

Preserving Your Genealogy Documents and Photographs for Future Generations

By Erin Bradford, 2009

This is basically a transcript of a presentation I gave at the [Genealogy Look Up Form](#) on February 12, 2009. I decided to revise the articles I had in HTML format that I did back in 2005 and also wanted those who attended the chat to have something they could go back to if they forgot something. I have reworded things a little bit and added a little information that I had to take out of the talk due to time constraints, so it is not a literal transcription, but pretty close. I plan to add more to this in the future including resources as I find more, so this is more like a “rough draft” rather than a final version. The 3rd paragraph is a brand new paragraph and was not presented in the talk.

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Hello everyone. My name is Erin Bradford and I am here to talk to you about preservation. Many of you know me from the quizzes every Wednesday and Saturday nights, but I see some new faces, so let me tell you why I’m qualified to tell you about preservation.

I graduated from NC State University with a master’s degree in public history with a concentration of archival management. I also worked for almost 2 years in the Special Collections Research Center at the NC State University library. I am currently working as a library assistant, but stay on top of things in the archival world by taking preservation workshops and whatnot.

Over the years, it has become evident to me that although many genealogists want to know how to take care of their documents and photographs, they just do not know what to do. Despite well meaning intentions, I’ve heard many stories that made me cringe when genealogists have tried to preserve things and in all likelihood actually sped up the process of deterioration. I decided in 2005, I wanted to take what I had learned over the years through both education and experience concerning preservation of both paper documents and photographic material and make that information more readily available to the genealogical community. My hope is this talk will help show how genealogists can use this information to apply the same principles used in archival conservation labs and easily apply them to the home environment.

Here is the basic format of tonight’s talk:

- Defining preservation and conservation
- Preserving paper documents, both original documents and photocopies of originals
- Preserving original photographs
- Preserving digital photographs
- Overview of preservation tools

- List of sources for more information
- Finally, we'll have a Q&A session as time permits. We have a lot to cover in this hour so if you have questions, please save them until the end. Write them down so you don't forget. If we don't have enough time for an extended Q&A, I will give you my email address so you can contact me after the chat is over.

## Preservation vs. Conservation

I want to start with a short discussion about the difference between the terms "conservation" and "preservation." People use these terms interchangeably and it's good to know that even though they are very similar concepts and often confused, they encompass different aspects of the same idea. These terms are closely related, kind of like brother and sister, maybe even fraternal twins, but there is a difference, and sometimes it can be confusing.

The term "preservation" refers to steps taken to prevent damage to material that *has not yet happened*, while the term "conservation" refers to the steps taken to repair damages that *have already occurred*. Some archival institutions group them together rather than splitting hairs. In addition, many conservationists do the work of preservationists and vice versa. These 2 terms share the same philosophies, the same ideas, and even the same methods and tools, but the main difference is preventing something from occurring vs. repairing what has already occurred. For genealogists, conservation and preservation relates to two things: documents and photographs. Although objects/artifacts are a third, I do not have sufficient knowledge in this area to give advice. The general rule of thumb for both documents and photographs is to keep them out of light and in a cool, dry place. This applies to artifacts as well, and that is the extent of my knowledge of preservation of artifacts such as cloth (also referred to as textiles) and collectibles.

Throughout this talk, I will be referring to two primary companies: [Light Impressions](#) and [Gaylord](#). These are companies that the university archives I did my internship in recommended and used. Many products from these companies, especially photographic supplies, are products that I use myself here at home or at the archives. I am not saying you have to buy the products from these two companies, but descriptions of the material on the website will help you understand better what to look for if you decide to use a cheaper company.

## Preservation and Storage of Documents (originals and copies)

Many of us do not have original documents, instead, we have the photocopies of the original, with the original still in an archival depository; however, the preservation of these copies is just as important as the preservation of the original. Why? Well, we all are well aware that fires can happen in an archival depository (Think of the 1890 census!) In addition, eventually originals deteriorate beyond recognition no matter what kind of preservation and conservation actions are taken. It's inevitable that all documents, at some point, will be gone.

