

PAPER

Introduction

The care and treatment of paper is a specialized study that takes training and experience to master properly. HOW long a paper artifact lasts depends on the raw materials from which it is made and the kind of treatment it receives. All conservation work performed on paper must be executed by a trained conservator. The following rules and regulations should be followed to protect paper artifacts in the collection.

General Rules

1. Never handle a book or piece of paper with dirty hands. Always check hands before picking up a paper artifact. Be sure the work area is hospital clean before working. Cover the workbench with unused newsprint or glassine paper, changing it as it becomes soiled.

2. Be on the lookout for all defects and note the extent of the problem on the conservation worksheet. Watch for signs of excessive dampness in the form of "foxing." Foxing is caused by fungus growth and appears in the form of orangy-brown spots. It can rapidly spread over the entire surface of the paper and must be handled by a trained paper conservator.

Look for other defects in the form of wax spots, stains, varnished papers, grease or oil stains, or severe creasing. Make note of the extent of the damage and call in an approved trained conservator as soon as possible. Look for prints or papers that have been improperly mounted or glued to their backing material. When these defects are found, have the papers dismounted by an expert. Never attempt to do this yourself.

3. When hinge-mounting a paper artifact, use an all-rag auxiliary support of museum board. This type of board has been treated and has had all chemical impurities removed that can damage the artifact. When mounting, hinge only at the top and allow to hang free. Use only Japanese paper hinges and a chemically pure wheat paste. Never mount solidly against the support. If a paper artifact is found in this condition, make a note of it on the conservation worksheet and leave it alone until a conservator can be appointed by the Collection Center to work on it.

4. If a paper artifact is framed, do not allow it to come in direct contact with the glass. An all-rag

separator must be placed between the mount and the glass. Never back a paper item with wood of any kind. Never back with acid cardboard.

5. Never use any form of Scotch or other pressure sensitive tape on paper. Never use an eraser to attempt removal of spots, stains, or other marks on the surface of papers. Never use rubber cement or staples. Never attempt to remove creases in paper by ironing.

6. Contaminated paper artifacts or items in doubt must be fumigated. A suitable chamber can be improvised by using a relatively air-tight cabinet that can accommodate, in a horizontal position, a 30" by 25" artifact. A frame should be hung two feet above the bottom of the cabinet and covered with a net or wire screen to support the artifact. On the bottom of the cabinet place a 40-watt bulb and suspend above it on a wire stand a dish of thymol crystals. The bulb will vaporize the crystals for which one ounce for a 16-cubic foot cabinet is needed. The bulb should be switched on for two hours every day for fourteen days. After each treatment the cabinet should be kept sealed for 24 hours. If a great many artifacts are done at one time, they should be rearranged before each heating session to be sure the vapor is reaching them all. Stand books on end with the pages fanned open. It is important that the chamber be internally free from paint. This process should not be used until it has been set up and executed under the direction of a conservator.

7. Keep paper artifacts out of direct sunlight. Old and important documents should not be exhibited. They should be kept in total darkness. If a document is needed for display, a photocopy should be used. Never expose paper to severe fluctuation of temperature or humidity. Keep it away from known sources of harmful chemical vapors.

8. All accession marks or other notations should be carefully made with No. 2, 2/3 or No. 3 pencil.

Storage

1. Maintain a constant relative humidity of 30% in the storage area. Keep the temperature between 65° and 75°F.

2. Make sure that the room is kept clean and dust free.

3. Keep the room dark when it is not in use.

4. Only rag paper or rag mat boards that are acid free should be in direct contact with paper items

in storage.

5. Never store flat papers between sheets of ordinary cardboard, which may be quite acid and damage the paper.

6. Store documents, watercolors, prints, etc. in specially constructed rag mat boxes or folders on wooden shelves covered with aluminum foil.

7. Unframed works of art should be covered with glassine paper or Japanese mending paper before they are placed in hinged mats for storage. These matted works should then be stored in solander boxes. Larger matted works are stored in portfolios. Shelves that pull out facilitate the handling of boxes stored in closed cabinets.

8. Framed watercolors, prints, drawings, etc. are stored in bins or on screens.

9. Old photographs may be protected with glassine paper or Japanese mending paper and stored in solander boxes or portfolios.