

Preservation Glossary



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



Chapter 1

Damage Glossary

Terms that may be helpful in understanding and describing damages or condition.



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

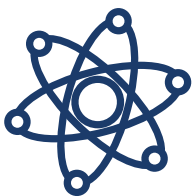
(also Degradation, Damage)

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

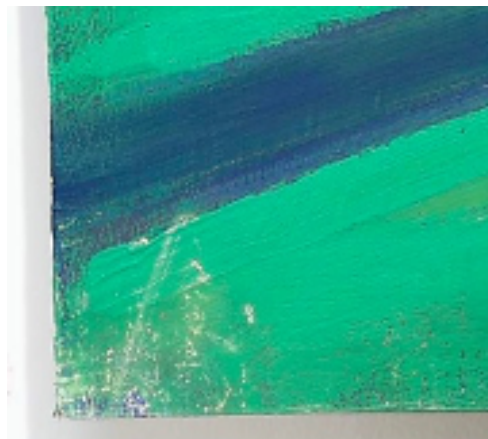
Deterioration caused by physical factors such as wear and tear, use, handling, movement, etc.



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.



© Government of Canada, Canadian Conservation Institute.



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.ccq.gouv.qc.ca

Tarnish



Material Working Group Image Gallery of Damages

Corrosion Staining



Centre de conservation Québec. www.ccq.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.



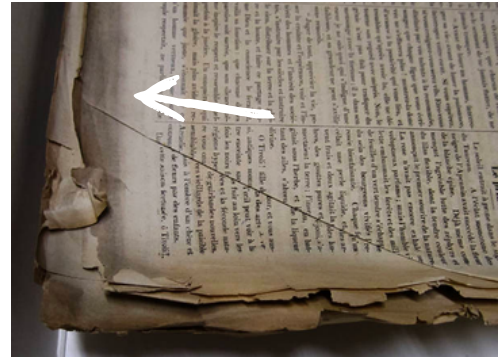
© Government of Canada, Canadian Conservation Institute.





Dirt / Grime

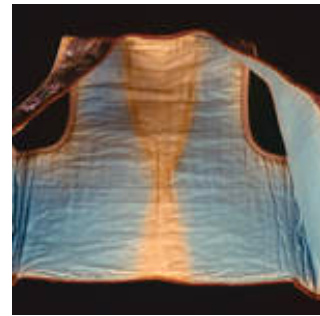
Any undesirable foreign matter which has accumulated on the surface. May be embedded or superficial. Grime is dirt of a greasy nature. (Also dust, soiling, accretion).



Centre de conservation Québec. www.ccgouv.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.ccgouv.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.ccgouv.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).



© Government of Canada, Canadian Conservation Institute.



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.



© Government of Canada, Canadian Conservation Institute.



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).



© Government of Canada, Canadian Conservation Institute.

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.ccgouv.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 🐞 ⚗️

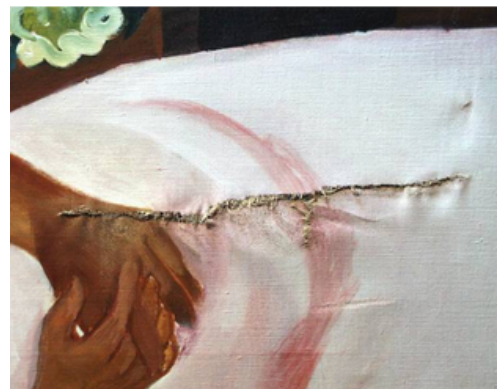
Soiling or discoloration of an object that cannot be easily removed because it is embedded in the substrate. Stains may be the result of uneven aging, foreign substances, chemical reactions, and improper handling. Tape stains are caused by oxidized adhesive residues.



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.

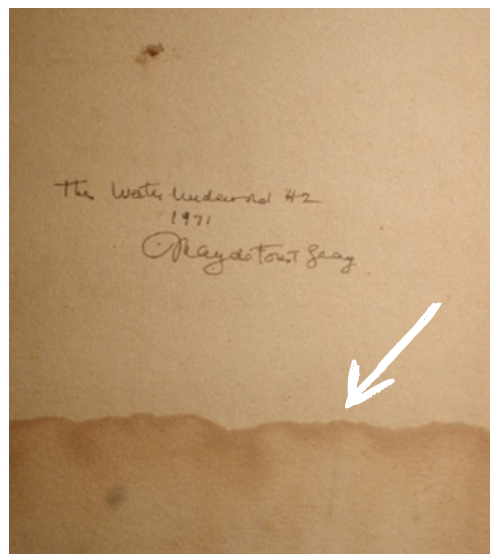


The Fine Arts Conservancy. <http://www.art-conservation.org/>



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.



© Government of Canada, Canadian Conservation Institute.

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>.

Centre de conservation Québec. "Glossaire Visuel Des Altérations." <https://www.ccq.gouv.qc.ca/index-id%3d90.html>.

The Fine Arts Conservancy. "Glossary For Works on Paper." http://www.art-conservation.org/?page_id=1189.