In addition, there is always the possibility of theft. Some archival depositories have greatly improved their security with security cameras in readings rooms, but local history libraries and under-funded archives or county court houses do not always have the means to increase security and theft still happens. Whether by natural means of deterioration or theft, all original documents will disappear in time. It could be a few decades or a few centuries, but they will all eventually disappear.

To give you an example of why we want to preserve our photocopies, say you were just at the archives and got a copy of great great great grandpa Joe's will from 1804. We may want to highlight important parts and think to ourselves, "well, I know where it is so if I want another copy, I can just go back later." 10 years pass and you realize you need another copy, so you go back to the state archives to get one, but Grandpa Joe's will is no longer there for one reason or another, what are you going to do?

The first step you need to take in order to preserve documents is to gather everything up and go through the pile one by one. Remove any staples or paper clips you find and replace them with acid free plastic paper clips (word of caution: even though plastic coated metal paper clips are better than plain metal ones themselves, in the long run, these are not a great option). I recommend Baumgarten's Plastiklips (more about these later).

You need to remove anything metal on those documents as soon as possible. Eventually they will rust and cause stains on the paper. I am sure most of us have seen damage caused by rust from those metal paper clips or staples. Although 100% stainless steel clips and staples are better, I still recommend the plastiklips because I've seen rust caused by these stainless steel clips and staples.

Part of the reason is that staples, no matter what material they are made of, will cause damage to some extent to any document. First, they cause those miniature holes in the paper, but after time, those holes can create tears in the paper emanating from them. Although when you remove staples, those holes will be there, it is better to remove them now before they start to rust or tear.

When removing staples, do not use a regular staple remover, as that will tear the paper when you remove them. You can remove them by using a flat object such as your finger nails to lift up each prong and pull it up through the holes, and this will help create minimal further damage. Using your fingernail is not necessarily a great idea because it can damage your fingernail. I suggest purchasing a micro spatula from [Gaylord](#) for around \$10, and it really is a great investment.

The second step that you need to take is to flatten all the documents. If they are folded up, you need to unfold them. If they are rolled up, they need to be unrolled. This is especially true of folded paper. Letters are often folded, and the pages should be unfolded and then clipped together with its envelope (if it exists) using plastic acid-free clips.

It is very important to unfold papers. You may have noticed in the past with older paper that the creases tend to become more fragile before the rest of the paper. Many times, paper will disintegrate at the creases first. There may be discoloration (which is a visible hint of disintegration); the paper may be more brittle around the creases, and start to tear.

You may find folded paper that is just too fragile to unfold. In that case, it is best to leave those as it is, but you want to make sure to unfold the paper before it gets to that state or eventually it will fall apart when you try to open it.

Flattening rolled documents is just as important because as the document ages, the documents becomes less flexible and more brittle. If you try to unroll one of these brittle, inflexible documents, they may shatter. It's best to get them flattened out now rather than wait. As with folded documents, if they are already in the brittle state, it's better to leave them as is. With both folded and rolled documents that are too fragile for flattening, a professional preservationist may be able to do it for you, but this will not be a cheap venture.

*Tools you need to unfold and unroll documents:* When unfolding documents and flattening the creases out, I recommend purchases a bone folder from [Gaylord.com](http://Gaylord.com) and use the flat side to run over the creases. A good bone folder is product **WW-6480** or **WW-6481**. For unrolling documents, you need something heavy and there are a few options here.

First, if you have some heavy books, you can use those as weights on the paper to flatten it out, leave the books on top of the flattened paper for a few days. Your second option is to take a brick and wrap it up in paper, such as gift wrapping paper if you want a nicer looking brick or even just a plain brown paper bag from the grocery store. I recommend using a couple of these bricks, depending on the size of the paper.

After you have done these first two steps, you have a couple of options. The first option and the one I recommend is to make a photocopy of the document and then store them in a safe deposit box, while keeping a "working" copy for your own use at home. The second option is to store them in your house. If you choose the second option, I still recommend making photocopies and using a set of the copies for your use instead of the ones you are working to preserve. The reason for that for creating a photocopy of the copy is that the oils from your hands, over time, can increase the rate of deterioration. I personally go with the first option and have a safe deposit box just for genealogy stuff. These boxes are fire safe, and in some cases, flood proof as well as a climate controlled environment (but check with the bank to be sure).

