

Preserving your Family Photos and Documents: Resource Guide

Archival-Quality Storage Materials

All materials should pass the ANSI Photographic Activity Test (P.A.T.)

Plastic photo album pages: polyester (a.k.a. Mylar) or polypropylene; avoid coatings, adhesives, “magnetic,” or “self-stick”

Paper album pages, interleaving pages, envelopes, & boxes (for photos): acid-free and lignin-free

Paper folders, interleaving pages, & boxes (for documents): acid-free, lignin-free, neutral or slightly alkaline (buffered) pH

Plastic sleeves (for brittle documents): polyester (a.k.a. Mylar)

Additional Preservation Supplies

Handling photos: powder-free nitrile gloves

Labeling paper album/scrapbook pages, envelopes, & folders: No. 2 pencil

Affixing items to paper album/scrapbook pages: archival-quality photo corners

Filling partially full boxes: acid-free spacers, polyethylene foam, or air pillow film

Archival-Quality Storage & Preservation Supply Stores

Gaylord Archival: gaylord.com

Archival Methods: archivalmethods.com

University Products: universityproducts.com

Hollinger Metal Edge: hollingermetaledge.com

Preservation/Conservation Services

American Institute for Conservation’s Find A Conservator Directory culturalheritage.org/about-conservation/find-a-conservator

- Where did you receive your training?
- How long have you been in practice?
- Do you have experience working on similar materials?

Scanning Services

Center for Jewish History’s Digital Lab: e-mail Jen Rodewald at jrodewald@cjh.org

Duggal Visual Solutions duggal.com/solutions/retouching-digital-studio/scanning

Choosing Your Personal Scanner Settings

Establish your preferred settings before you begin scanning. Choose the optimal setting that is practical for you. Although larger files are more optimal from a preservation perspective, they require more storage space and are more difficult to share than smaller files.

Color Palette = Range of gray tones or colors in an image

- Larger range = larger file size
- Grayscale: recommended for black and white photos and documents
- Color: recommended for color photos & documents

Resolution = Measure of the sharpness or detail of an image

- Higher resolution = larger file size
- Satisfactory recommendation: 300 dots per inch (dpi)
- Optimal recommendation: 600 dpi
- If you are scanning larger photos/documents or plan to enlarge an image, ideally scan at 400-600 dpi.

File Type

- JPEG file: image data is lost every time the file is saved = smallest file size

- TIFF file: always retains 100% of image data = much larger file size
- Optimal recommendation: Save all images as TIFF files for your personal digital archive. If you wish to edit or share a given image, save a second copy as a JPEG file.

Additional Online Resources

Library of Congress: Collections Care
[loc.gov/preservation/care](https://www.loc.gov/preservation/care)

National Archives: How to Preserve Family Archives [archives.gov/preservation/family-archives](https://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives)

American Institute for Conservation: Caring for your Treasures [culturalheritage.org/about-conservation/caring-for-your-treasures](https://www.culturalheritage.org/about-conservation/caring-for-your-treasures)

Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) Guides & Fact Sheets: [ccaaha.org/resources](https://www.ccaha.org/resources)

Library of Congress: Personal Archiving [digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving](https://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving)

“Personal Digital Archiving” by Gabriela Redwine (Digital Preservation Coalition)
dx.doi.org/10.7207/twr15-01