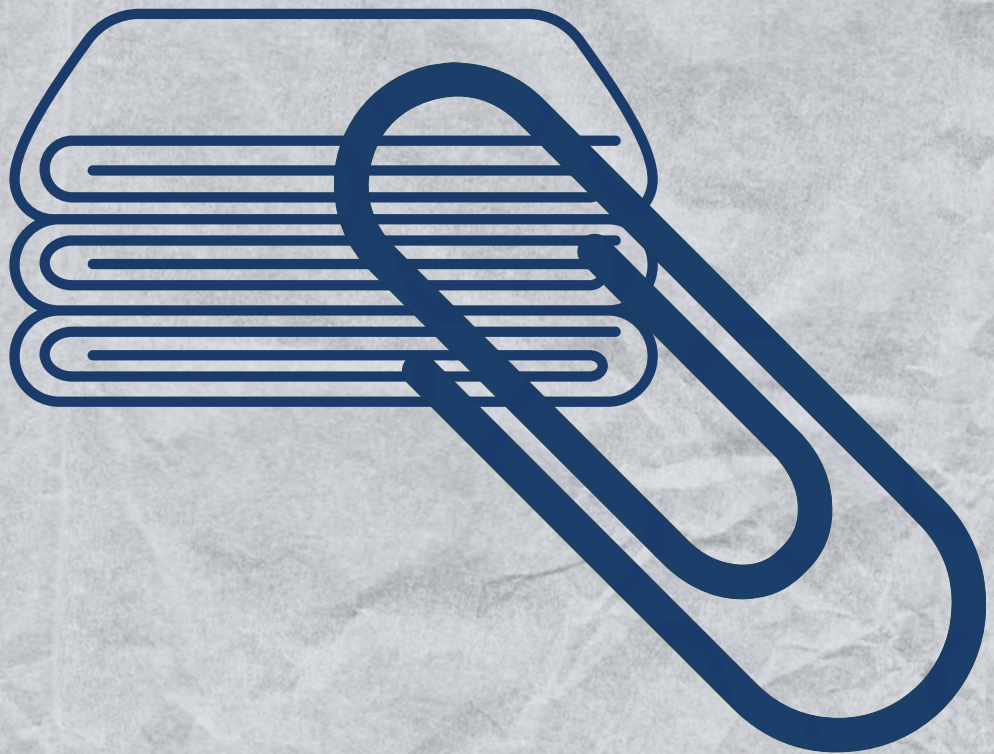
ICON. "Conservation Glossary." <https://www.icon.org.uk/resources/caring-for-your-collection/conservation-glossary.html>.

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

Chapter 2

Materials Glossary

Materials that may be encountered or used in the storage, exhibition or transport of collections.





Materials Glossary

Acid-free Tissue/Paper

Paper that has a neutral pH when it's manufactured; can become acidic over time, but is generally more safe than non-acid-free alternatives. Acid-free tissue can be used as interleaving or wadded or rolled and used as padding.



<https://storemydress.com/products/unbuffered-acid-free-tissue-paper-20-sheets-white>

Acrylic Sheet

A plastic material noted for its transparency, weather resistance, color fastness, and transparency. Acrylics are important in preservation because of their stability and resistance to chemical change. Acrylics are available in sheets, films, and resin adhesives. Some common trade names for the sheet form are Perspex, Lucite, and Plexiglas. Ultraviolet absorbing acrylic sheet is used in preference to glass for glazing framed materials because it is less likely to break and the additional ultraviolet absorbers protect the framed objects from light damage.



<https://ccaha.org/services/housing-framing>

Archival Corrugated Board (Blue Board)

Paper based corrugated board made with acid-free materials; is often blue or grey in color and can come buffered or unbuffered. Can be used to interleave, build 3D housings, or support while handling.



<https://www.talasonline.com/Heritage-Corrugated>



Blotter Paper

Soft, unsized paper or board used to absorb moisture. Blotting paper used in conservation should not be colored. Can be used to pad surfaces or absorb moisture during treatment or emergencies.



<https://emipapers.com/>

Bristol Board/Folder Stock

Often cream or off-white in color. Available in various weights. 10/20pt standard for library use. Often used to make folders, 4-flap tuxedo boxes, or interleaving.



http://www.shopbrodant.com/library-supplies/archival-supplies/archival-document-storage/Archival-File-Print-Folders/_/Map-and-Print-Folders1/

Cardboard

Paper based corrugated board; usually made with low quality paper that becomes acidic over time. Can be used to make temporary storage or shipping boxes, but archival corrugated board is preferred for long-term storage.



https://www.alibaba.com/product-detail/Shenzhen-company-3mm-thickness-B-flute_60330492255.html

Construction Paper

An inexpensive, heavy paper produced in many colors and sizes. Construction paper is made from groundwood pulp and is not durable. Many of the colors are water-soluble and most are susceptible to fading. Construction paper can be found in artwork, but it is not recommended as a preservation material.



<https://www.dickblick.com/products/crayola-construction-paper-packs/>



Coroplast

Plastic corrugated board made from layers of polypropylene. Coroplast can be used to make boxes for storage or shipping, but archival corrugated board is preferred for long term storage of most materials.



