

## Conservation Guidelines for Camera Operators

### Iraqi Jewish Archive Preservation Project National Archives and Records Administration

The purpose of these guidelines is to facilitate the best image capture and to ensure the safety of the records during imaging. During the course of this project, imaging staff will digitize both loose and bound records. All records will be reviewed for conservation and handling issues by Conservation staff prior to imaging.

#### Project Overview:

There are 3,846 IJA objects in a variety of formats and in varying condition. Many of these will be imaged. All of the materials were subjected to adverse conditions, including a water event that caused severe distortion and mold damage across most of the collection. The IJA librarian is cataloging each object in the collection, but is not doing archival organization or rearranging the material. One IJA item may contain a single book or a gathering of documents.

#### Languages:

Along with many European languages, IJA materials are written in Arabic, Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic. These Semitic languages read from right to left, and as a result, the pages turn the opposite way from what we are used to in the US.

Hebrew: Text reads this direction.

←

חַסֵּל סְדוּר פֶּסַח כְּהִלְכָתוֹ,  
כָּכָל מִשְׁפָּטוֹ וְחֻקָּתוֹ.  
בְּאֲשֶׁר זָכִינוּ לְסִדֵּר אוֹתוֹ,  
בֵּן נְזֻכָה לְעִשׂוֹתוֹ.  
זֶךְ שׁוֹכֵן מְעוֹנָה,  
קוֹמֵם קְהֵל עֵדוּת מִי מְנָה.  
בְּקִרְוֵב נִהַל נְטֵעֵי כְנָה,  
פְּדוּיִם לְצִיּוֹן בְּרָנָה.

Judeo-Arabic: Text reads this direction.

←

יא ויקח המן את הלבוש ואת הסוס וילבש את מרדכי  
וירכיבוו צרחוב העיר ויקרא לפניו ככה יעשה לאיש אשר  
המלך הפך צוקרו: יב וישב מרדכי אל שער המלך והמן  
גדחף אל ביתו אבל והפוי ראש: יג ויספר המן לזרש אשתו  
ולכל אהביו את כל אשר קרבו ויאמרו לו הכנינו זרש אשתו  
אם נזרע היבודים מרדכי אשר החליט לנפל לפניו לא תוכל  
לו כי נפול תפול לפניו: יד עודם מדברים עמו וסריסי המלך  
הגיעו ויצילו להציל את המן אל המשתה אשר עשתה  
חסתה:

■ جبهة التحرير بالجزائر تفوز بالانتخابات  
■ واشنطن تعزل علي خبطة آنان بسوريا  
■ قمة الخليج تبحث اتحاد السعودية والبحرين  
■ إخوان الأردن: النظام فاسد ومستبد

Arabic: Text reads this direction.

←

## Conservation Treatment and Review Prior to Imaging:

Every IJA object was assigned a number during Phase II of the project. That number was written on a strip of alkaline paper, which must travel with the object at all times and will eventually return to Iraq with the object. During this current and final Phase III of the project, each IJA object will travel with a work ticket. The printed information on the top of the work ticket is from the database, and the other parts of the work ticket are filled in as the object travels through Conservation, Cataloging and Digital Imaging. The work ticket and the alkaline strip should travel with the object at all times, but are not being imaged. The work ticket includes a space for instructions to imaging, as well as whether or not redaction is needed, and space to write which imaging batch it came in. Imaging staff are responsible for writing the image count on the work ticket for future reference.

Before coming to the imaging lab, each IJA item is examined by a conservator and treated for mold if needed. Necessary treatment steps are taken to allow the object to be imaged (mending tears across text, flattening severe distortion). Each object will be rehoused in either a custom-sized box or in folders and document boxes. Conservation staff will remove damaging fasteners and replace them with stainless steel paper clips over barrier strips of Permalife paper.

The Cataloger will create and provide a Title Page for the first image capture for each IJA object. The Title Page will have the IJA number and the most complete title information as of the day the object is queued for imaging.

## IJA Materials by Format:

### Unbound Archival Materials

Unbound Materials are prepared in Conservation and will come to imaging in folders within document boxes.

