

Damage Glossary



Created by
The Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts
in partnership with
Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia



Condition

Physical state of an object or item at a particular time.

This glossary defines terms that are useful in describing the condition of collections. It is valuable to describe condition because that information can be used to track change over time and prioritize future collection care goals.

It is important to regularly update this information, to provide an up- to-date record of any changes to the item. This information allows you to anticipate which items are likely to require conservation treatment, and informs whether an item is at risk of damage during display or travel based on its condition.

It is important to document condition (overall state of being) and damage (an injury to an object or unwanted change in its condition). Documentation can be written or photographic in nature, but should be labeled and stored in an accessible way.

Deterioration

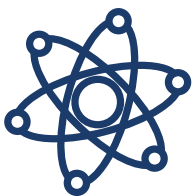
(also Degradation, Damage)

Damage caused to an item by physical, chemical or biological means.



Biological

Deterioration caused by biological factors such as mold, insects, rodents, etc.



Chemical

Deterioration resulting from reaction between primary support and/or media and other chemical species such as atmospheric pollutants, residues from manufacture and poor quality materials. **Inherent vice** is the tendency in physical objects to deteriorate because of the fundamental instability of the components of which they are made, as opposed to deterioration caused by external forces.



Physical

Deterioration caused by physical factors such as wear and tear, use, handling, movement, etc.



Damage Glossary

Abrasion

A gradual loss of surface material due to rubbing, scraping, or wear. An abrasion may look like a roughened surface, a matte area, or a group of scratches.



The Fine Arts Conservancy. <http://www.art-conservation.org/>

Accretion

Foreign material attached to the paper support. In general, an accretion is superficial and rests on top of the substrate rather than being embedded. An accretion may cause staining or planar deformation in the support. Examples include mold growth, food, or fecal matter of insects or rodents.



Islamic Manuscript Conservation. www.islamicmanuscriptconservation.org/

Acid Migration

The transfer of acid from an acidic material to a less acidic, neutral, or alkaline material. This may occur when two materials are in direct contact or indirectly by vapor transfer. It can cause staining, weakening and embrittlement.



© S. Michalski



Agents of Deterioration

The 10 primary threats to heritage objects. Detect, block, report, and treat the damage they cause.

Physical Forces

Thieves and Vandals

Fire

Water

Pests

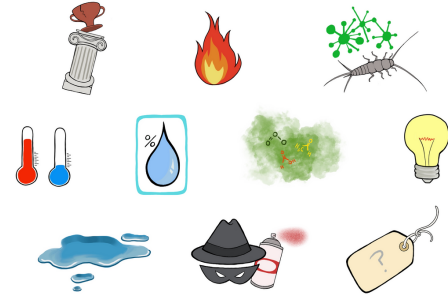
Pollutants

Light

Incorrect Temperature

Incorrect Relative Humidity

Dissociation



Melissa King.

Backing

(Secondary/Auxiliary Support)

Material(s) adhered to the back of the primary support, the sheet or surface which bears the image or text directly. Attachment may be partial or overall. Backings may or may not be original to the support.



CCAHA Instagram @conservationcenter

Bleeding

The loss or spreading of color or media when it comes in contact with water or other solutions, mold growth, food, or fecal matter of insects or rodents.



Writing Text with Bleeding Ink
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Flev1Wshl3A>

Burn

Darkening, scorching, embrittlement or destruction caused by heat, fire, or certain chemical reactions.



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Cleavage ↑

Separation or splitting between layers of media, for example, cleavage of paint from a canvas or paper.



The Fine Arts Conservancy. <http://www.art-conservation.org/>

Cockling ↑

Deformation of a planar or flat support, generally paper, characterized by multiple alternate concave and convex distortions or ripples, often in parallel ridges. Can also refer to warping and twisting in several directions, for example, the covers of a book.



The Fine Arts Conservancy. <http://www.art-conservation.org/>

Corrosion ⚗

Corrosion is a process of wearing away or destruction of metals by a chemical agent or process. Any metal object that has scales, blisters or dustiness can be considered to be in a state of **active corrosion** (also, rust). **Tarnish** is also corrosion. Some objects may have an inactive or stable oxidation layer that can have aesthetic effects (also, **patina**).