<https://www.universityproducts.com/coroplast-sheets.html>

Dartek

Nylon plastic film used to wrap paintings in storage



Ashley Distributors

Encapsulation

A form of protective enclosure for paper and other flat objects. It involves placing the item between two sheets (or one folded sheet) of clear plastic film (usually polyester), that are subsequently sealed with adhesive tape or by heat welding or sewing around the edges. The object is thus physically supported and protected from the atmosphere, although it may continue to deteriorate within the package. A sheet of buffered paper or board is sometimes included. The object can simply be removed by cutting one or more edges of the plastic film. (Sleeve is a similar idea, but is not sealed on all sides)



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Ethafoam

Rigid polyethylene foam often used as padding for objects in shipping and storage; can be abrasive to sensitive surfaces.



<https://masterpak-usa.com/products/ethafoam-r-by-sealed-air>



Felt

A type of cloth made by rolling and pressing wool accompanied by the application of moisture or heat, which causes the constituent fibers to mat together to create a smooth surface. Can be used to pad tables and shelves, but is not recommended for long-term storage.



www.etsy.com

Foamboard/Foam Core

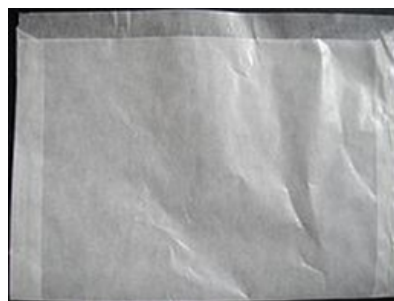
Lightweight, laminated foam panels. Foamboards are typically made with expanded polystyrene between one or two outer layers of papers of paper, metal, or plastic.



<https://creativecoldsnow.com/product/elmers-foam-board-3-16-48x96-white/>

Glassine

A thin, shiny paper that is usually semi-transparent; Often used for interleaving. Can sometimes stick to photographs in humid conditions, and is not considered ideal for permanent storage.



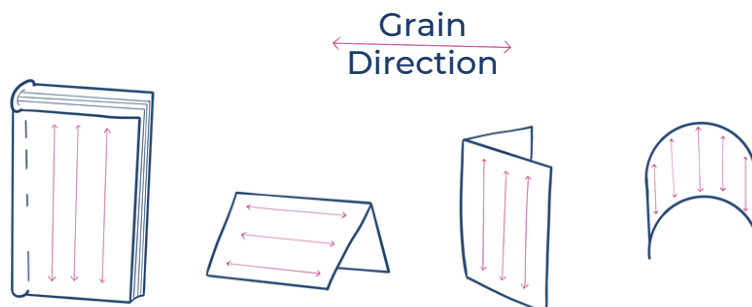
Public domain

Glazing

Flat glass or acrylic sheet used for framing artwork or presenting art objects in a display box

Grain

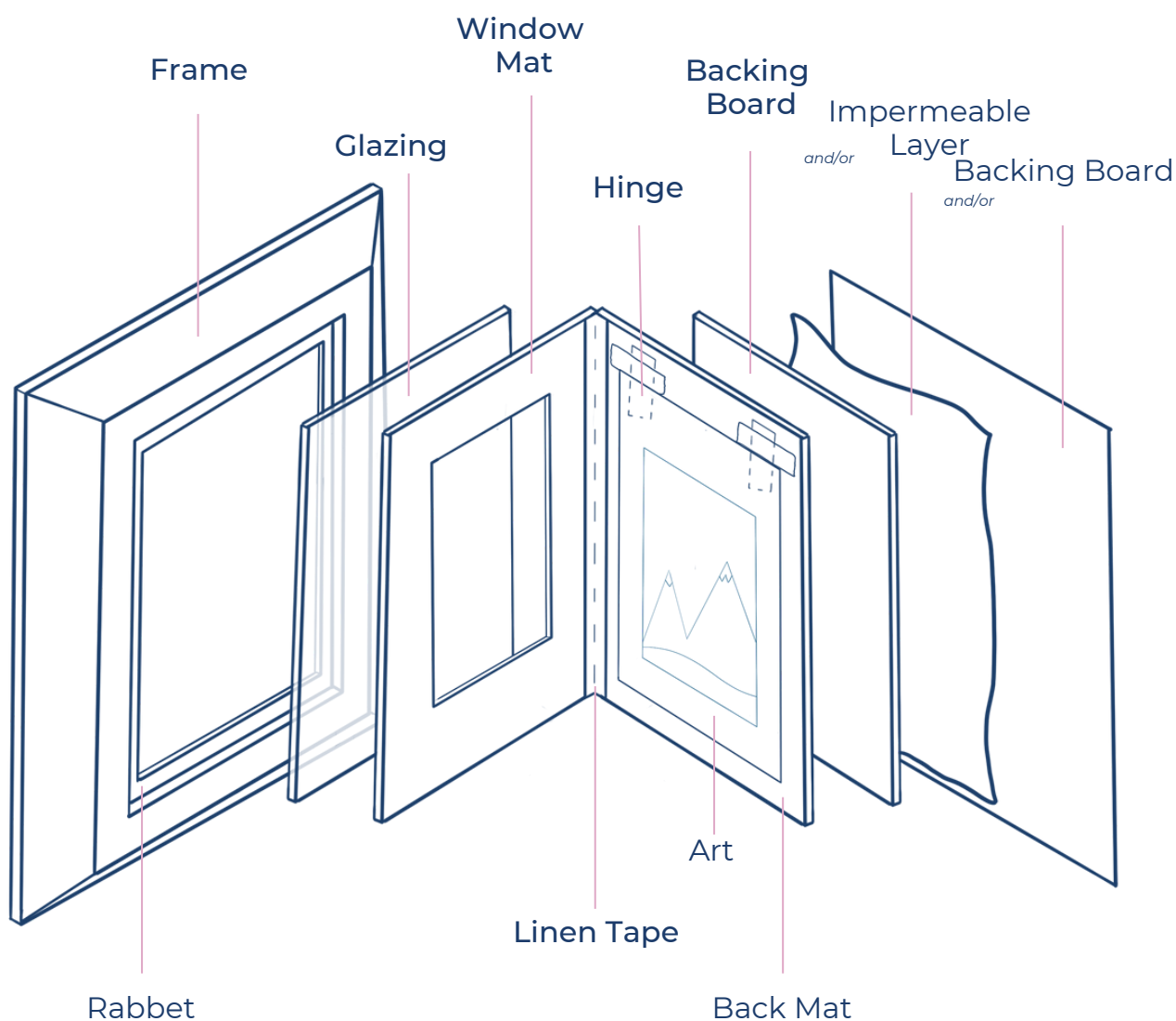
In machine made paper and board, the direction in which the fibers predominantly lie. Grain direction needs careful consideration in bookbinding and paper conservation treatments.





