

Collections Care

Paper

Paper, by definition, is made with macerated, cellulose fibers that are pressed and dried. The oldest, extant fragment of paper dates to around the 2nd century B.C.E. and was found in the Gansu province of China. Up until the Industrial Revolution, it was generally made from worn-out textiles, such as hemp, cotton, and linen, and was quite expensive. Technological advances, however, made paper abundant and inexpensive, which drove up demand. To meet this demand, wood pulp fibers were added and eventually became the dominant paper-making material. Because paper is a lightweight, natural material that receives a lot of handling, works on paper can be very susceptible to deterioration mechanisms, including physical damage, light exposure, moisture, and general soiling. As with any museum or personal collection, appropriate handling techniques and storage are the first line of defense in their preservation. General tips include handling works on paper using powder-free nitrile gloves; using rigid, archival-quality supports and storage materials; storing paper unfolded; using a soft artists' brush to gently remove dust; and good housekeeping in storage and exhibition areas. Further tips, including those for books, scrapbooks, and photographs are below. See also "Caring for Your Collection: Two-Dimensional Art" for further resources.

General Care

- American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC):
 - ["Caring for Your Treasures – Paper"](#)
 - ["Caring for Your Treasures – Matting and Framing Works of Art and Artifacts on Paper"](#)
- Connecting to Collections Care:
 - ["Care of Paper, Photographs, and Audiovisual Collections" Webinar](#) (Presenter: Kristen Laise, formerly of Heritage Preservation)
 - ["Oversize, Overwhelmed? Caring for Maps and Architectural Drawings in Your Collection" Webinar](#) (Presenter: Robin Carlson, David Erickson, and Katie Mullen of the Wisconsin Historical Society)
- Henry Ford Museum: ["Documents and Works of Art on Paper"](#) (by Mary M. Fahey, Chief Conservator)
- National Park Service: [Museum Handbook: Appendix J, "Curatorial Care of Paper Objects"](#)
- Northeast Document Conservation Center:
 - [Preservation Leaflets](#)
 - ["Storage Methods and Handling Practices"](#) (*Preservation Leaflets* series)

Books and Scrapbooks

- American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC): ["Caring for Your Treasures – Books"](#)
- Connecting to Collections Care: ["Care of Books and Scrapbooks" Webinar](#) (Presenter: Rebecca Elder of Rebecca Elder Cultural Heritage Preservation, Austin, TX)

- Connecting to Collections Care: "[Caring for Books](#)" Webinar (Presenter: Donia Conn of Simmons College)
- Northeast Document Conservation Center: "[Cleaning Books and Shelves](#)" (*Preservation Leaflets* series)

Photographs

See also "Collections Care: Audiovisual and Photographic Materials" for information on film

- American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC): "[Caring for Your Treasures – Photographs](#)"
- Connecting to Collections Care: "[Caring for Photographs](#)" Webinar Series (Presenter: Debra Hess Norris of the University of Delaware)
- Cornell University Library, Department of Preservation and Conservation: [Preserving Your Family Photographs](#)
- National Park Service: [Museum Handbook: Appendix R, "Curatorial Care of Photographic Collections"](#)
- Northeast Document Conservation Center: "[Care of Photographs](#)" (*Preservation Leaflets* series)