- Follow special imaging instructions on each item's work ticket, which will be the first page in the folder. The work ticket and the Permalife strip with the IJA number on it must remain with the object at all times. The work ticket and Permalife strip will not be imaged.
- Unless noted on the work ticket, all flat documents may be imaged on the flatbed scanner, under hinged glass or on top of the glass at the Digital Imaging lab's discretion.
- Some documents will be housed in polyester L-sleeves. Please do not remove items from their sleeves.
- Some documents will be encapsulated. Please do not cut open encapsulations.
- Maintain original page order in folders. IJA objects in multiple languages often have no apparent order and should be imaged as found.
- A single IJA number may fill more than one folder. In these instances, folder breaks are defined by the thickness of material and how many documents safely fit within the folder.
- Some items may exceed the dimensions of the flatbed scanner. These items must be imaged using the overhead camera. IJA objects that contain items larger than will fit on the flatbed scanner will have a flag marking the larger item and "oversize" written on the work ticket.

- Use a support board (provided by Conservation) for moving material from one imaging station to another.
- For each folder, Conservation staff has included instructional inserts behind the work ticket and at the front and back of each folder indicating text orientation as an aid to the camera operators (see Images 1 and 2). Like the work ticket, the instructional inserts are not imaged.
- When you encounter flags or instructional inserts in file folders, keep them in place when you move on to the next document.



**Image 1**

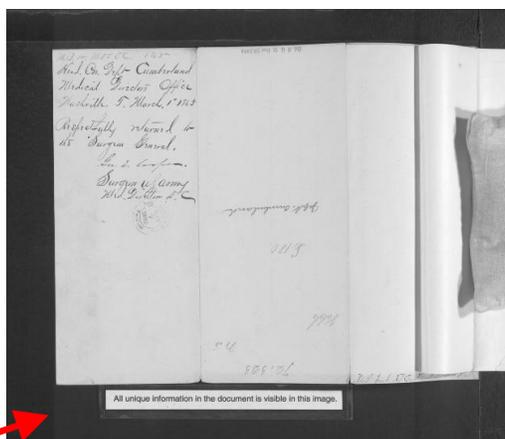
Instructional (green) insert in the front



**Image 2**

Instructional (salmon) insert in the back

- Conservation staff will insert flags in folders to indicate to camera operators when to use slugs. Slugs help us communicate with the researcher viewing the images (see Image 3).



**Image 3**

Image with slug

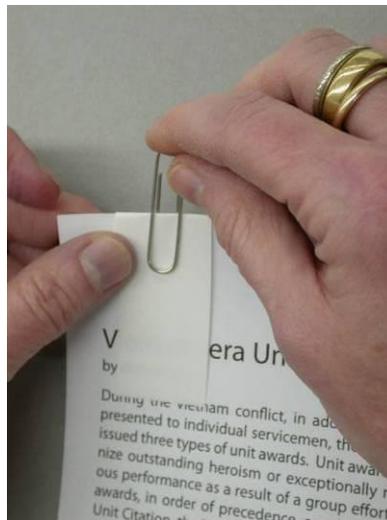
- The collection contains many duplicates. Conservation staff will treat one copy and place the untreated copies in a polyethylene bag. If an IJA entry contains duplicates, the entire entry (with duplicates) will travel together to the Digital Imaging lab.

Only image the treated copy that is not in a plastic bag. Do not open the polyethylene bags (see Image 4).



**Image 4**  
**Duplicates housed in polyethylene bags**

- Conservation staff will remove fasteners when necessary. Fasteners will be replaced with a stainless steel paper clip and a barrier strip of Permalife paper (see Image 5). Carefully remove and set aside the stainless steel paper clip and barrier strip. Replace the Permalife barrier strip and paper clip post imaging.



**Image 5**  
**Stainless steel paper clip and barrier strip**

- Conservation staff will unfold dog eared corners on documents if there is text under the fold. Conservation does not expect the Digital Imaging lab to flatten folded corners. If the Digital Imaging lab encounters a folded corner, they can presume the fold has been reviewed by Conservation and conservators have not found text underneath.

- Documents in multiple pieces should all be repaired prior to imaging. The Digital Imaging lab is not expected to and should not piece together fragments of a document prior to imaging.