Hinge

A folded piece of paper, Japanese paper, linen tape, etc., used to attach a paper artifact to a mount or mat, in such a way that a portion of the hinge is adhered to the back edge of the artifact, while the remaining portion of the hinge is adhered to the surface of a mount or mat. This attachment system can provide good structural support, yet allows safe, ready access to the attachment when it is desired to remove the artifact.





Honeycomb Board

This material has a hexagonal honeycomb core sandwiched between two 4 ply mat boards for structural strength. It is perfect for mounting 3D objects and supporting large textiles, posters, maps, and more. It is also ideal for protective packaging of documents and artifacts. The board cuts easily with a razor, art knife, or fine-toothed panel saw blade.



<https://www.gaylord.com/New-Products/Preservation-Supplies/Conservation-Hexamount-Board-%285-Pack%29/p/HYB09465>

Japanese Tissue

A paper support made by traditional Japanese hand papermaking techniques (or by machine in some cases), using traditional Japanese papermaking fibers of kozo (paper mulberry), mitsumata, or gampi. Japanese paper is very strong (has a high tear strength) even in thin weights, because of the very long fibers used to make the paper stock. It generally retains its strength on aging. Japanese paper may be encountered as the primary support, in Eastern or Western art, or as a conservation material. Japanese paper is valued in conservation treatments because its thinness and translucency make it less obtrusive, while its strength and stability on aging lend long-term support to the original.



<https://www.talasonline.com/yukyu-shi-Kozo-Paper>

Kraft Paper

Kraft paper or is paper or paperboard produced from chemical pulp produced in the kraft process. This material is not archival and will become acidic over time. It is good for use in shop or studio spaces, or for external wrapping during transport.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kraft_paper



Marvel Seal

An aluminized nylon and polyethylene barrier film that will resist the passage of vapors together with other atmospheric gases and pollutants. An ideal barrier for the lining of wooden shelves and for lining of transport crates. Has also been found to be successful for fabricating custom bags due to the ease at which it can be welded. Approx. 5 mil. thick.



<https://www.talasonline.com/Marvel-Seal>

Mat Board

A stiff paper-based board that can be placed under a flat object to support it in a frame or in storage; stability is dependent on the materials it's made with, so pay attention to descriptors when purchasing mat board. Mat board comes in varying thickness: Four-ply board is most commonly used to make mats; two-ply is handy for mounts or inserts; eight or more plies may be needed to create a window mat that is thicker than a thick or undulating support. Typically a paper artifact is attached to a mat by hinges, though folded corners of paper or polyester may be placed over the corners of the artifact and attached to the mat as well.



<https://www.gaylord.com/Preservation/Photo%2C-Print-%26-Art-Preservation/Matting-%26-Framing/Matting%2C-Mounting-%26-Backing-Boards/Rising-Buffered-Museum-Board-Sample-Corner-Kit/p/RMBC-K>

Media

Materials used to create the image or text, such as paint, marker, pencil, or ink.

Digital Preservation: The material format on which information is recorded.





Muslin

Plain weave undyed cotton cloth; can be used as padding or wrapping; it is recommended to wash before using.



<https://www.walmart.com/ip/Natural-100-Cotton-Muslin-Fabric-Textile-Unbleached-Draping-Fabric-by-the-yard-60in-Wide/165159388>

Newsprint

A smooth, lightweight paper made from unpurified wood pulp fiber stock. Newsprint is acidic and high in lignin. These components contribute to its physical instability and predisposition to darkening with the simple passage of time, and especially when exposed to light and pollutants.



