



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- How many items of value do you own?
- What mediums/types are these items?
- Do you own these items?
- What items are damaged?
- How can you and your family take care of your heirlooms?

ORGANIZE AND LABEL:

- Stick to one organizational method.
- Label your items with pencil only (no pens, markers, etc.).
- Use tags to label objects or textiles.



WHERE TO GO FOR ASSISTANCE:

- The National Archives and Records Administration: www.archives.gov
- Email NARA: Preservation@nara.gov
- American Institute for Conservation (AIC): www.conservation-us.org
“Contact a Conservator” box on the top left.
- In the event of a disaster:
 1. www.conservation-us.org/emergencies/national-heritage-responders
 2. www.archives.gov/preservation/records-emergency
 3. Contact a private vendor for assistance in emergencies. Make sure you get a written contract stipulating what they will do, including cost, before anything is done.



PRESERVATION
PROGRAMS

VIRTUAL GENEALOGY FAIR 2017

HANDOUT | SESSION 1

Taking Care of your Family Heirlooms
by Katie Smith





ENVIRONMENT:

- The cooler, drier, and more stable the environment the better. Keep the temperature and humidity stable.
- Keep items out of basements, attics, garages, and barns.
- Take light sensitive items out of storage for only short periods of time. Avoid natural and fluorescent lighting.
- Monitor pest activity and contact a conservator if it becomes a problem.
- Use a clean soft-bristle brush or clean cotton cloth to gently remove dust.

STORAGE

- Keep storage areas well ventilated.
- Store items off the floor.
- Use acid-free boxes.
- Do not overfill storage boxes.
- Store books upright with books organized by height so that they support each other. Store large, heavy books flat.
- Wrap each object in unbuffered acid-free tissue; use extra tissue as padding.

STORAGE CONT.

- Store photographs in archival-safe photo sleeves.
- Store rolled film on plastic reels.
- Store textiles flat with folds padded with unbuffered acid free tissue paper.
- Store electronic/digital/audio visual objects in their respective cases.

HANDLING

- Wash hands regularly.
- Do not use lotion or hand sanitizer.
- Clean hands when handling books and documents. Wear gloves when handling photographs, film, metal items, and textiles.
- Do not force open bound books.
- Do not use tape or adhesives—including products like Self-stick notes—staples, and paper clips. Use folders to keep pieces of documents together.
- Carry fragile items on rigid supports.

DISPLAY AND USE

- Use heirlooms rarely.
- Display items for short periods of time. Use facsimiles for display if possible.
- Use a professional framer to frame items. Make sure that your item is not in direct contact with the glazing or any type of adhesive. Angle light sources away from items and avoid direct sunlight.

COPIES

- Remember LOCKSS: Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe. Keep digital copies in different locations and upgrade regularly.
- When copying items on your own, do not use a camera flash. Use caution when selecting a document scanner since some scanning devices that come into direct contact with records may cause damage.
- Avoid copying audio/visual items on your own. Contact a vendor and vet the vendor carefully.