

Preserving Your Scrapbooks



Creating scrapbooks as a hobby has been a popular pastime for over a century. More communicative than photo albums, scrapbooks allow us to express our personality while creating lasting memories. Unfortunately many of the early materials used were damaging to the items that the creator hoped to preserve. In order to ensure that your memories last for as long as possible, it is important to examine the primary causes of damage.

- Improper handling can often cause damage. Scrapbooks should be handled carefully as this minimizes tears, creases and abrasions.
- Heat and bright light are also damaging to scrapbooks as they increase the rate of fading.
- Moisture and humidity are danger factors as they can cause a mold or mildew breakout.
- Acid based paper was used in the majority of old scrapbooks. It is extremely unstable and aids in the deterioration of the scrapbook by causing the pages to become brittle and break easily.
- Product instability can also cause damage. Not all products used to create scrapbooks are of archival quality. Be careful of the materials that you are using.

Storage

Scrapbooks should be kept in a stable, cool, and dry place. Do not keep them near windows where they could be exposed to direct sunshine. It is also not advisable to place them near vents or other sources of heat and/or moisture. Storing the scrapbook in an archival box can keep dust from settling into the pages. Storing flat also helps loose items from falling out and becoming damaged.

Scrapbooks should be examined periodically to ensure the integrity of the materials being used and to check for weaknesses in the paper where tears might occur.

Materials

When creating your scrapbook careful attention should be made to the materials used. Only archival and preservation quality items should be chosen as they will enhance the life span of your scrapbook.

- The first item that is selected when starting to create the scrapbook is the album. The album should be hinged to allow for expansion of pages. "D" or "O"-type three ring, poly post, multi-ring and strap binders are all good choices. Avoid albums with magnetic pages because of the adhesive used on the mounting pages. Also be sure that the album is assembled using archival materials.
- Paper should be buffered, acid-free, and lignin free. It should also preferably be of white or off-white 80 lb. weight or better. If preserving letters or other folded documents, store them unfolded in a buffered folder. Do **not** keep them folded as the paper will break at the crease. If you want to preserve newspaper clippings, it is best

to photocopy them onto buffered paper like Eucasta Waylite, Crane Weston Xerographic, or Howard Permalife. The original will not last as long as a copy.

- When attaching items into the scrapbook, be sure to use archival quality corners or adhesives. If using adhesives, they should be made from paste using no animal products. Glues made from animals do not age well and can damage mounted items. Also make sure the adhesives are acid-free and washable. Do **not** use tape as it becomes yellow with age and will ooze onto the page. Do **not** use pins or staples for attaching as they rust over time. Flowers or other objects can be put into a polyethylene plastic bag and attached with white cotton thread.
- When using pens and pencils, make sure they are acid-free, have pigment ink, and are fade proof, and waterproof.
- Use page protectors to stop bright markers or materials from bleeding onto the previous page. Do **not** use plastic page protectors. "PVC" free is not good enough. Use only products made with Dupont Mylar polyester, polyethylene, cellulose triacetate, or polypropylene.
- When using stickers, make sure they have an acrylic adhesive. Avoid latex as it breaks down rapidly and will fail over time.

In the Event of an Emergency:

If you need to evacuate your home it is best to keep all your family videos in one place so that they can be located quickly and removed. If they are really important to your family, duplicate them and ask a friend or relative to keep a copy.

Suppliers

The following suppliers are some sources for archival materials that can be used in "scrapbooking." There are many vendors – so ask the right questions!

The Archival Company
800-862-2228
www.archivalsuppliers.com

Creative Memories
800-341-5275
www.creative-memories.com

Get Smart Products
800-827-0673
www.pfile.com

Icon
800-801-2128
www.iconusa.com

Light Impressions
800-828-6216
www.lightimpressionsdirect.com

Scrapbook Express
801-796-5560
www.scrapbookexpress.com

Rena Lindgren Products
512-663-1106
www.renalindgrenproducts.com

Tumblebeasts
505-323-5554
www.tumblebeasts.com

Online Resources

Caring for Your Family Archives
http://www.archives.gov/preservation/caring_for_your_family_archives.html

Graceful Bee FAQ

<http://www.gracefulbee.com/newbees/faq.html>

NEDCC Offers Hints for Preserving Family Collections

<http://www.nedcc.org/leaflets/fmlycol.htm>

Preservation of Scrapbooks and Albums

<http://lcweb.loc.gov/preserv/care/scrapbk.html>

Scrapbook and Home Archive Preservation

http://www.rit.edu/~661www1/sub_pages/scrapbook.htm

Scraps of the Past

<http://www.familytreemagazine.com/articles/dec02/scrapbooks.html>

Tips on Creating an Archival Scrapbook

<http://www.uni.edu/petersog/icpctip2.html>

Tips on Preserving Scrapbooks

<http://www.uni.edu/petersog/icpctip1.html>

Further Reading

Smedley, Wendy. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Scrapbooking*. New York, NY: Alpha Books, 2002.

Zucker, B.F. "Scrapbooks and albums: their care and conservation". *Illinois Libraries* v. 67 (October 1985) p. 695-9.

Developed by Kim Learning for the Inland Empire Libraries Disaster Response Network (IELDRN 08/03)

