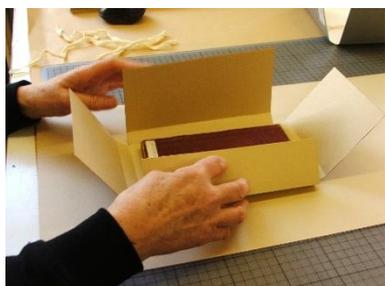




Packaging shows collection care

This sheet will describe:

- benefits to collections;
- packaging formats;
- archival standards.



Packaging archival material is an easy, cost effective and valuable way of protecting collections. Packaging is most effective if there is an outer enclosure such as a box, plus inner packaging which encloses the document itself such as a folder. Original packaging materials may also form part of an archive's context and therefore should be enclosed in packaging themselves.

Benefits

- physical protection;
- buffering from the environment;
- surfaces for labelling;
- standardises physical formats;
- groups items.

Types

Common archive packaging formats include:

- transparent sleeves;
- folders;
- boxes;
- wrappers;
- dividers;
- ties.

Design

Packaging may be bought ready-made or hand-made to fit a document. Design should fit correctly, be easy to use and not cause damage to a document, especially when the packaging is removed.

Factors to consider when selecting packaging materials and designs include: cost; expansion space available; frequency of access; availability of surrogates; type of document and skills, tools, space and time available.

Materials

A range of materials can be used for packaging, including paper and cards, plastics and textiles. Archival quality materials are recommended, with the highest quality in contact with the item itself. Poor quality materials may adversely affect documents, for example with discolouration, acidity or dye transfer.

Good archival packaging is designed to: last for the foreseeable future; shield collections from the damaging effects of the environment, handling, storage and other materials; and actively slow deterioration of collections.



Specifications for materials

The British Standards below describe specifications for materials which may be used for packaging archives and meet certain levels of purity, permanence, durability and stability. Purchasing materials which reference these standards should mean they will be of an appropriate quality.

BS EN ISO 9706:2000 - Paper for Documents: Requirements for Permanence

Permanence means the ability to remain chemically and physically stable over long periods of time; permanent paper will undergo little change over time in the correct conditions. The standard includes strength and acid resisting requirements.

BS ISO 11108: 1996 - Archival Paper: Requirements for permanence and durability

Archival paper has both high permanence and high durability, i.e. resisting wear and tear. Fibres should be mostly cotton, cotton linters, hemp, flax or mixes. Folding endurance is an additional requirement to 9706 above. Paper made to this standard also meets 9706.

BS ISO 18902:2013 - Imaging materials. Processed imaging materials. Albums, framing and storage materials

Requirements include pH levels and non-bleeding dyes. Fibres may include unprinted, pre-consumer waste but post-consumer recycled is not acceptable. Materials must also pass the PAT test in ISO 18916 below. PVC, nitrate and acetate are not permitted, neither are plasticised coatings. Suitable plastics listed are: polyester; polystyrene; polyethylene and polypropylene.

BS ISO 18916:2007 - Imaging materials. Processed imaging materials. Photographic activity test (PAT) for enclosure materials

This includes a broader range of materials than 18902 as it includes plastics and the predictive PAT test. Materials which pass this test are deemed suitable for packaging photographic material.

Assessing packaging needs

The most impact can be gained from packaging if a broad assessment of a collection's needs is made first. Prioritisation can then take account of the space, resources and collections information available, targeting items at higher risk.