Active Corrosion



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Patina



Centre de conservation Québec. www.ccg.gouv.qc.ca

Tarnish



Material Working Group Image Gallery of Damages

Corrosion Staining



Centre de conservation Québec. www.ccg.gouv.qc.ca



Crack ↑

A break or split in material without a complete separation of parts. Generally, the term is used to describe breaks in solid material such as stone, ceramic and wood but there may also be cracks in paint or other media



Material Working Group Image Gallery of Damages

Crease ↑

A line, mark or ridge of paper or textiles caused by folding or crushing.



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Darkening ⚛

A shift in color which is darker than the original appearance. May occur because of contact with poor quality materials and/or exposure to adverse environmental conditions. The appearance of darkening may be partial or overall.



Centre de conservation Québec. www.ccg.gouv.qc.ca

Delamination ↑

The separation of layers in an object or material composed of multiple layers, seen frequently in cardboard, often due to exposure to moisture.



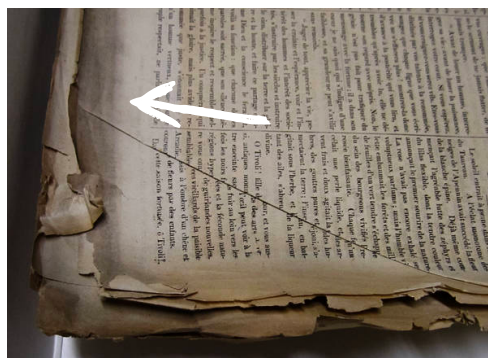
© Government of Canada, Canadian Conservation Institute.





Dirt / Grime

Any undesirable foreign matter which has accumulated on the surface. May be embedded or superficial. Grime is dirt of a greasy nature. (Also dust, soiling, accretion).



Centre de conservation Québec. www.ccg.gouv.qc.ca

Discoloration / Fading

The change in the original color of a material. Discoloration may be due to exposure of the object to moisture, chemicals, light, or the effect of age.



Centre de conservation Québec. www.ccg.gouv.qc.ca

Embrittlement

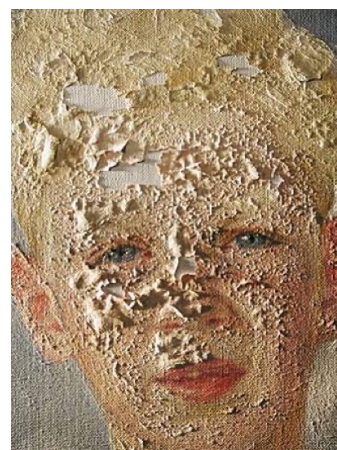
The condition of an object in which it has lost flexibility and become susceptible to cracking, crumbling, or breaking.



Ullman Library Preservation and Book Repair.

Flaking

The separation of small, thin pieces of material or coating from its substrate. Frequently seen in paint layers.



The Fine Arts Conservancy. <http://www.art-conservation.org/>



Fold ↑

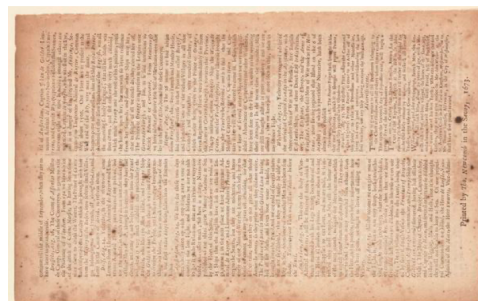
In which one part of the paper support is laid over onto itself. Creasing may or may not accompany a fold. (Also a folded corner may be referred to as a "dog ear").



Centre de conservation Québec. www.ccg.gouv.qc.ca

Foxing 🐛 ⚗️

Discoloration on paper, generally in the form of random rust-colored spots. Believed to be caused by one or more of the following: fungus or mold, impurities in manufacture, high humidity or dampness, airborne acids. Foxing tends to be aesthetically unappealing but not damaging. The removal of foxing is not generally recommended in library preservation since methods of removing foxing almost always will cause further damage to the object.