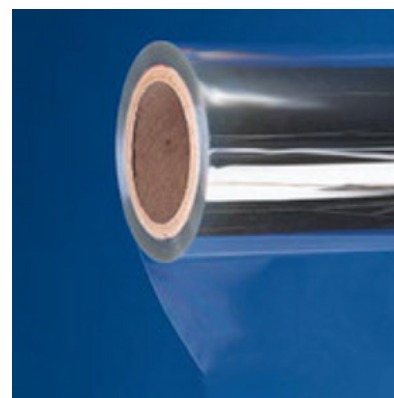
<https://www.amazon.com/TYH-Supplies-Newsprint-Packing-Unprinted/dp/B07RX21W3G>

Paper

In general, matted or felted sheets of predominantly cellulose fibers, formed on a fine screen from a water suspension of the fibers. Papers can be hand or machine made. Traditional Western papers were made from cotton or linen rags. Modern papers are made from wood fibers. The type of wood pulp used to make the paper will influence its expected lifespan - alkaline papers are usually more stable than acidic papers; groundwood papers contain high amounts of lignin and have a short lifespan. Japanese paper is made by traditional methods from a variety of plant fibers - valued for its properties of flexibility, strength and permanence.

Polyethylene Sheet (Mylar)

Plastic sheeting that comes in various thicknesses. Can be cut, folded or welded using heat. (Can also be silicone coated for easy release from most adhesives).





Posterboard

A thin, stiff, smooth surfaced cardboard. Posterboard is available in white or colored varieties. Standard size poster boards are 22 x 28 inches or 28 x 44 inches. They are used for advertisements, posters, and school projects.



Ragboard

A cotton-based mat board, that is placed under or over a drawing, painting, or photograph to serve as a frame or provide a border between the picture and the frame. Rag boards are available in a variety of colors and surface finishes. Most rag mat boards are made with a cotton core and backing with acid-neutralized facing. An archival quality board made of 100% cotton is generally specified as 'museum rag'.

Twill Tape

Twill tape or twilled tape is a flat herringbone twill-woven fabric tape or ribbon of cotton, linen, polyester, or wool. It may be used in sewing and tailoring to reinforce seams, make casings, bind edges, and make sturdy ties for closing garments. Twill tape is also used to tie curtains or to tie cable coils so that they do not unroll.



<http://unprinted.com>

<https://www.amazon.com/TYH-Supplies-Newsprint-Packing-Unprinted/dp/B07RX21W3G>



Tape

Paper, fabric, or plastic carrier with an adhesive layer applied. The adhesive layer is generally activated by pressure, or by the application of heat or water. Pressure sensitive or 'sticky' tapes should not be used for materials intended for long term preservation, since the adhesive degrades and yellows and the adhesive residues can become impossible to remove.

Double Sided



www.uline.com

Gaffer's



www.uline.com

Packing



<https://www.ys-packingtape.com/premium-grade-brown-self-adhesive-bopp-packing-tape.html>

Duct



<https://www.flipkart.com/garry-s-duct-tape-manual-manual/p/itm2fecf9f7848f>

Gummed Linen Tape



<https://www.utrechtart.com>

Packing (Reinforced)



www.walmart.com

Electrical



https://www.3m.com/3M/en_US/p/d/b00034627/

J-LAR®



<http://www.shopbrodard.com/Library-Supplies/>

Painter's



www.uline.com

Frame Sealing/Aluminum



<https://www.amazon.com/Frame-Sealing-Tape-Color-White/dp/B001DNCFEW>

Masking



www.uline.com

Transparent/Scotch



www.kroger.com



Volara

Smooth polyethylene foam often used to pad shipping and storage containers.



<http://valentinepackaging.co/packaging-shipping-supplies/volara-foam>

Wheat Starch Paste

A type of adhesive prepared by cooking starch in water until it forms a thick translucent white suspension. When prepared from purified water and when free of additives, paste has excellent aging properties and can be easily reversed.



<https://thebookandpaperathering.org/2016/10/20/paste-making-tips-with-two-recipes/>

Resources

American Institute for Conservation. "Choosing Materials for Storage, Exhibition, and Transport."
https://www.conservations-wiki.com/wiki/Choosing_Materials_for_Storage,_Exhibition_%26_Transport

Conservation & Art Materials Encyclopedia Online (CAMEO). https://cameo.mfa.org/wiki/Main_Page

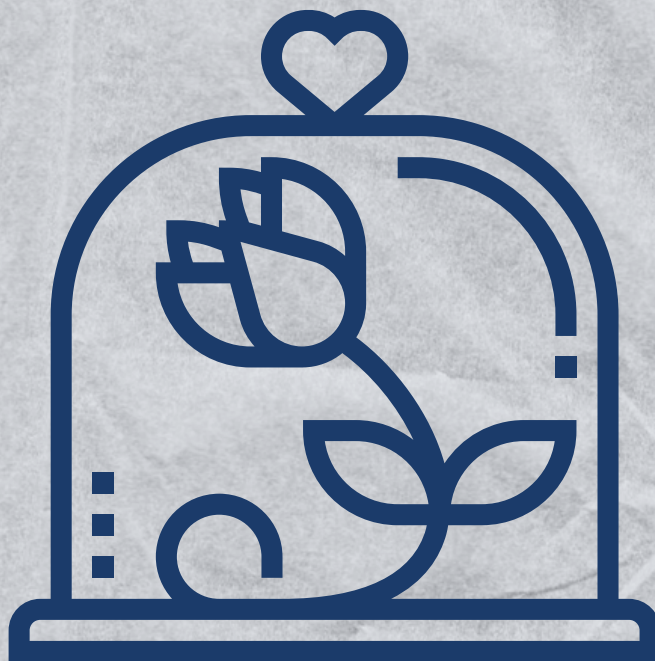
Products Used in Preventive Conservation - Technical Bulletin 32. Jean Tétreault, Canadian Conservation Institute.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/conservation-preservation-publications/technical-bulletins/products-used-preventive-conservation.html>