Now that you have figured out *where* to store them, you may be wondering *how* these records should be stored. Well, no matter where they are kept, they should be stored in acid free folders. If stored at home, those folders should be stored in acid free boxes. If stored in a safe deposit box, those acid free boxes will not fit most likely and they should be fine in their acid-free folders inside a safe deposit box.

If you store them at home, there are two things to keep in mind. First, do not store them in a place that could potentially be flooded, in other words, not in your basement. Even the first floor may not be suitable. Your 2nd floor would be the best bet, but not if it is the highest point in your house since heat travels upwards and tends to gather on the highest floor of your house.

Second, you want to make sure they are in a climate controlled atmosphere. Humidity, light, and heat can contribute to faster deterioration of your documents, but what is even worse is if these environmental factors constantly change. It would actually be a bit better for preservation purposes to keep documents in unfavorable conditions that remain constant than in conditions and constantly change between favorable and unfavorable. It is always best though to be sure that wherever you keep them, it is cool, dry, and dark.

So, you have taken care of the documents you already have, but what about future documents? The same steps will be taken. Some archival depositories will actually staple things in the archive when making copies for patrons. If that is the case, find out if the staples are stainless steel or not. If so, it is up to you if you want to leave them, but if they are not stainless steel, you will need to remove them.

If you know that a depository automatically uses staples, you can tell them ahead of time not to staple things together. They should comply, and some of them may have some plastic clips to use.

After staples and metal clips are removed, paper needs to be laid flat if not already, then a copy made for your own use at home (some repositories will make more than one copy at once so you can get it all done at the repository, but remember they charge for those). Find out if they use acid free paper or not for photocopies of original documents at the depository where the original copy was made. If not, it would be a good investment to purchase some acid free printer paper or copy paper to make your copies if you have a personal photocopier. If you are making copies at a place like Kinko's, specify the copy to be made on acid free paper.

Use the acid free copy as your archival copy to preserve and the other copy as your working copy. It is best not to make marks on the stored copy, and with the documents already in your possession, it is understandable that there may already be marks, but if you must make marks to future documents, make it on the working copy rather than the stored copy. After you do all this, put it in an acid free folder and either in the box upstairs or in the safe deposit box.

Taking these steps will greatly increase the life expectancy of your documents for use by future generations. Your descendants will thank you for taking the extra time to conserve and preserve your records.

## Preserving Your Original Photographs

Preservation of original photographs depends greatly on the type of photograph it is. Daguerreotypes have different preservation needs from tintypes, and the preservation needs of tintypes differ from cabinet cards. Although I cannot go into detail about preservation of photos due to time restraints, I will talk about different types of storage options in general terms. The final choice of enclosures used depends on the particular needs of a collection, the type of photographs stored, and budgetary restraints. For more details on preservation of particular photograph types, see the list of resources at the end.

A basic understanding of the deterioration of original photographs is necessary. In general, long exposure to light, heat, and humidity increase the rapidity of the deterioration, just like that of documents. In order to decide if paper storage enclosures are better versus plastic enclosures, it is important to look at the advantages and disadvantages of each.

For Paper enclosures, there are more advantages than disadvantages. Paper enclosures are opaque, meaning that they help to block out harmful light. Paper is also porous, which helps to protect the photograph from the accumulation of moisture in the atmosphere (humidity). The disadvantage to using paper enclosures is that due to their opaqueness, it is necessary to remove the photograph from the sleeve in order to view it. This can potentially lead to problems with mishandling the image and increasing the rate of deterioration, for instance by exposing the images to the natural oils in a person's fingers or fingerprint smudges.

Plastic enclosures have fewer advantages, but depending on the current condition of the photograph, the advantage may be more important. The biggest advantage to plastic enclosure is that the image can

be viewed without removing it from the enclosure. This is a great asset for images that have already undergone a lot of deterioration. The disadvantage of plastic enclosures is that the nature of plastic can actually lock in moisture to the image. In this case, humidity is an important factor. In areas of high humidity, paper enclosures may be better, while in areas of low humidity, plastic may be just fine.