AIC Wiki, BPG Glossary of Terms

Fraying ↑

Unravel or become worn at the edge (usually a fabric, rope or cord).



<http://www.museumtextiles.com/blog/from-pearl-harbor-to-new-england>

Friable ↑

A term used to describe media that is powdery, loosely adhered to the support, and easily disturbed. (Also powdering).



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Inherent Vice

Inherent vice is the tendency in physical objects to deteriorate because of the fundamental instability of the components of which they are made, as opposed to deterioration caused by external forces. All objects have some kind of inherent vice as a result of the baseline law of entropy, or the gradual decline of matter into disorder. For example, cellulose nitrate film is, itself, an unstable polymer. While careful preparation of cellulose nitrate can reduce the rate of decay, there is currently no effective means of completely stopping the deterioration process.



Insect/Pest Damage

Physical damage to support and/or media as a result of destructive contact with insects. Damage may appear as surface thinning, losses, or as accretions, such as flyspecks.



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Losses

Missing area in one or more layers of an object.



The Fine Arts Conservancy. <http://www.art-conservation.org/>

Mat Burn

The transfer of an acid from a more acidic material to a less acidic material with which it is in contact. Often the result of a window mat made from acidic material.



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Mold

A surface growth of fungus which may have varying color, shape, and configuration. It generally proliferates in damp conditions (60% relative humidity or greater) where there is little air circulation. Active mold smears when touched whereas inactive mold is powdery and dry. Damage caused by mold includes staining and loss of strength.



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Planar Distortion

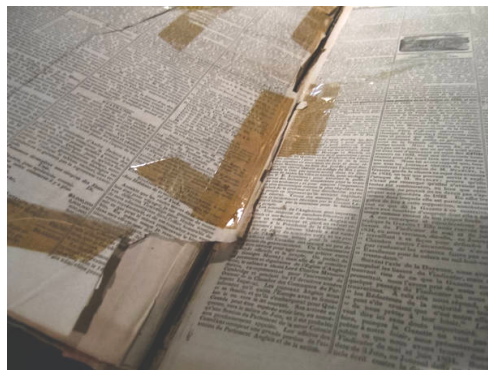
Planar deformation consisting of soft, gradual distortions which are convex and concave in appearance. This damage becomes more visible in raking light due to cast shadows. (Also warping, cockling, wrinkling, undulation).



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Pressure Sensitive Tape

Tape that is sticky at room temperature and may be attached to a surface using slight application of pressure. Examples include scotch tape, masking tape, and duct tape. It is always undesirable to attach to a work of art on paper or historical document because it can leave residues and cause staining that is nearly impossible to remove completely.



Centre de conservation Québec. www.ccg.gouv.qc.ca

Puncture

Hole created by impact.



The Fine Arts Conservancy. <http://www.art-conservation.org/>



Red Rot

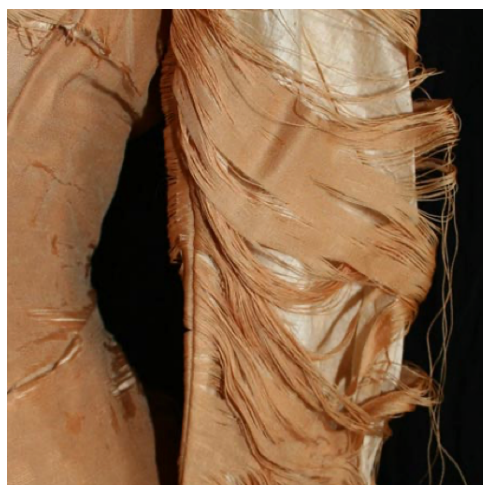
The process of leather deterioration characterized by orange or reddish powder. Red rot is most commonly found on vegetable-tanned leathers from the later 1800s and early 1900s. As a result of the tanning process, the leather is naturally acidic. Prolonged storage in or exposure to high relative humidity, environmental pollution, and high temperature affects the fibrous structure of the leather leading to the hardening and embrittling of leather and eventual disintegration into red powder that can present a risk to surrounding collections.