Storage Techniques for Art, Science and History Collections (STASHc) Materials, Tools & Supplies.
<https://stashc.com/resources/materials-and-suppliers/>

Chapter 3

Preservation Glossary

Terminology that may be encountered in the preservation of archives and other collections.





Preservation Terminology

Accessioning

Accessioning is the formal act of legally accepting an object or objects to the category of material that a collecting institution holds in the public trust, or in other words those in the museum's permanent collection.

Acquisition

A body of materials from the same donor taken into archival custody at the same time. Does not necessarily imply legal transfer.

Appraisal

The process of determining if materials have sufficient value to be accessioned into a repository. This does not refer to placing a monetary value on the materials. Often, collections will include materials that may have been unintentionally included by a donor, or that may simply not add anything to the evidentiary nature of a collection. The key to appraisal is understanding the relevance of the collection materials to the institution and its collecting scope. According to the Society of American Archivists, "the basis of appraisal decisions may include a number of factors, including the records' provenance and content, their authenticity and reliability, their order and completeness, their condition and costs to preserve them, and their intrinsic value." Appraisal can be performed at any processing level (collection, box, series, folder, or item), and at any point in a collection's lifecycle (donation, accessioning, and/or processing).

Archival

A commercial term used to describe materials suitable for long-term collections storage but has such a broad definition that the word has become nearly meaningless. The Society of American Archivists states that one should, "avoid the term 'archival' and use specific requirements such as 'lignin free' or 'acid free with a three percent calcium carbonate reserve'."

Archival Needs Assessment

An evaluation of an institution's archival program, identifying and addressing specific organizational needs, operational efficiencies, facility and storage concerns, and collection management issues. Conducted by an experienced archivist with needs assessment expertise.



Archives

- (1) An institution responsible for the appraisal, acquisition, preservation, and access to archival documents.
- (2) A building or part of a building in which archival materials are preserved and made available for use.
- (3) Materials created or received by a person, family, or organization, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of their informational value or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator.

Arrangement

The process of organizing materials with respect to their provenance and original order, to protect their context and to achieve physical or intellectual control over the materials.

Buffered

Paper containing a buffering agent to counteract any increase in acidity resulting from aging or interaction with the environment.

Cataloguing

The systematic process of creating and maintaining bibliographic and authority records. This provides access to materials by creating formal descriptions to represent the materials and then organizing those descriptions in a way that will connect user queries with relevant materials. This includes additional work to prepare the materials for use, such as labeling, marking, and maintenance of authority files.

Cellulose Degradation

The chemical breakdown of the cellulose chain as the cellulose ages causing the chains to become shorter, more acidic, and colored.



Collection

(1) A group of materials with some unifying characteristic, usually a shared history of creation and ownership.

(2) Collections (pl.): The holdings of a repository

Group of objects/items having shared or combined significance

Note: The term “collection” is mainly used within “movable cultural heritage”. In the context of immovable cultural heritage other terms are used, e.g. ‘historic ensemble’, ‘historic site’, ‘conservation area’, ‘historic garden’.

Collection Development Policy

The collection development policy is a written set of guidelines that provides information to stakeholders about how the collection is chosen and grown, and it explains who is responsible for making decisions about the collection.

Collection Management Policy

This policy defines the scope of a collection, how the institution cares for it, and makes collections available to the public. A collections management policy also explains the roles of the parties responsible for managing the museum’s collections

Collection Assessment

Collection assessment is “an organized process for systematically analyzing and describing a collection.” Hunt & gather, verify, analyze, and disseminate are the 4 steps of collection assessment, which focus both on the collection and the use/user.

Conservation/Conservator

Conservation encompasses all those actions taken toward the long-term preservation of cultural heritage. A conservator saves our cultural heritage physically. They are unique in the particular expert hands-on technical and decision-making skills they bring to preserving and caring for tangible history. Conservators train in a graduate conservation program or sometimes a lengthy apprenticeship with more experienced senior colleagues. While they take many paths to becoming a conservator, they all have extensive training in art history, science, studio art, and related fields.



Creator

The individual, group, or organization that is responsible for something's production, accumulation, or formation.

Deaccession

A formal act which allows an institution to remove permanently from its holdings items deemed no longer to be of archival value, or within the repository's collection policy or responsibilities. Sometimes called "permanent withdrawal."

Description

The process of compiling and organizing information into a format (catalog record, finding aid) that allows users to locate and retrieve specific documents.