The bottom line is that photographs in good condition with minimal use may be fine in either paper or plastic enclosures, but poor quality or high usage may dictate that plastic enclosures would be best. On the other hand, if an area has a lot of light and high humidity, paper enclosures would be best. In some cases, the combination of paper and plastic enclosures would be a great idea, for example a photograph in poor condition in an area with low humidity, but a lot of light might be best stored in a plastic enclosure which is further stored in paper. In a situation such as this, the plastic would make it easier to view the photograph without further damage while the paper's opaqueness helps protect the photograph from light.

There is a lot more information in photographic preservation, but I have so much information to present tonight that I don't have time. I have a couple of quizzes coming up later this month and in March and I will try to create a quiz using that information and possibly schedule a talk in the future just on photographic preservation.

## Preservation of Digital Images

In this digital age, it is important to know how to preserve your digital photograph collection. When planning for preservation of digital photographs and images, two major issues need consideration: file format and storage media. Digital photographs can last many years when stored in the best file format and when properly handled. Other issues involved in the preservation of digital photographs include the quality of storage media and technological changes.

## **Creation of the Digital Image: File Format**

File format is an important consideration to make when planning a preservation project of digital photographs. Although many file extensions are available, only three will be discussed, as they are the most universal. Choosing the right file format for digital photographs is important for two reasons. The first is that the right format can be viewed in a wider range of photograph viewers and editors. The second is that some file formats have a lossy compression while others have a lossless compression.

Just as its name implies, lossy compression loses quality every time an image is viewed, while lossless does not lose image quality. That is not to say that you will see a visible difference in the image from one viewing to the next with lossy compression, but over time, changes will become more evident. If you were to view the lossy compressed file on a daily basis for a year and then compare it to the lossless file version of the same image, you would be able to tell a decrease in image quality of the lossy file

Three common file formats are JPEG, GIF, and TIFF. JPEG is probably the most common file type found on the internet; however, it does not mean that it is the best format in which to store files. Although the files are smaller and more manageable, easier to upload and download, and able to be

opened with almost any image viewer, JPEG images are lossy formats. Every time you open a JPEG file, it loses pixels. This includes viewing photographs embedded onto a webpage. GIF file formats are the second most common. Although GIF images are slightly larger, they are comparable to JPEG images in that they are very manageable, easy to upload and download, but not all image viewers can open GIF images. One vast improvement of GIF over JPEG is that GIF images are lossless, meaning that they can be viewed an infinite amount of times and not lose any pixels. In addition, *GIF images are not to be used for actual photographs.*

TIFF images are probably the most common format for digital photos, but also are probably the least known of the three. Many photo editors use .tif as the default file extension to save images, yet no one will find many TIFF images online. The reason for that is TIFF images are very large compared to GIF and JPEG images. Although TIFF images are larger than GIF and JPEG, it is highly recommended you save a master copy of the image as TIFF due to their universal nature and lossless compression.

To illustrate the difference in file size between JPEG, GIF, and TIFF, I saved two different images in all three formats. To make sure that the file size remained accurate in all three formats, I made no changes to the actual image, in other words, they were identical in every way other than file extension. The first image is that of Oliver Hackett Wilder taken at the turn of the century in Illinois. The second image was that of the father of William, Mary, and Jemima Coventry, whose given name remains unknown, taken in the mid 1800s in Illinois.

The first image of Oliver Hackett Wilder had a smaller .jpg file size, and subsequently a smaller .gif and .tif size. The file saved as a .jpg totaled a mere 47.2 KB, or roughly the size of a long email message. The .gif image totaled 58.7 KB, slightly larger. The .tif image totaled 580 KB. The Coventry file had a much larger .jpg size. The .jpg image was 578 KB, the .gif image was 874 KB, but the .tif image was a whopping 5.67 MB. Different factors effect file size, including resolution and the size of the image; an 8"x10" digital image will be much larger than a 3"x5".

No matter what the intended use of the digital image is, a master copy should always be saved with the .tif file extension. Although TIFF images take up a lot more disk space, they are the ideal format for master images because they are the most universal image file format. TIFF images can be viewed in any currently existing image viewers, whereas GIF and JPEG images are more limited. Prints of the digital image should come from a file format that is of lossless compression as it will be the most true to life copy. If you save a file as a JPEG and TIFF master, the print should come from the TIFF file. If you save a file as GIF and TIFF master, prints could come from either file.

