

Proper Handling of Special Collections for Digitization

Guidelines for Handling Manuscript & Archives Materials (letters, journals, clippings, ephemera, books, broadsides, maps, pamphlets, sheet music, prints, drawings, paintings, photographs)

Safe and proper handling of works on paper is critical to preserving paper collections.

Archival materials are to be handled as little as possible and with extreme care.

Special care must be taken with fragile, rolled, or oversize material.

Please notify a staff member if you find damage to any item.

- Hands should be clean and dry before handling paper items, as the oils from fingers can cause staining on the paper.
- Do not eat or drink in the work area.
- Always use pencils when working with special collections materials, to avoid possible disfigurement from inks.
- Manuscript leaves should be handled as gently and as little as possible, with fingers in the non-text areas of the sheet whenever possible.
- Do not rest anything on top of special collections materials. Acid free slips (for use as place markers) are available in the storage closet.
- Manuscript folders should remain flat on the table at all times. Contents should also remain flat and in order while they are being worked with.
- No marks should be added or erased from library materials.
- All materials in boxes and folders should be maintained in original order. Please use an acid free slip to mark your place. Realign documents in file folders before returning a file folder to a box.
- After scanning, be sure to return letters with their enclosures, wrappers or envelopes as found.
- Be sure you have adequate space for handling oversize documents.
- Carry oversize items with two hands. Support the weight of the object from underneath using the palm and forearm, and balance it using the opposite hand. When transporting any large, heavy item or numerous items use a book cart.
- Avoid touching fragile photographic materials; salts in human perspiration may damage surfaces. Clean lint-free gloves should be used when handling negatives and photographs that are not in sleeves. There is a supply of cotton gloves in the storage cabinet.
- If an item must be moved a short distance or turned over during examination, use an auxiliary support (such as a piece of rag board or folder stock) to protect it from damage caused by unnecessary touching, bending, and flexing, etc.

- How a book is handled and used contributes to its longevity. If a book will not lay flat, do not use force it to open further. The covers should always be supported when the book is open.
- When handling scrapbooks carefully support the binding and the pages. Brittle pages can break, items can easily become detached or torn, and bindings can also break.