Digital Preservation

Digital preservation aims to ensure that digital information of continuing value remains accessible and usable. It combines policies, strategies and actions to ensure access and to reformat and born digital content regardless of the challenges of media failure and technological change. The goal of digital preservation is the accurate rendering of authenticated content over time. Digital preservation strategies and actions address content creation, integrity, and maintenance.

Digital Preservation Assessment

An evaluation of an institution's preservation needs related to digital collections, assessing strategic goals, policies, technological resources, and processes and workflows for digital preservation. The assessments help institutions apply for funding to increase accessibility of their collections.

Disaster/Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan

A document setting out procedures to be followed by an organization to prevent or minimize the risk of a disaster occurring, and to describe actions to be taken should a disaster occur. Such a plan should include provisions for the prevention of a disaster, salvage procedures in case a disaster should occur, and replacement/restoration measures to be taken.



Documentation

The information about the object. This may be in the form of an archive of documents and images but can also be passed in information makers/private owners/past repairers tell you. It is important to record this information as part of the documentation of the object.

The process of creating documents to record the state of an object and any conservation actions, which have been applied to it. Documentation may consist of written descriptions, diagrams, drawings, photographs, scans, and results of analytical research. The documentation of conservation actions should include guidance about the housing, handling, use, and long-term care of the object. For example, X-radiographs, drawings, photographs, written reports, computer files, photogrammetry, laser-scanning, etc. Note: This term can also refer to the process itself.

Emulsion (photographic)

A layer applied onto paper, film, or glass; a coating throughout which finely divided grains of a light-sensitive material (most often silver halides) are dispersed and in which they remain suspended without dissolving. For both prints and negatives, emulsions commonly used have been gelatin, collodion, and albumen as binding media.

Enclosure/Box/Housing

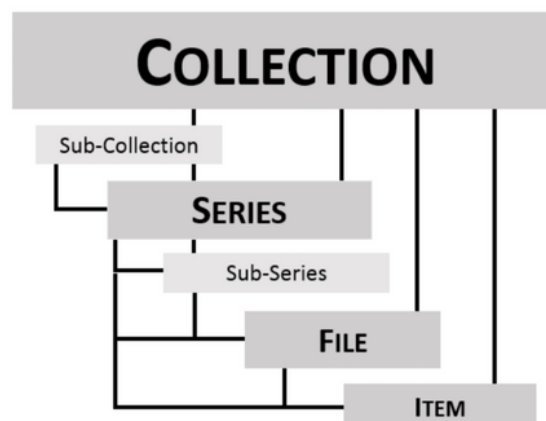
Housings are protective enclosures for objects intended to mitigate deterioration from physical and chemical factors in the environment.

Facsimile

A reproduction or copy of an original work that is similar in appearance to the original.

File Unit

A group of documents related by use or topic, typically housed in a folder (or a group of folders for a large file).





Finding Aid

A finding aid is the traditional format for archival description, which allows researchers to gain physical and intellectual access to an archival collection. Use of a finding aid can help readers to ascertain the relevance of a collection to their research. A finding aid also contextualizes the collection by providing further information about the people and subjects included, the acquisition and provenance of the collection, and the organization and arrangement of the materials.

Frame

A rigid structure that surrounds or encloses something. Can be considered a housing, and can play a role in preservation.

Insurance

Fine Art Insurance covers a wide variety of art collections, from visual arts like paintings and sculptures, to rare books, historical artifacts, and archaeological specimens. Though preservation professionals are ethically not allowed to appraise the monetary value of an object, discussing coverage for critical financial or disaster protection for collections is part of the holistic view of preservation.

Intellectual Control

The ability to know what is in a collection and how to access it. The creation of tools such as catalogs, finding aids, or other guides that enable researchers to locate particular materials.

Interleave

A process of using sheets of paper or other material to separate items. Buffering paper is often recommended to slow deterioration. Note: Can also act as a handling support.

Interventive Conservation

Any invasive action, which has a physical effect on the nature of an object; the use of procedures to repair, preserve, and restore the physical structure of an item. All processes ideally should be reversible.



Intrinsic Value

The inherent worth of a document based upon intangible factors such as age, content, usage, ownership, circumstances of creation, etc.

Inventory

- (1) A guide to an archival or manuscript collection that often includes only a list of the series in the collection. Much more concise than a complete finding aid.
- (2) A physical count of a collection conducted for accountability purposes.

Item

An individual object.

Item-Level Conservation Assessment

Conservation condition reports and treatment proposals for all the materials in a collection, with assistance in prioritizing conservation treatment for individual items or object groups.

"Lignin-Free"

Lignin is a complex polymer that is found in plants; when found in paper, lignin can break down and form acidic products; products marketed as “lignin-free” generally have less than 1% lignin content; “lignin-free” is often a more descriptive term than “acid-free.”

Manuscript

- (1) A handwritten document.
- (2) An unpublished document.
- (3) An author's draft of a book, article, or other work submitted for publication.

Mission Statement

A mission statement is the beating heart of a collecting institution. It articulates the museum's educational focus, purpose, and its role and responsibility to the public and its collections. Some museums choose to also develop vision and value statements as a way of extending the concepts expressed in the mission statement. These are different but related guiding documents for the museum: mission is purpose; vision is future; and values are beliefs.