## **Storage of Digital Images: Choosing and Preserving Storage Media**

After creation of a digital file, the file needs to be stored on some type of media. Possible media for genealogists include a computer hard drive, 3.5" disks (which are now becoming obsolete), USB memory sticks, CDs, and DVDs. Stability of the media, and change in technology are the two biggest considerations to weigh before choosing a type of storage media.

Stability of storage media is an important consideration. Hard drives, 3.5" disks, and USB memory sticks are very unstable, therefore not good choices for long-term storage. A computer hard drives can

crash and usually need replacing within a few years, which makes them relatively unstable as well. CDs and DVDs are relatively stable and therefore are better choices long-term.

Due to the nature of the rewritability of 3.5" disks and USB memory sticks, it is possible to lose information by accidentally writing over it or otherwise losing the image. CDs and DVDs are the best types of storage media for long-term storage of digital images; however, the *quality of the construction can affect rate of deterioration*.

There are six types of CDs and DVDs on which you can store images: CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, DVD-RW, DVD+R, and DVD+RW (and now blue-ray, but I do not know much about those at this point to offer advice). Choosing which to use depends on how much file space you need and how stable the disk is. Rule out CD-RW, DVD-RW, and DVD+RW immediately as their stability is no better than that of a 3.5" disk or USB memory stick due to their rewritable nature.

Through process of elimination, CD-R, DVD-R, and DVD+R are by far the most stable and best media format to store digital images. Being stable, however, does not mean that deterioration will not happen.

CD-R, DVD-R, and DVD+R discs experience increased rates of deterioration in five major ways: temperature, humidity and moisture, light, scratches, and a combination of fingerprints, smudges, dirt, and dust. You can break down these five ways into two groups: environmental conditions and improper handling. It is important to note that with poor environmental conditions and improper handling, discs can become unusable in just a matter of days. With proper environmental conditions and handling, they can last for decades.

Light can be the most devastating environmental condition. We are all aware of how light can be devastating to paper documents (just leave a newspaper in your car's windshield for a week and see what I mean!), and the same goes for CD's and DVD's. The bottom line is that CD's and DVD's just like paper documents need to be stored in cool, dry, dark places.

Effects of improper handling, such as fingerprints and light scratches, are very common, and not a major concern. The biggest concerns in regards to improper handling are deeper scratches that make the discs useless and flexing or bending of the discs, which can cause them to break.

Another very relevant consideration, especially in the case of computer hardware and peripherals, is the constant change in technology. Every few years, new technology comes out, often replacing and leading to the obsolescence of older technology. You can see this by looking at a timeline of technology. In the 1970s, 8-tracks came out and by the early 1980s were obsolete. The early 1980s brought cassette tapes, and although they are still available, they are becoming obsolete. 5" floppy drives were the standard in computer peripherals in the late 1980s, they became obsolete by the early 1990s after the advent of the 3.5" floppy disk.

Today, the 3.5" disks are now becoming obsolete with the advent of CDs, and CDs will soon become obsolete with the advent of DVDs. No doubt, eventually DVDs will become obsolete by some new technological advance, which will undoubtedly become obsolete by something else, and the chain continues as long as there are new inventions and new gadgets.



So what does this mean for the long-term storage of digital photos on CDs and DVDs? Because of the frequent change in technology, it is necessary to convert files and move them to newer, and often better, media devices in order to ensure their availability to future generations. Despite the storage media chosen, it is important to remember that with technological changes, images need to be converted to the optimal available media.

## Glossary and Explanation of Preservation Tools

### **Boxes:**

When you think of boxes, I am sure the first type that come to mind are the corrugated cardboard boxes we use to send Christmas gifts through the mail with. When preserving documents, however, these are not a good for long term storage because they are not necessarily acid free. [Gaylord](#), [Light Impressions](#), and 2 companies called Hollinger and Metal Edge, Inc. all sell great boxes for long term storage of documents.

