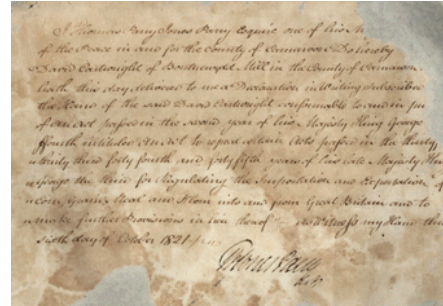


Conserving Your Documents

The main reason for documents and photographs deteriorating is the poor quality of paper used. Most inexpensive papers contain acid which will eventually lead to the paper becoming discoloured and brittle. Documents and photographs are often damaged by the same factors: these include changes in heat and humidity, and the effect of light on the item. Both documents and photographs should be stored in acid-free containers, and should not be kept in the attic or the cellar, where the temperature and humidity will fluctuate.



It is better to do nothing than to repair a document yourself, unless you are trained to do so. We include a few suggestions on how to prolong the life of your documents and photographs.

Documents:

- Documents should be kept flat, not folded, where this is possible. Do not forcibly straighten documents, doing so can weaken the paper.
- Photocopy a newspaper cutting on to acid-free paper. They should then be stored in an acid-free container.
- Store documents away from sunlight or fluorescent light. Visible light damages all documents. Ultra-violet light will destroy documents. One early effect of damage from light is ink which has faded, and eventually disappears. If a document, such as a certificate, must be displayed place it in a frame protected by ultra-violet filtering glass.
- If you copy some documents on to high quality, acid-free paper, do not store them next to sheets of lower quality paper: separate the documents with a sheet of acid-free paper.
- Do ensure hands are clean before handling documents. If documents are very important, handle them with gloves.
- Do not use rubber bands, they will harden and leave a deposit on the paper.
- Do not use metal paper clips or other metal items to bind documents together. They will rust, damaging the document.
- Do not use adhesive tape to repair documents. This is highly acidic. Most adhesive tape will be effective for up to ten years, and will leave an area of the the paper sticky and discoloured.
- Do not laminate a document. This does not prolong the life of the document. It is virtually impossible to remove the sticky plastic. An alternative to lamination is to use encapsulation, where a document is placed between two sheets of polyester film. These sheets are bonded at the edges.

Photographs:

- Protect photographs from bright light. If a photograph is to be displayed, use ultra-violet filtering glass.
- Hold photographs by the edges, or wear gloves, available from camera stores, while holding them.
- Keep negatives and photographs in acid-free envelopes.
- Avoid using "magnetic" photo albums, these are very acidic.