Preserving Historic Scrapbooks & Making New Ones That Last

An ALCTS Webinar for National Preservation Week

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Historic Scrapbooks at ISU Library

• Over 1,400 scrapbooks (1800s – present day)

• Goals of project:
  • Inventory
  • Stabilize
  • Rehouse
  • Digitize
What Is a Scrapbook, Anyway?

Binding + Supports + Attachments + Ephemera
Binding

- Sewn Binding
- Laced Binding
- (Hinged) Post Binding
### Supports
- Paper pages
- "Magnetic" or self-adhesive pages
- Plastic sleeves
- Plastic overlays

### Attachments
- Adhesive
- Tape
- Pins
- Paperclips
- Staples

Paperclip photo credit: [http://hsli.lib.unc.edu/specialcollections/handlingmaterials](http://hsli.lib.unc.edu/specialcollections/handlingmaterials)
Ephemera

- Photographs
- Newspaper clippings
- Programs/brochures/cards
- Pressed flowers
- Swatches of cloth
- Locks of hair
- Buttons
- Currency
- Artwork
Risks to Scrapbooks & Storage Considerations

- Light
- Temperature/humidity
- Indoor air pollution/dust
- Pests
- Mold
- Handling
- **Inherent Vice***

- Minimize light exposure
- Store at 55° to 70° Fahrenheit and 30% to 50% RH
- Clean, dust-free location
- Store in an enclosure
  - boxes, folders, wrappers, paper envelopes, etc.
Inherent Vice

- Strained structures
- Acidic papers
- Unstable plastics
- Failing/creeping adhesives
- Corroding staples, pins
Mitigating Inherent Vice

- **Interleaving**
  - Phototex paper (unbuffered)
  - Permalife paper (buffered)

- **Isolation/encapsulation**
  - Paper envelopes (buffered or unbuffered)
  - Mylar/Melinex
  - Polyethylene sleeves
Mitigating Inherent Vice

- **Stabilization**
  - Reattach ephemera
    - Wheat starch paste
    - PVA (polyvinyl acetate)
    - Photo corners
      (Mylar or paper)
  - Relax stuffed bindings
    - Loosen laces or posts
    - Remove blank pages
Mitigating Inherent Vice

- **Surrogates**
  - Preservation photocopy
  - Facsimile
  - Digital surrogate
Mitigating Inherent Vice

- **Enclosures**
  - Boxes
  - Folders
  - Four-flap wrappers
  - Foam or board for additional support
Mitigating Inherent Vice

Other Rehousing Options:

- **Disbinding**
  - Removing supports from binding

- **Disassembly**
  - Removing ephemera from supports and rehousing them
Decision-Making #1

• What do you see in this photo?
• What would you do with this scrapbook?
Decision-Making #2

• What do you see in these photos?
• What would you do with this scrapbook?
Decision-Making #3

- What do you see in these photos?
- What would you do with this scrapbook?
Decision-Making #4

- What problems do you see in these photos?
- What would you do with this scrapbook?
Decision-Making #5
Creating New Scrapbooks That Last

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More Stable Choices</th>
<th>Materials To Avoid</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acid-Free*</td>
<td>Solvent-based adhesives (such as rubber cement)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Archival*</td>
<td>Pressure-sensitive tape (such as scotch tape, masking tape, duck tape, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lignin-Free*</td>
<td>Adhesive “dots”</td>
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<td>Cotton rag papers</td>
<td>Metal clips and pins</td>
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<tr>
<td>PVA (polyvinyl acetate)</td>
<td>PVC (polyvinyl chloride) plastic</td>
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<td>UHU Stic glue stick</td>
<td>Kraft, “construction,” and other acidic papers</td>
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<td>Wheat Starch Paste**</td>
<td>Original photographs</td>
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<td>Water-moistenable gummed linen tape</td>
<td>Self-adhesive (“magnetic”) albums</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polyethylene plastic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polypropylene plastic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mylar/Melinex film</td>
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<tr>
<td>Printed digital copies of photographs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper or Mylar “photo corners”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Binding structures with spacers or stubs</td>
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</tbody>
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Creating New Scrapbooks

- Test decorative papers and storage boxes with an Abbey pH pen.
- Purple = neutral or alkaline pH.
- Yellow = acidic pH.
A Note About Product Terminology

- “Archival”
  - Not a regulated term, so meaningless on consumer products.

- “Acid-Free”
  - Neutral pH at time of manufacture only.
  - Can become acidic over time.
  - Some manufacturers will put this term on items that are inherently acid-free.

- “Lignin-Free”
  - Lignin breaks down and causes wood pulp paper to become acidic.
  - Use lignin-free paper whenever possible.
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