I personally prefer Hollinger brand boxes, but that is more for the color than anything else. All 4 companies seem to have different shades of boxes, so go with whatever brand you prefer based on color or price since the quality of the boxes themselves are the same. *The main feature to look for is metal edged boxes because they will last longer and are more durable.* There are many different styles as far as how the documents are stored (vertical vs. horizontal) and how the lids open. As far as the lids, pick which ever you like, but as far as storage goes, *documents stored vertically are better.*

For letter sized documents, boxes need to be at least 10” high by 12” wide in order to accommodate the folders which store the paper documents. For legal sized documents, boxes should be 10” high by 15” wide. If you have mixed legal and letter sized documents, get your boxes in legal size to make sorting easier, otherwise you’ll have to organize by paper size rather than document type. *All boxes for paper documents should be lignin free, acid free, and buffered* (they will say “buffered” or possibly “3% Calcium carbonate buffer”).

Single boxes for documents run about \$10. To see what an ideal box is, go to the [Gaylord.com](#) and enter the code **WW-ACD12102** into the search box at the top of the screen. The graphic on that page will also show you the 2 main different types of pulls on a box (to remove it from the shelf). There are 3: strings, a metal ring, and a hole in the box. Do not get boxes with the hole in the box as a pull because that compromises the protection the box offers from environmental factors. Stick with the string or metal ring pulls.

Original photographs may need different types of storage than documents, so the boxes may be different. The main difference between document and photo boxes is that photograph boxes should be acid free, lignin free and *unbuffered*. You might even be able to pick up some decorative kinds in retail stores, just make sure it’s acid free at the very least (those in department stores will usually be unbuffered anyway; they may not be lignin free though).

### **Folders:**

Many people store their documents in manila envelopes or folders. Although these are good for short term storage of documents, it is best to invest in some acid free folders that you can purchase from [Gaylord](#) or Hollinger, as well as other companies I am sure. Many tab styles are available as well as colors. It does not matter what style or color you pick as long as it is acid free, lignin free, and can be either buffered or unbuffered in order to help to protect your documents. \*a note, original photographs

should not be stored with documents; they need to be stored in photo sleeves/envelopes in unbuffered boxes.

### **Gloves:**

Gloves should always be worn when handling fragile documents or photographs that are not in sleeves. 100% cotton gloves are the best and can be found in many places. [Light Impressions](#) offers 4 different styles based on your needs. Check them out to see what works best and then order from them or use that information to get them elsewhere.

An important note, for handling photographs, do *not* use the “sure grip” type of gloves. These types of gloves are meant for handling artifacts so they don’t slip. There is a possibility of the “sure grip” gloves causing damage to photographs and fragile documents.

### **Photo Albums and Sleeves:**

With saving your pictures, you want to make sure they are stored in acid free sleeves, either in an album or individually. Many older photo albums, and even ones today, use those album pages with the gummy adhesive and you have to pull back the clear sheet and stick the picture to the page and then close the sheet over the picture and press down to reseal. Although these are convenient, they are very bad as most are not acid free at all, even if they do say “archival quality.” The adhesive itself is the main issue.

In the depository where I worked, they gave me some recommendations, which I am passing on here.

- Photo albums: Both [Light Impressions](#) and [Gaylord](#) have good sturdy acid free albums. I personally recommend the kind enclosed in a slipcase in order to block out even more light, dust, bugs, and any other pollutants. To see what I am talking about, go to [Light Impressions](#) website and enter exactly the phrase **album & slipcase set** in the search box at the top of the screen. The results will show you all of their available album/slipcase sets (a note, you’ll save a bit of money buying them as a set rather than separately).
- Photo album pages: If you already have a photo album, but just want to add pages, they have those as well in many varieties and styles. The main thing to look for is acid free (no surprise there!) and the depository really liked *polypropylene*, *Mylar*, and *melinex polyester* sheets. You will find tons of styles, so the best advice I can give here is plan it out first what you want to do before you buy the products so you buy the right products the first time. It will take a major investment in time, but it could also save you some money in the long run.
- Slides: If you want to store slides, both [Light Impressions](#) and [Gaylord](#) have acid free sleeves for that as well. The depository where I worked before said it for negatives from a reputable seller such as these 2 businesses; it’s really all about the style.
- Photo sleeves: If you want to store your photos in a box rather than an album, you can purchase sleeves for that as well. For photo sleeves, I actually prefer [Gaylord](#) in my own experiences, but as far as quality goes, they are no better than sleeves at [Light Impressions](#). I’m going to list my personal favorites for sleeves for both paper (opaque) and plastic (clear) and also how to figure out what size to get.

