

# Archival 101 & Working with Suppliers of Archival Products



AN ALCTS WEBINAR BY:  
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## About me

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After beginning as work-study in preservation at Johns Hopkins, Verheyen studied binding and conservation in Germany and Switzerland to become a rare book conservator working in private practice and research library preservation programs. He established the conservation lab for the treatment of special collections materials at Syracuse University Library, where he is also past head of conservation and preservation. He has been co-teaching ALCTS' Fundamentals of Preservation online class since 2011 (corrected 5/1).



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## What is archival, what does it mean...

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- Not easily quantifiable.
- Can mean different things for different materials.
- Storing / treating an item with the most sound appropriate material in the proper environment.
- Implies long term retention and storage.
- BUT
- Overused (especially in marketing) and misunderstood.

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## Issues & problems with materials

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- Poor environment (too hot / humid...).
- Poor storage materials.
- Handling.
- Disaster preparedness, or lack thereof.
- Quality of artifacts: Acidic, brittle, torn, fragile, sensitive.

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## Solutions

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- **Proper storage.**
  - “Archival” materials appropriate for artifact.
    - ✦ Boxes, folders, binders, albums, enclosures, raw materials...
- **Proper environment.**
  - ✦ UV filters, desiccant, hygro-thermographs to monitor
- **Repair / Conservation.**
  - ✦ adhesives, tapes, papers, board, cloth, erasers, tools.

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## Acid-Free

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- **All paper / paper board products will be acid-free.**
  - Some buffered (alkaline, pH 8 - 9).
  - Some unbuffered (neutral, pH around 7).
- **pH will be acid-free/alkaline at time of manufacture.**
  - Will become acidic over time as dust and other degradation products are absorbed from air and artifacts.

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## Acid-Free

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- **Wait! Does this mean that I need to replace all my boxes...**
- **No – boxes still protect artifacts from light, dust, handling.**
  - No feasible for just about any organization to deacidify all documents and replace boxes / folders on regular schedule.
- **But, replace if breaking down or real deterioration noted.**

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## Buffered / Unbuffered

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- **Buffered vs. unbuffered vs. acid-free.**
  - Buffered preferred for most materials except some photographs and textiles.
  - Buffered materials will absorb acids from air/dust/... for a longer period of time than unbuffered. Eventually will become acidic though too.
  - Have higher pH and CaCO<sub>3</sub> Reserve (ca 3%) – the buffering.
  - Acid-free means neutral pH (7.0ish) at time of manufacture. Generally has no buffering.

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## Lignin free

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- **Lignin free.**
  - Lignin is part of the plants used to make paper.
  - Can be removed when pulp is extracted chemically but remains in groundwood papers such as newsprint.
  - Responsible for rapid aging and yellowing of newsprint.
  - Lignin is not desired.

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## Lignin free

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- **Lignin free.**
  - All archival paper products are lignin free.
    - ✦ Blue/grey
    - ✦ Tan
    - ✦ Corrugated
    - ✦ ...
  - Tan boxes cost more than “blue/grey.”
    - ✦ Unbuffered likely to be tan only.

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## Plastics

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- **Plastics safe for “archival” storage.**
  - Mylar: Crystal clear, rigid, inert film.
  - Polypropylene: Like Mylar but not as stiff.
  - Polyethylene: Inert, but less clear and stiff.



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## Plastics

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- **PVC and Acetate: BAD!!!**  
PVC will off-gas chlorine which forms hydrochloric acid and will cause serious damage. Common in cheaper sleeves / albums. Can become brittle/break.
- Not used anymore but still found within collections, and the corners of your supply room.



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## Newspaper

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- **Newspaper**
  - Made from poor quality groundwood paper.
  - Very acidic.
- If in good condition deacidify and store in buffered enclosure or sleeve. Bookkeeper recommended.
- If in poor condition, make photocopy onto acid-free paper and deacidify original before putting into sleeve if need to keep.

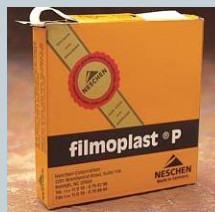
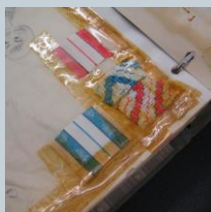


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## Adhesives I

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- **Tapes / Glue sticks...**
  - Objects can be difficult to remove and tape/glue can cause damage.
  - Try to avoid if possible. If you have to use tape use Filmoplast. Has buffered paper carrier with acrylic based adhesive.

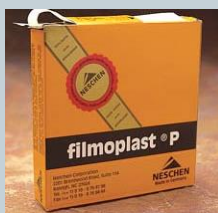


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## Adhesives II

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- For mending tears in circulating collections books...
  - Filmoplast best.
    - ✦ Has buffered paper carrier with acrylic based adhesive.
    - ✦ More flexible than polyester tapes.



