

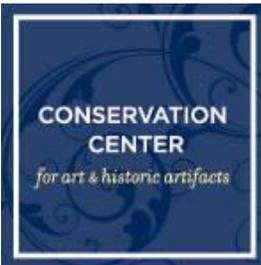
CCAHA specializes in the treatment of art and historic artifacts on paper and provides preservation education, training, and consultation. Established in 1977, CCAHA is the largest nonprofit conservation lab in the country.

Storing Your Photographic Collection: A Guide to Choosing the Proper Materials for Long-term Storage

The first step in preserving a photographic collection is to re-house the collection material in storage folders and boxes that meet the proper storage criteria. Placing photographic materials in direct contact with good quality materials limits the amount of acids and other pollutants that will damage your photographs over time. When purchasing supplies, the most important factor is to **ONLY** buy materials that have passed the Photographic Activities Test (PAT), which ensures the storage materials do NOT react with the silver in the photographic image. If housing supplies are constructed of paper or paperboard, make sure they are lignin-free and either buffered or non-buffered. In the case of plastic materials, use only the following types of plastic: polyethylene, polypropylene, and polyester. Again, make sure these materials have passed the PAT test!

The following are examples of **GOOD** materials to purchase and use:

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|------------|--|---|--|--|
| ENCLOSURES | <u>Paper envelope</u> Balanced seam, no thumb cut preferred | For film and prints |  | |
| | <u>Paper 4-flap enclosure</u> | For glass negatives and other photos on glass |  | |
| | <u>Plastic enclosures</u> "L" sleeve and other designs | For prints |  | |
| | <u>Folder with interleaving</u> | For prints, especially over-size or panoramic |  | |
| | <u>Plastic pocket page</u> | For prints or new film (polyester ONLY) |  | |



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Storage boxes should also be constructed of good quality materials. Boxes for photographic materials come in standard sizes according to the format of the photographic material. As a general rule, vertical boxes provide easier access to materials than horizontal boxes. Make sure to pad out any extra space in a box with good quality rigid support materials, like alkaline blue board or mat board; excess space should be filled to provide a solid support for the photographic materials. Placing rigid materials every few inches within the box will also provide a solid support to your floppy photographic prints, minimizing their ability to curl.

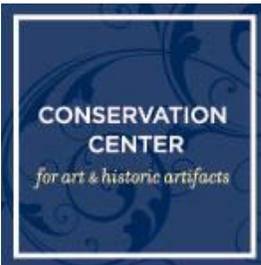
| | | | |
|-------------------|--|--|---|
| CONTAINERS | <u>Flip-top box</u> | Vertical storage for all negatives and smaller prints |  |
| | <u>Telescoping box</u> | Vertical storage for all negatives, smaller prints, mounted prints, slides |  |
| | <u>Drop-side box</u> | Horizontal storage for all prints and negatives in enclosures and folders |  |
| | <u>Museum case or Solander box</u> *boxes made prior to the late 2000's did not pass the PAT test | Horizontal storage for matted prints |  |



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Support boards and interleaving tissues should be made of good quality materials and pass the PAT test. To avoid abrasions and to prevent photographic emulsions from sticking to each other when humidity fluctuates, place a sheet of interleaving tissue between each photograph when stacking. Always stack photographs with the emulsion facing in the same direction, never face to face. In addition to providing rigid support within storage boxes, good quality boards can be used to make custom storage folders for oversized photographic materials, such as panoramas.

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| PAPERS & BOARDS | <u>Matboard</u> | For mats, box dividers, custom housings, etc. |  |
| | <u>Alkaline corrugated blue board</u> | For folders, box dividers, custom housings, etc. |  <div style="position: absolute; top: 5px; right: 5px;">double wall</div> <div style="position: absolute; top: 50px; right: 5px;">single wall</div> |
| | <u>Interleaving paper</u> e.g. Microchamber, Phototex, Renaissance | In folders and original albums |  |



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Photographic albums with magnetic pages contain poor quality plastic overlays and acidic paper board supports with adhesive materials that will degrade photographic materials overtime. It is recommended to replace those styles of photographic albums with those that contain good quality materials.

