

## CONSERVATION VS. PRESERVATION

While these two terms are often used interchangeably, they have different meanings when it comes to archives.

**Conservation** aims to mend or stabilize material objects so that these items can survive in their original form for as long as possible — without losing their overall aesthetic and historical integrity — allowing for continued study, use or display.

Essentially, conservation can be seen as remedial action to damaged or deteriorated items.

This can include:

- Relaxing folded, rolled or crumpled paper/photographs
- Removal of damaging materials (tape, corrosive adhesives, etc.)
- Surface cleaning to remove dirt, stains, insect residue, etc.
- Mold and soot abatement
- Deacidifying records
- Mending tears
- Repairing loose book joints



**Preservation**, in contrast, aims to reduce or prevent damage and deterioration from occurring in order to extend the life expectancy of items as much as possible.

This can include:

- Environmental monitoring (controlling temperature and humidity levels, limiting exposure to light, dust and other pollutants, etc.)
- Proper storage materials and object-handling practices
- Duplicating unstable materials (e.g., nitrate film or thermofax) to a stable media
- Copying potentially fragile materials into a usable format such as microfilming or digitization

As many of these practices can be adapted for personal use, this zine will focus on providing general guidance on preserving your photographs at home.



## HANDLING

- Avoid touching the image area by gently holding any item by its edges with clean hands.
- Be cautious when removing dust from the surface of a photograph. Even soft brushes can result in scratches or other damage. Use an air bulb, not a compressed air duster.
- Do not attempt to force flatten. Unroll or uncurl a small section at a time and **ONLY** if there is no resistance from the photograph. Otherwise, place in protective sleeves as gently as possible and allow time and gravity to work.
- **NEVER** use heat, water or household cleaners/detergents on or near photographs under any circumstances.

## CAPTIONING

- Avoid standard permanent markers, pens or highlighters.
- Use a #2 pencil for prints that are fiber-based (regular paper feel).
- For plastic or resin-coated prints (slick, glossy feel), use a 4B or 6B graphite pencil.
- Work on a clean, hard surface. Lightly write identifying information on the back near the edges. If concerned about pressure transfers, write on folders, envelopes or sleeve cards.

### Important Information to Identify

- The **names** of any individuals and their relationship to the photographer or to each other.
- The **location** as well as any **landmarks** or **named structures**.
- The **date**. If you only have an approximate date, consider using “circa” or “c.”
- Provide any necessary relevant information for context, if desired.



## DISPLAYING

- Use frame spacers and ultraviolet (UV) filtering glass or acrylic for picture frames.
- **NEVER** use self-adhesive tape, glue or other adhesives on any photographs you wish to preserve. Use acid-free mounting corners instead.
- Hang or place photographs where they will not be exposed to direct sunlight and keep light levels as low as possible.
- Consider an occasional or rotating display versus permanent display. Or display copies while storing the originals. For best practices on scanning, see additional guide found at [bit.ly/vaarchivesmonth25](https://bit.ly/vaarchivesmonth25).

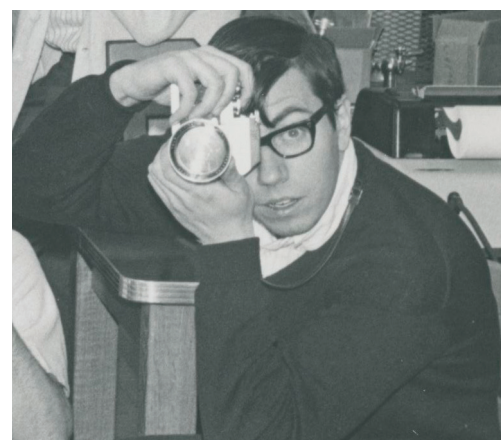


## PHYSICAL STORAGE

- Items should be kept in a consistently cool and dry place.
- **Be wary** of locations with a high risk for condensation and extreme environmental fluctuations and areas in close proximity to vents and radiators.
- Avoid common storage materials (e.g., self-adhesive albums, shoe boxes).

### Look for:

- Paper enclosures (envelopes/folders/boxes) made from non-acidic, lignin-free paper
- Plastic enclosures (sleeves) made of uncoated polypropylene, polyethylene or polyester
- Items should be housed within envelopes, folders or sleeves before being placed in boxes.
- Enclosures should be larger than your items but not so large that damage may occur from items sliding around.
- Small groups of photographs (same size and type) can be kept together.
- Negatives should be stored separately from prints.
- **NEVER** use paper clips, rubber bands or other mechanical fasteners.
- Fragile items should be stored in their own individual enclosures.
- Plastic enclosures should **NEVER** be used for nitrate or acetate-based negatives.
- If storage space is ever above 70% relative humidity, **DO NOT** use plastic enclosures.



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# HOW TO IDENTIFY COMMON TYPES OF PHOTOGRAPHS

For collection examples and additional content visit [bit.ly/VAARCHIVESMONTH25](https://bit.ly/VAARCHIVESMONTH25).



## TINTYPES/FERROTYPES (1853–1930S)

- Image Tone: Monochrome (chocolate brown to sepia; milky-white highlights; subtle hand-coloring common)
- Surface Sheen: Semi-glossy
- Printed on thin sheets of iron and most are fairly small (e.g., 2" x 3")
- Low contrast and limited tonal range
- Tintypes may be difficult to distinguish from other direct image photographs (e.g., daguerreotypes, ambrotypes). However, a magnet can be used to conclusively identify the tintype's iron support.

## ALBUMEN PRINTS (C. 1850S–1890S)

- Image Tone: Characteristic warm tones (purplish to chocolate brown or yellow-brown); prints after 1860 may be tinted with a pink or blue dye as an effort to mask the eventual natural yellowing of the albumen layer.
- Surface Sheen: Semi-glossy (c. 1850s–1870s) to glossy (c. 1870s–1890s)
- Cracked patterns may be seen in darker areas.
- Foxing (reddish brown blotches) is common.
- Image on very thin paper and usually mounted on cardstock.

## PLATINUM/PALLADIUM PRINTS (1873–1930S)

- Image Tone: Monochrome (neutral gray-black, warm brown, brown-black or purple-blue-black)
- Surface Sheen: Matte
- Rich, soft image tone with no fading or silvering
- Print paper may show yellowing and/or embrittlement.

## SILVER GELATIN PRINTS (1874–PRESENT)

- Image Tone: Monochrome (neutral gray-black and white; sometimes purplish); may also have warmer tones (brown, sepia or yellowish tones) depending on print paper.
- Surface Sheen: Matte, glossy, or textured
- Images often exhibit silver mirroring (reflective metallic sheen with faintly blue or iridescent appearance).

## COLOR CARBRO PRINTS (C. 1900S–1950S)

- Image Tone: Full color (cyan, magenta and yellow dyes)
- Surface Sheen: Glossy in darker areas, semi-matte in highlights
- Vivid colors with good image permanence and little to no fading
- Colors will often seem misaligned or separated, particularly at borders and in areas of fine detail.

## CHROMOGENIC COLOR PRINTS (C. 1940S–PRESENT)

- Image Tone: Full color (cyan, magenta and yellow dyes); may have yellowish or reddish cast if faded.
- Surface Sheen: Varies, matte to high gloss
- Can be white-bordered on fiber-based paper or can be resin-coated (slick, glossy feel).
- Information about process, date and materials often stamped on the back.



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