- Paper sleeves: my favorite paper sleeves are at [Gaylord](#) website, enter code into the search **WW-PB45**. These are ideal paper sleeves. Not only do I prefer them, that is what they used at the depository where I worked. Why are they ideal? First, they are made from a heavy duty paper, they are acid free, lignin free, reinforced seems, ph neutral adhesive (which is very important), and the sleeve is closed on 3 sides, leaving only 1 side open in which to insert the photo so there is less chance of it slipping out. It's also cheaper than many of its competition.
- Plastic sleeves: my favorite plastic sleeves are also at [Gaylord](#)'s website. Enter code **WW-ESM453** into the search. These are very good plastic sleeves. These sleeves are melimex polyester that are 3 millimeters and the only thing that would make them even better is if they were 4 millimeters (which are available with code **WW-ESM4104**). There are only 10 of these a package (instead of 100 as with paper sleeves), but almost the same as with paper, so unless you can really afford to, you won't be able to put all your photographs in plastic sleeves. What you'll need to do is prioritize your photographic collection and figure out which need to go into the plastic ones now and which can wait.
- Sizing sleeves: For the most part, this will be obvious. If you have a picture that is 4x7, you will want a sleeve that is not too snug, so at least 4 1/4 x 7 1/4. The real reason I'm putting this section is for when you combine sleeves.

Say you have a fragile picture you want in a clear sleeve so you can safely look at it, but you also want it in an opaque sleeve to block out light. If that is the case, make sure that the plastic sleeve is 1/2 an inch bigger. The reason for that is if it's a fragile photo and for some reason down the road you need to remove it from the plastic sleeve, you do not want to play tug of war with it, so you need a bit more room, so go with 1/2 an inch more or even a full inch. For the opaque/outer sleeve, it needs to be at least a 1/2 inch larger than the inner sleeve, but it could be 3, 5, even 10 inches bigger; there is no limit to how much bigger the outer sleeve should be, just make sure it's not too small..

Example: great grandpa Joe's picture is 5"x7". You want a plastic sleeve 5 1/2" x 7 1/2" at least. [Gaylord](#) has one 5 1/2 x 8 1/2. Then you need the paper at least 1/2 an inch bigger than that, so at least 6x9. [Gaylord](#) has one 8 1/2 x 10 1/2.

Another example: "Aunt" Sophie's tintype measures 2" x 2.5". You'll need a plastic sleeve at least 2.5" x 3". [Light Impressions](#) has some 4"x6" (the smallest I can find – item number [b] 20280/[b]). Now, you'll need the paper to be at least 4.5"x6.5." Both [Gaylord](#) and [Light Impressions](#) have paper sleeves that are either 5.5"x7 3/8" ([Gaylord](#)) or 5 3/8" x 7 3/8" (LI) and it just depends on price.

### **PH Tester:**

PH testers are used when you don't know the acidity of paper. There are many types of pH testers. One type of tester is a pen you can use to mark a small inconspicuous spot on a folder or box, etc. When the ink dries, the spot's color indicates a pH level of 7.0 or higher (good) or 6.5 and lower (bad). I personally recommend **WW-PH65** at [Gaylord](#) and we use them at my current job.

### **Plastiklips:**

These are acid free pure plastic paper clips that contain no metal. You can order Plastiklips online from many office supply stores, such as Office Depot (but not Staples). Check around for the best price. I have not actually been able to find any by going into a store to buy them, only online.

### **Staple Removers:**

Archives use two main types of removers. One is referred to as a "Staple Extractor" that has a bulbous, round wooden handle with a beveled edged flat metal dull blade (You can purchase through [Gaylord](#) item number **GF-T1245**). In my own experience, these are great for sturdier materials or thick packet of pages stapled together, but not so much for preservation. The blade is very strong, but at the same time has a potential for damaging delicate material.