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| ALBUMS | <u>3-ring binder</u> | For plastic pocket pages or album pages |  |
| | <u>Album</u> | For prints For paper pages with coversheets or plastic pocket pages Secure objects onto pages with photocorners |  |

Labeling your photographic materials should be done with care. As a rule of thumb, mark the photograph using a graphite pencil with as little pressure as possible on the back side (verso) only, preferably in the margin. Labeling your storage enclosure and container is also recommended.

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| MARKING HOUSINGS | <u>Soft pencil</u> 4B or 6B | For paper and paperboard |  |
| | <u>Sharpie permanent black marker</u> | For plastic enclosures only |  |
| MARKING PHOTOGRAPHS | <u>Soft pencil</u> 4B or 6B | For paper supports and mounts |  |
| | <u>Solid graphite pencil</u> 4B or 6B | For resin-coated supports |  |



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There are many reputable supply companies that manufacture and sell the proper storage materials recommended for photographic collections. These companies also sell many other products that are good quality and useful for other types of archival and art materials, but those materials might not be suitable to use for your photographic materials. Remember again the rule that materials for storing photographic collections must pass the PAT.

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| SUPPLIERS | Archivart | www.archivart.com |
| | Conservation Resources | www.conservationresources.com |
| | Gaylord | www.gaylord.com |
| | Hollinger- Metal Edge | www.hollingermetaledge.com |
| | Talas | www.talasonline.com |
| | University Products | www.universityproducts.com |

What **NOT** to use with your photographic materials and why.

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| LABELING AND ATTACHMENTS | <u>Material</u> | <u>Examples</u> | <u>Problems with photographs</u> |
| | <u>Blue pencil</u> |  | Use only soft graphite pencils on the back of photographs. Other writing media can fade, rub off, or bleed during a disaster resulting in staining of the photograph and a loss of information. |
| | <u>Pressure-sensitive labels</u> |  | The pressure-sensitive adhesive on the label will damage photographs, become harder to remove, and/or fail over time so that the informational content is lost. A foil backing will not address these problems. |
| | <u>Paperclips or staples</u> |  | Do not use any paper clips or staples, even rust-proof ones. Over time, they will create permanent dents in the photograph. Clips containing iron will rust in high humidity creating stains and weakened areas. |
| | <u>Self-adhesive notes</u> |  | Do not use any brand, even temporarily. Like other pressure-sensitive adhesives, the adhesive on the Post-it will cause staining and deterioration in the photograph as it ages, and become difficult to remove. |
| <u>Rubber bands</u> |  | Rubber bands contain sulfur and other compounds that will discolor photographs. They decay over time and fall apart so that they no longer function. | |

BOARDS AND PAPERS

| | <i>Material</i> | <i>Examples</i> | <i>Problems with photographs</i> |
|--|--|---|---|
| | <u>Foamcore or foamboard</u> |  | |
| | <u>Colored mat boards and papers</u> |  | Poor quality and acidic materials will potentially cause chemical deterioration of the photograph leading to fading, staining, embrittlement. Weak and poorly constructed housing materials will endanger the physical integrity of the photograph. They should not be used for boxes, dividers, mats, framing, etc. |
| | <u>Brown corrugated board</u> |  | |
| | <u>Acidic cores</u> |  | |
| | <u>Glassine Interleaving or enclosures</u> |  | ISO 18902:2007 does not permit the use of glassine with photographs. This paper will cause deterioration photographic images and stick irreversibly to gelatin in very high humidity. |

| | Material | Examples | Problems with photographs |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| ADHESIVES AND MOUNTING | <u>Tapes</u> |  | Pressure-sensitive tapes will damage photographs, become harder to remove, and/or fail over time. |
| | <u>Adhesives</u> |  | Many adhesives will damage photographs, become harder to remove and/or fail over time. |
| | <u>"Magnetic" albums</u> |  | Photographs adhere to pages over time and become stained by the rubber-based adhesive that creates the sticky page. |
| CLEANING PRODUCTS | Photo cleaning spray and wipes |  | May dissolve or otherwise damage photographs including removing surface coatings. Do not attempt to clean photos without the advice and supervision of a conservator. |
| | Rubber sponges |  | Contain sulfur-based materials that will degrade the silver in a photographic image. |

Compiled, written, and revised by CCAHA photograph conservators Barbara Lemmen, Jessica Keister, and Rachel Wetzel for CCAHA.