



# Protect Your Family's Heritage

How to preserve your family  
photographs, letters, diaries and  
other historical documents



*Our Places - Our Stories*  
*Nga whakanikoniko o te Ao Tawhito*

The strands of our history are woven into the tapestry that is our heritage.

## Conservation Week 2003

### 1. Storage

Books, letters, papers, and photographs are damaged by light, heat and moisture.

Store them somewhere with good air circulation, an even temperature and, if possible, in the dark.

Attics, basements, the garage, rooms near kitchens, or anywhere there is water, such as the laundry or near hot water cylinders, are not good storage places as these can be damp or at risk from floods.

Your documents are best stored in archival quality enclosures (folders, envelopes, and boxes). The enclosure that is in direct contact with your original should be of the highest possible archival quality. Even wrapping documents in photocopy paper to protect them from dust and from contact with ordinary manila envelopes or folders is a help. Ordinary office stationery, such as manila folders, contain acids and chemicals that cause deterioration.

Lie all papers flat and unfolded, to prevent them from breaking along the fold lines. Storing items in envelopes can damage the items when they are pulled in and out of the envelope, so a folder or archival quality sheet protector is advised.

Newspaper clippings deteriorate quickly, a photocopy will last much longer. If you want to save original clippings keep them stored separately from other documents, this will prevent the clippings from damaging the other items. Remember to record the date and source of all newspaper clippings.

Metal rusts, so remove all metal pins, staples and paper clips as the rust will damage the paper. Carefully remove them and if necessary replace with plastic coated paper clips. Sellotape or any sticky tape, and many glues can damage documents so avoid them as much as possible.

Do not have original documents laminated. This permanently damages the item. If an item is fragile you can

put it into an archival quality sheet protector with a support card behind it.

### 2. Display

Think about where you display your photographs, pictures, textiles or special objects. Temperature variation and direct sunlight will damage them.

Places to avoid include; windowsills, anywhere there is direct sunlight or heat, such as above heaters or fires.

The best places for display are hallways, or rooms with u.v. protected glass or net curtains.

Mounting special photographs or documents behind glass will help preserve them and protect them from dust. Make sure the mounting is of museum quality from a reputable framer. Otherwise your precious documents will discolour with age around the mount.

### 3. Photographs

Black and white photographs are still the best way to preserve picture memories.

Colour photographs do not last as long as black and white photographs. Videos, colour slides and digital photographs have an even shorter life span. Film and video tapes deteriorate very quickly. The N.Z. Film Archive accepts home movies and videos on deposit at no charge.

Anything that you want to last, or to share with your grandchildren should be recorded on black and white film, and always keep the negatives. The negatives are the originals so store them safely.

Store your photographs flat in a sturdy cardboard box. For extra protection, line the box with loose pieces of acid-free paper. Don't use glue or other adhesives to stick the paper to the box as in time this will damage your photographs.

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### Reference & Local History Services



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Never use albums with self-sealing plastic to mount your photographs. These can react with the photographs and cause them to deteriorate. The best type of album to use has acid-free paper, with photo or mounting corners to keep the photographs in place.

**Important:** Use an archive storage box that is clearly labeled to store letters, documents and memorabilia. (These are available from office supplies stores.)

Unlabeled old cardboard boxes are easily thrown out by mistake!

If disposing of family papers and photographs, always consider offering them to your library or historical society first.

You may even discover national treasures when you sort through old family papers.

Contact Archives New Zealand for free advice.  
Telephone: 09 270 1100  
Email: [auckland@archives.govt.nz](mailto:auckland@archives.govt.nz)

## Further Information:

More detailed information on protecting your family's documents and memorabilia can be found at:

National Preservation Office, National Library Service of New Zealand 04 474 3000

Brochures: including "Caring for family collections."  
<http://www.natlib.govt.nz/en/services/2protect.html>

California Preservation Clearinghouse  
[http://cpc.stanford.edu/training/family\\_treasures.html](http://cpc.stanford.edu/training/family_treasures.html)

## Archival supplies:

Storage for very special items can be purchased through Conservation Supplies, phone 09-425-7380 (Warkworth), email: [jamorrison@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jamorrison@xtra.co.nz)  
web page: [www.conservationssupplies.co.nz](http://www.conservationssupplies.co.nz)

New waxed archives boxes are available from Archives NZ Auckland 270-1100. Enquire about their inexpensive second hand boxes.

## Advice:

If you need advice on the restoration or conservation of special items contact:

**Auckland Art Gallery** Ph:307 7723 or 307 7724

Website: <http://www.aucklandartgallery.govt.nz/services/conservation/default.asp?print=true>

**N.Z. Film Archive** Ph:379 0688

Website: <http://www.filmarchive.org.nz/about/locations.html>

## Other useful Websites:

### National Library of New Zealand

Advice on protecting heritage material  
<http://www.natlib.govt.nz/en/services/2protect.html>

### Californian Preservation Clearinghouse

Saving Family Treasure  
[http://cpc.stanford.edu/training/family\\_treasures.html](http://cpc.stanford.edu/training/family_treasures.html)

### Department of Conservation

Conservation Week 2003  
<http://www.doc.govt.nz/Community/002~Events/Conservation-Week/008~2003/Activities.asp>

## Recommended Reading:

### Managing family archives

By Mark H S Stevens

### Caring for your family treasures

By Jane S Long

### Family history comes to life

By Peter Cuffley

## Reference & Local History Services

Reference Assistant Librarians

Corrine Oemcke 832-9047

Raewynn Robertson 836-8000 ext 8505

Local History Collections Advisor  
Robyn Mason 838-1303 ext 823

Kai Whakahaere Maori  
Rewi Spraggon 836-8000 ext 8536