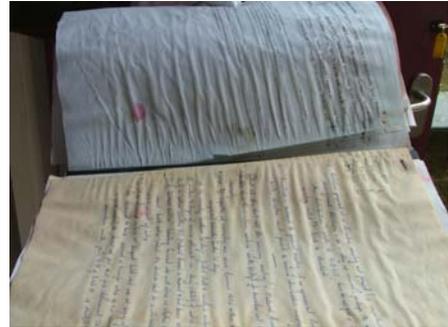


Storage Guidelines

The main causes of damage to archival material are: damp, high temperatures, light, dirty surroundings, unsuitable adhesives and acid paper.

Damp

All documents (letters, books, photographs etc.) will soak up moisture from the atmosphere if they are kept in damp conditions. As their moisture content increases mould will begin to grow, so it is vital to store all material in a dry place, away from any pipes that might develop leaks.



Light

Both sunlight and artificial light give off Ultra Violet radiation, which reacts strongly with paper, causing discolouration and brittleness. UV-rays will also make photographs fade.

Dust

It is very important to keep the storage area clean. Any dirt, especially food crumbs, will attract insects; once certain insects have found their way in, they will start eating the documents.



High temperatures

Mould flourishes in high temperatures, so try to keep the temperature in the storage area below 20°C (68°F) and if possible even lower for photographs.

Adhesives

Never use sellotape or any other kind of self-adhesive tape: the adhesive will migrate into the document, causing permanent staining and damage.

Acid paper

Most modern paper is acidic, which means it will discolour and become brittle and will eventually completely disintegrate. If acid paper is used for storing documents (e.g. as envelopes or folders), the acidity will migrate to the documents and affect their stability.



Other do's and don'ts

- Newspapers have a very high acidity content, which can affect other documents. Store newspaper clippings separately in acid-free folders or archival polyester sleeves and keep well out of light. Make photocopies on good quality paper, as the originals will eventually disintegrate.
- Metal paper clips and staples rust, damaging the documents; use plastic or brass alternatives.
- Avoid elastic bands as they perish and permanently mark documents.
- When using envelopes to store documents, make sure they are acid free. The adhesive flap could stick to the contents and needs to be removed. A better way for storing single sheets is by using acid free folders or archival polyester sleeves.
- Don't use plastic sleeves that contain plasticisers or polyvinyl chloride. Archival polyester film, sold under the trade names Mylar or Melinex, is available in many sizes from specialist suppliers.
- Photographs are best stored in the polyester flip-over type photograph albums. Alternatively, they can be individually placed in polyester sleeves and stored in acid free folders or boxes.
- Wrap rolled items with archival quality paper or store them in map tubes. Ensure the entire roll is properly supported when lying down.
- Store microfilm in its case, keeping it well out of light and dust.
- Fax machines tend to use extremely fugitive ink – the text sometimes disappears within months. Make photocopies on good quality paper of any important faxes.
- At the first sign of mould, remove the affected items and fan them out in a dry, well-ventilated room. Then seek professional advice.
- Follow the same procedure for water damaged material, provided it can be handled without being damaged further. Never attempt to dry anything by using heat.

Repairing archival documents requires specialist skills and equipment.

Irreparable damage can be caused by well-intentioned amateur interventions.

For further advice on looking after your documents contact the Conservation Department at Derbyshire Record Office.