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## Adhesives III

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- For mounting objects use archival photo corners or strips instead.
  - Inert materials won't react with photos...
  - Easy to remove, no adhesive touches materials.
  - *They're not just for photos...*



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## New Technologies I

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- **Laser printer: Pigment based and sit on surface of paper. Held together with a binder. Fade resistant but can abrade/crack especially with “wrong” papers.**
- **Ink Jet:**
  - Dye based: Colors more likely to fade and water/moisture sensitive – will bleed when exposed.
  - Pigment based: More “archival,” less likely to fade/bleed. Used for “art” prints. Also called glicee.
  - For both, great variety of inks available, some better than others. Price a fair indicator of quality.

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## New Technologies II

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- **CD/DVD: Never an “archival” storage media**
  - Even “gold” media can fail.
    - ✦ Scratches..., especially on varnished side.
    - ✦ Rapid advances in technology will render obsolete.
    - ✦ Variety of ever changing DVD formats...
- **Recommend storage on servers with regular back up.**
- **For tapes (reel-to-reel, cassette, video).**
  - House in cool, dry environment.
  - Migrate to digital / replace.
  - Technology obsolete.

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## How long do they last?

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- **How long will items last when put in archival materials?**
  - It depends. Variables such as chemistry of artifact, temperature, humidity, condition, and usage will make a difference.
  - Most archival paper materials designed to last 500 years under optimal conditions.
  - Some plastics can last almost forever.

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## PAT: Photo Activity Test

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- **Tests the reactivity of materials with photographs**
  - Performed on paper, board, plastics...
  - Usually requested by mfg. or seller.
  - Indicates that material is safe for use with photographs, though caution is called for.
  - PAT should be indicated in catalog.
  - Most paper/board/plastics sold by archival vendors safe, though not always indicated.

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## Expensive?

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- **Why so expensive?**
  - Cost of raw materials. Archival quality materials cost more to produce as “ingredients” have to be of a higher/purer grade.
  - Market forces and perception.
    - ✦ Made for a select group. This is changing as more vendors begin to make and label products as archival. Costs will go down, as “archival” becomes a commodity.

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## “Undifferentiated” Product

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- **Archival supplies have become commodity items.**
  - Products come from the same range of suppliers.
  - Composed of same raw stock and made with same equipment.
  - All geared towards same standards.
  - Quality relatively uniform, though some vendors better at some things than others.

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## Differences

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- May be some visual/tactile differences between boards used among vendors.
- These DO NOT affect performance.
- COST
  - Customers will shop around, especially those working at the higher end, in conservation labs...
    - ✦ Can ignore purchasing contracts... to get what they need.

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## Be Flexible & Creative

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- Materials can often be adapted for different purposes.
  - Use slide/photo pages for ephemera like buttons.
  - Put clippings in photo pages rather than adhering to album pages (back with acid-free paper).
  - Most copier/printer papers already buffered. Test with Abbey pH pen.



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## Be Flexible & Creative

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- **Glue-in binders problematic.**
  - Hard edge of cloth can cause problems with brittle or valuable materials. Solution: Fold piece of good paper around pamphlet, sew, then glue in.
- **Make own envelope binders by sticking archival envelope into glue-in binder.**
- **Make own “envelope sling.”**
  - Fold piece of paper around brittle material, then insert.



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## Custom Orders I

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- **For odd shapes and sizes, ask for custom enclosures.**
  - Binders / folders / enclosures.
    - ✦ Ensure “perfect” fit.
    - ✦ Be proactive – ask for this when looking to protect odd sizes.



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## Custom Orders II

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- **Material tips**
  - If it's made with one board, can be made with others
  - Metal-edged designs ok as well as some ship-flat
  - Corrugated cheaper than blue/gray, than tan...
    - ✦ EVERYONE is price conscious.
    - ✦ NO difference in quality.
- **They have the materials and technology, make use of it!**

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## Vendor Provided Guides

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- **Vendor Information:**
  - Gaylord
    - ✦ [Tips and guides](#)
    - ✦ In particular Guide to Collections Care: Paper, Photographs, Textiles & Books (PDF) at bottom of page.
  - University Products
    - ✦ [Resources](#)
  - Hollinger – Metal Edge
    - ✦ [Guide to products](#)
  - Other vendors have them too...

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## Learning More

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- A wealth of information is to be found on the Internet:
  - Fundamentals of Preservation – ALCTS online course
    - ✦ [http://www.ala.org/alcts/confevents/upcoming/webcourse/fpres/ol\\_templ](http://www.ala.org/alcts/confevents/upcoming/webcourse/fpres/ol_templ)
  - Connecting to Collections Online Community (webinars)
    - ✦ <http://www.connectingtocollections.org/topic/recordings/>
  - Dear Donia @ your library (better than “Dear Abby”)
    - ✦ <http://atyourlibrary.org/passiton/dear-donia>
  - ALCTS Preservation Webinar Archive (free)
    - ✦ <http://www.ala.org/alcts/confevents/upcoming/webinar/pres>
  - Northeast Document Conservation Center (leaflets and more)
    - ✦ <http://www.nedcc.org>

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## Thank you

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- Please feel free to contact me with questions as they arise...
- Conservation & Preservation Resources at Syracuse
  - <http://researchguides.library.syr.edu/preservation>
- Thank you to the Gaylord and the Archival Team



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