The other type is referred to as a "spatula" or "micro-spatula." A spatula is a long thin piece of metal, about 8" long with one tapered head and one rounded head. To get an idea of what I am talking about, try going to [Gaylord](#) and look up item **GF-MIC**. I use these most often as they work great without causing further damage to stapled material if used properly. They come in 2 different styles, either bent or straight. I prefer the straight, but it's only a personal preference.

### **Starter Kits:**

[Gaylord](#) has a starter kit for documents for \$22.25 (+shipping). The starter kit includes a metal edged box, 25 folder, an archival clippings envelope (great for newspaper clippings!), a pair of cotton gloves, and 6 box labels. I really recommend this if you want to get products to start preserving your documents and photographs because this will save you money just for the box and folders alone. To get this starter kit, go to the Gaylord website (<http://www.gaylord.com>) and enter the product number **WW-ARCHKIT-BG** in the search box at the top of the screen and it will take you right there.

[Light Impressions](#) has a starter kit for photos for \$46.95 (+shipping). The starter kit includes 1 photo archival box, 25 envelope sleeves, 25 negative sleeves, 100 tabs to link photos with negatives, index card, and label. I personally think this is priced pretty high and I would get each piece separately. If you invest a bit more money, you can get a lot more product. Usually, for example, envelope sleeves are sold in units of 100 for about \$20 for a 4" by 6" or smaller. Negative sleeves run \$14 for 50 sleeves. Boxes run for about \$8-\$15 each depending on the type and size. The starter kit could be good if you wanted to get everything at once and not shop around, but you could save some money in the long run if you shop around a bit.

## **RESOURCES:**

### Supply Vendors

- [Gaylord](http://www.gaylord.com/) ~ <http://www.gaylord.com/>
- [Hollinger](http://www.hollingercorp.com/) ~ <http://www.hollingercorp.com/>
- [Light Impressions](http://www.lightimpressionsdirect.com/) ~ <http://www.lightimpressionsdirect.com/>
- [Metal Edge, Inc.](http://www.metaledgeinc.com/) ~ <http://www.metaledgeinc.com/>

## Online Resources

- Byers, Fred R. *Care and Handling of CDs and DVDs: A Guide for Librarians and Archivists*. Washington, DC: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2003.  
<http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub121/pub121.pdf>
- [Dating Old Photographs](#) - This is a great site for tips on dating your photographs, especially for cabinet cards.
- [Emergency Salvage of Moldy Books and Records](#) - a great resource on mold!
- [Emergency Salvage of Wet Books and Records](#) - This is a great article for books and documents
- [Emergency Salvage of Wet Photographs](#) - Another great article of salvation!
- [Handbook for Digital Projects](#) - This is a technical article, but part 2 gives a good discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of digitization and things to consider before you begin.
- [Removal of Damaged Fasteners from Historic Documents](#) - This is a wonderful article! One thing to note is the difference in ideas of leaving rusted staples or not. One thing I have learned is that different institutions have different ideas. Where I work, we remove *all* staples and paper clips, but in this article they say to leave them if it will cause further damage to a document. Both points have merit and in the end, it's up to you.
- [Saving Photographs After a Flood](#) - Good site, pertains more to an archival depository, but you can still apply the principles to your house.
- [Storage Solutions for Oversized Paper Artifacts](#) - If you have anything to store larger than legal size paper, this is a great read!
- [Temperature, Relative Humidity, Light, and Air Quality: Basic Guidelines for Preservation](#) - This is good for further reading on how these different environmental factors affect the rate of deterioration.
- [Types of Photographs](#) - This is a pretty good site to determine what type of photograph you have. Only thing is that it can be very technical and in nonprofessional's terms.

### Offline Resources:

- Kenney, Anne and Lynne K. Personius. *The Commission on Preservation and Access: Joint Study in Digital Preservation Phase I, A Report to the Commission on Preservation and Access*. Washington, D.C.: The Commission on Preservation and Access, 1992.
- Koelling, Jill Marie. *Digital Imaging: A Practical Approach*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2004.
- Lee, Stuart D. *Digital Imaging: A Practical Handbook*. New York, NY: Neal-Schuman, 2001.
- Williamson, Ray A. "Opportunities and Challenges of Preservation Technologies." *Archives and Museum Informatics*. 13 (1999/2001), pp.211-225.