

Preserving Your Photographs



Importance of Preserving Your Photographs

- Maintains the memories of the family
- Preserves the history of your locality
- Offers a unique glimpse into the past
- Can become a valuable resource for the community and those from further away
- Pictures can bring people together

Threats to our Photographs

- Photos are very sensitive to a number of factors
- Photos must be protected from:
 - high / low humidity
 - high / low temps
 - acidic adhesives
 - fluctuating environments
 - direct sunlight
 - physical damage
 - air pollutants

How do you protect your photos?

- Proper handling
- Appropriate storage
- Controlled environment
- Keep the negatives

Proper Handling

- Always wash your hands before handling photos or wear lint-free cotton gloves – natural oils from the skin can damage photos over time
- Hold the photos from the edges
- Do not bend or roll up photos at any time

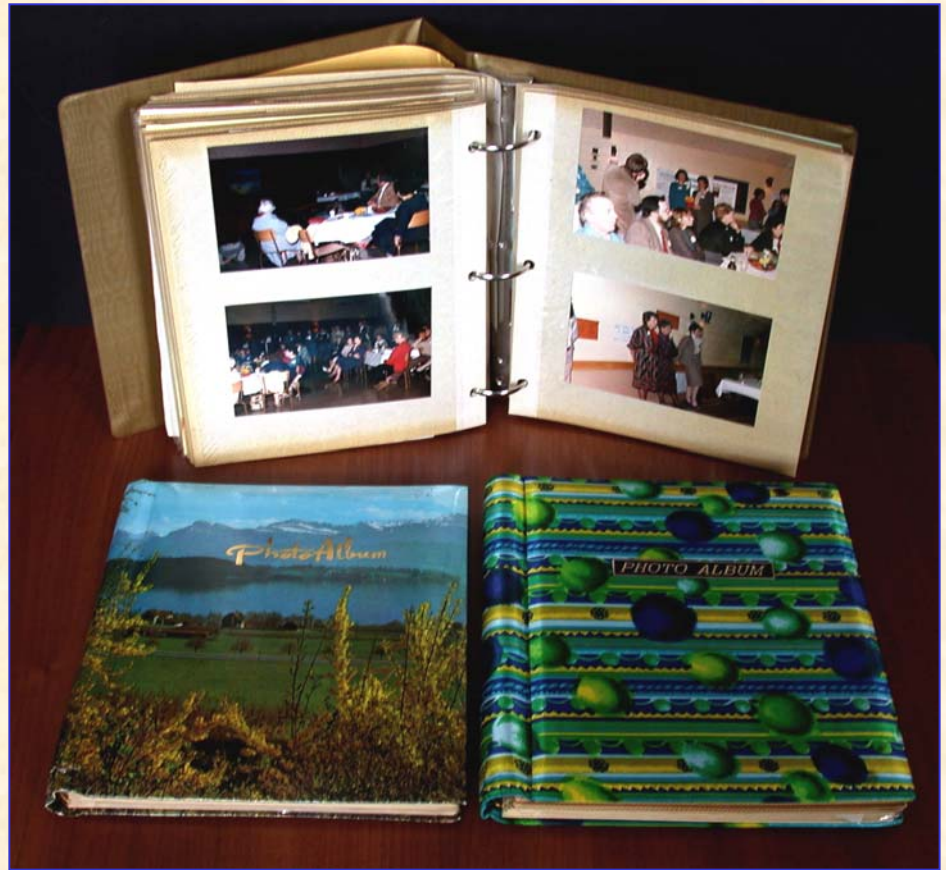
Appropriate Storage

- Best albums are comprised of acid-free / polyester sleeves that the photos slide into



Appropriate Storage

- Worst albums use adhesive backings to keep photos in place – adhesives are often acidic and will damage photos over time



Appropriate Storage

- If in boxes, make sure that photos are not packed too loosely (photos may bend or slide around) or tightly (may be torn when removed)
- Be sure that boxes are made of neutral or buffered (ie. acid-free) materials – a shoe box or other boxes may have dyes or chemicals that can off-gas

Controlled Environment

- Keep photos out of direct sunlight – sun accelerates the chemical breakdown and fades photos
- Ideal storage conditions are at 30% - 50% relative humidity (RH) and 16°C - 19°C temperatures – mould can begin to grow at 21°C and 60% RH
- Maintain a stable environment – fluctuations in temps and RH promotes moisture in / out of photos and leads to quicker deterioration

Controlled Environment

- Be aware of harmful fumes and airborne pollutants such as soot, ash, nitrogen oxides (from engines), gases from burning coal and oil, fumes from cleaning agents, varnishes, paints and untreated wood
- Do not eat or drink when handling photos – crumbs and drips on photos can attract insects and rodents who love to eat and nest in photographic materials

Keep the Negatives



Keep the Negatives

- Negatives are the first generation and best version of the image
- If a print is damaged, use the negative to produce a new print
- Store negatives in enclosures that are made of acid-free paper or polyester and in a cool environment out of direct sunlight

How to protect damaged photos

- Store photos in polyester sleeves with at least a 2-ply cardboard backing for added support
- Make a copy of the damaged photo for display and keep the original in a safe place
- If you are going to mend a torn photo, be sure to use adhesives that are chemically neutral – there are tapes and glues of this nature

Special Case: Digital Cameras



Special Case: Digital Photos

- Digital cameras are great for quick results and easy transfer to others
- Digital media is not good for preservation
- Technology changes so rapidly that hardware / software may be obsolete within a few years
- CD's can fail without warning
- Computers can crash and data can be lost forever

Special Case: Digital Photos

- How do you see the photos in the future?
- Get prints of your best photos
- Save two copies of photos on high quality CD's – one for use, one for storage
- Migrate the photos to the latest/best storage media available at least every five years
- Example: floppy disk to CD to DVD

Helpful Hint

- Archives has hundreds of unidentified photos; harder to use and catalogue
- On the back of your photos, write down all of the information available – who, what, where, when
- Preserves the memories forever
- Always write in pencil or an acid-free pen; chemicals in pens and markers are likely acidic and will ruin photo over time