTS

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history@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au
<http://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/library>
<http://www.facebook.com/HawkesburyLibrary>

Access the catalogue <https://aurora.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/library/>