More Product, Less Process (MPLP)

The viewpoint, argued by Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner in the article *More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing*, that the traditional archival process is too slow. MPLP advocates for the use of minimal processing to reduce backlogs and provide access to archival collections as quickly as possible.

Offgassing

Offgassing occurs when a material releases a volatile substance into the surrounding air. It may be indicative of degradation processes taking place in the material or is related to an evaporating solvent component (as in a paint or varnish). Volatile material being offgassed is typically detrimental to collection materials.

Original Order

The original order of materials is the organization scheme applied to the collection by its creator, or the state in which the records were kept when in active use. The principle of original order intends that an archivist should maintain the creator's arrangement whenever possible.

P.A.T Passed or P.A.T. Certified

The acronym P.A.T. stands for the Photographic Activity Test, which is an International Standard (ISO 18916); the PAT looks at the chemical reactions between photographs and materials when in prolonged contact; always look for PAT passed materials when housing photographic collections, and is a good indicator for archival materiality in general.

Personal Papers

The private documents of an individual or family (versus "records").

pH

A measure of the acidity or alkalinity of some substance, determined by the concentration of hydrogen ions. pH is measured on a scale from 0 to 14; values below 7.0 are acidic, and values above 7.0 are alkaline. A pH of 7.0 is neutral.



Policy

Policy work is a targeted, solution-based activity in which the causes of a problem or issue are analyzed, and policy-based solutions are communicated to decisionmakers to address them in a manner that creates favorable change. Efforts will typically try to establish new policies, improve existing policies, or challenge the development of unfavorable policies.

Preservation Needs Assessment

A general evaluation of a collection's needs, including environment (temperature, relative humidity, pollution, and light), housekeeping, pest control, fire protection, security, disaster preparedness, collection storage, handling, exhibition, treatment, and preservation planning.

Preservation Plan

Sets out an organization or an individual's approach to preservation, addressing the questions of what needs to be preserved, why, for what purpose, and for how long.

Preventive Conservation

All conservation activities designed and applied indirectly to an object to prevent or minimize future damage or deterioration or decay. Examples are environmental control, pest management and cataloging.

Processing

The arrangement, description, and housing of archival materials for storage and use by patrons.

Provenance

Provenance is traditionally defined as the "origin or source of something" (SAA). In archival terms, a collection's provenance is understood to be the chain of ownership through which the collection passed before being donated to an institution. Understanding the chain of custody allows archivists to prove the authenticity of certain documents, as well as to understand the context in which the materials were created, used, and preserved.



Record Group

A body of organizationally related materials based on provenance. Can include sub-groups.

Records

Items generated as the result of routine activities or a transactions, especially those of an organization (versus “papers” or “personal papers”).

Recto

The front of a flat object—usually the side that is seen most. In a watercolor painting, the recto would be the painted side. For books bound on the left, the recto is the right-hand page.

Repository

Any type of organization that holds documents, including business, institutional, and government archives, manuscript collections, libraries, museums, and historical societies, and in any form, including manuscripts, photographs, moving image and sound materials, and their electronic equivalents. A University Archives and Special Collections could have several repository levels: rare books, manuscripts, university archives, artifact collection, photograph collection.

Risk Assessment

An analysis of collections management policies and procedures; facilities and building location; environmental conditions; security and fire protection; pest and mold control; and weather and geographic risks. A risk assessment is the first step in the emergency planning process.

Special Collections

Usually used within a library, it contains collections of unusual or scarce materials such as rare books, manuscripts, personal papers, historical maps, drawings, paintings, photographs, etc.

Standards

A benchmark or reference used to measure some quality or practice. Collection care professionals follow a wide variety of standards created by many associations and organizations, such as SAA, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), etc.



Strategic Plan

A strategic institutional plan (often referred to as a strategic plan or long-range plan) is a document that is multi-year, aligned with the collecting institution's mission, and contains measurable goals and methods by which the museum can evaluate success.

Survey

A comprehensive and systematic review of a collection conducted either to obtain a brief overview of a repository's holdings or to gain knowledge on a particular point, such as the amount of cellulose nitrate-based negatives and film in a repository, or the physical condition of a collection or group of collections. Surveys may be conducted on any level (item to repository) and on any topic.

Value/Significance

Aspects of importance that individuals or a society assign(s) to an object. Values can be of different types, for example, artistic, symbolic, historical, social, economic, scientific, technological, etc. The assigned value can change according to circumstance, for example, how the judgement is made, the context and the moment in time. Value should always be indicated by its qualifying type.

Aesthetic, historic, scientific, social, or spiritual value for past, present, or future generations.

Cultural significance is embodied in the object itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places, and related objects. Objects/items may have a range of values for different individuals or groups.

Note: May be 'tangible' and/or 'intangible'

Verso

The back of a flat object; the left-hand page of a book bound on the left.

Resources

American Alliance of Museums (AAM). <https://www.aam-us.org/>

American Institute for Conservation (AIC). <https://www.culturalheritage.org/>

American Library Association (ALA). <https://www.ala.org/>

Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI). <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/culture/history-heritage/museology-conservation/preservation-conservation.html>

Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA). Resources. <https://ccaaha.org/resources>

Society of American Archivists (SAA). <https://www2.archivists.org/>