Center for Jewish History Wiki

Shattering

Broken into many small pieces. In regard to textiles, usually silk, the term refers to loss of fiber strength resulting in linear breaks. This damage is often seen in relation to the chemical instability inherent to some silks based on metallic inclusions during manufacture.



<https://www.vintagevixen.com/pages/what-is-shattered-silk>

Silver Mirroring

Silver mirroring is a natural chemical process that affects photographic materials containing silver over time. It results in a metallic sheen over the surface of the photograph, typically affecting the darker areas of a photograph most.



AIC Wiki



Skinning ↑

A form of physical damage in which the surface of the paper in an area appears to have lifted in a continuous thin surface flap. This can occur as the result of tape or backing removal.



<https://www.scrapbook.com/articles/paper-restoration>

Stain

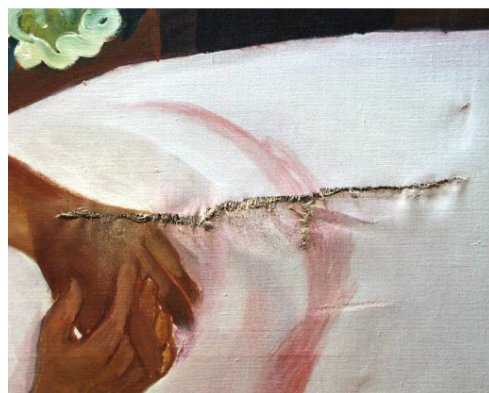
Soiling or discoloration of an object that cannot be easily removed because it is embedded in the substrate. Stains may be the result of uneven aging, foreign substances, chemical reactions, and improper handling. Tape stains are caused by oxidized adhesive residues.



The Fine Arts Conservancy. <http://www.art-conservation.org/>

Tear ↑

Physical damage which results in a linear or branched separation of the support into partially or completely separate pieces. The resulting edges along the separation have a soft fibrous "feathered" edge.

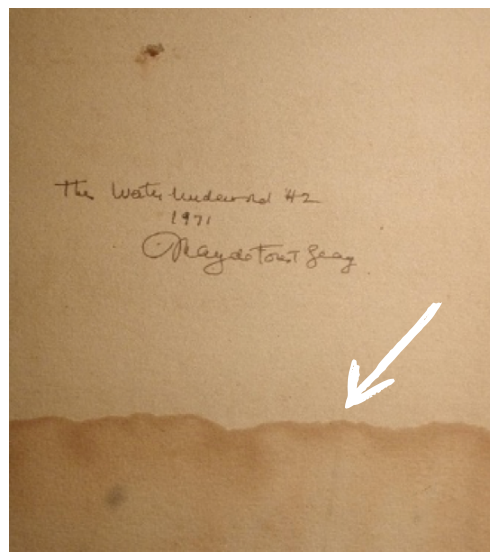


The Fine Arts Conservancy. <http://www.art-conservation.org/>



Tideline

A stain which occurs when a liquid dries, depositing dissolved material at its perimeter. A tideline is characterized by a discrete edge which is often darker than the remainder of the associated stain.



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Yellowing

Alteration of a material that takes on a yellowish tint.



Centre de conservation Québec. www.ccq.gouv.qc.ca

Resources

American Institute for Conservation. "BPG Glossary of Terms - Wiki." https://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/BPG_Glossary_of_Terms.

Canadian Conservation Institute. 2018. "Caring for Paper Objects - Preventive Conservation Guidelines for Collections." <https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/preventive-conservation/guidelines-collections/paper-objects.html>.

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ICON. "Conservation Glossary." <https://www.icon.org.uk/resources/caring-for-your-collection/conservation-glossary.html>.

National Library of Australia. "Library Preservation Glossary." <https://www.nla.gov.au/chg/useful-resources/library-preservation-glossary>.