## Bound Materials

There are a variety of binding styles. The majority of volumes are in poor condition. Many books are “stab sewn” and do not open flat. Many bindings are severely distorted.

- Follow special imaging instructions on each item’s work ticket.
- Conservation staff will place a colored paper flag(s) with the work ticket indicating whether it may be imaged underneath the hinged glass platen or will need to be imaged on top of the glass (see Image 6).
  - A **green** flag will indicate it is OK to use the hinged glass platen on top of the object. For thicker books, the green flag will also remind the camera operator to use spacers under the glass. Green flagged books may be imaged on top of the glass at the discretion of Digital Imaging staff.
  - A **yellow** flag will indicate hinged glass may not be used on top of the object.
  - A **red** flag means Conservation should be called prior to imaging this item.



**Image 6**  
Use of a **green** flag



**Image 7**  
Instructional inserts shown, front, back, and text direction.

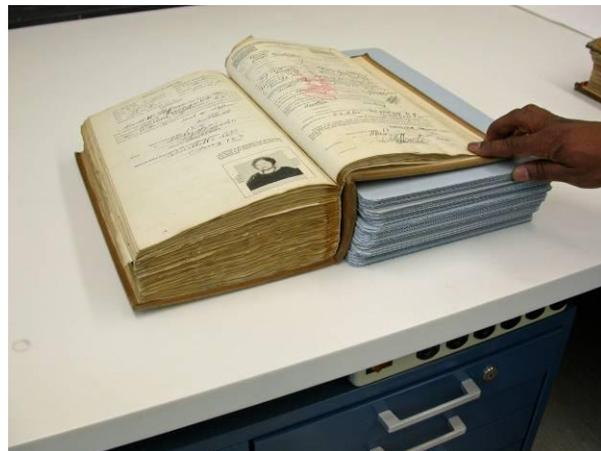
- Instructional inserts will indicate the front and back of a volume as well as the text orientation, just as used with loose records. (see Image 7).
- Flags inserted by Conservation staff in bound volumes will have the same quarter-sheet format as the instructional inserts so as not to protrude from the volume and interfere with imaging. Once camera operators have acted upon the instruction in the flag, they can be removed and returned to Conservation for re-use.
- Many pages have losses where text from the page underneath shows through. Insert a slip sheet (provided by Conservation in a variety of sizes) under the loss to hide the text

Imaging without the use of the hinged glass on top of an object:

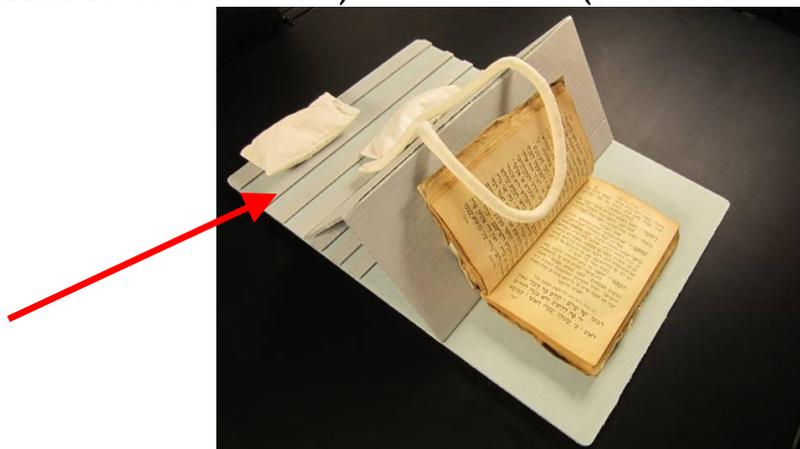
- If a volume must be imaged on top of the glass, Conservation will recommend the use of layers of acid-free board to support the volumes (see Images 8 and 9) or a cardboard cradle (see Image 10).
- The individual boards used to in the support stack should be taller and wider than the book cover it is supporting (see Images 8 and 9).
  - The angle of the cardboard cradle is adjustable. Tight bindings which do not open well will need a cradle opening adjusted close to 90°. Loose bindings may be opened wider and can therefore be accommodated with a more obtuse opening. Books will vary in how readily they open; do not force them open.



**Image 8**  
Support board under front cover  
(or back cover if in Arabic)



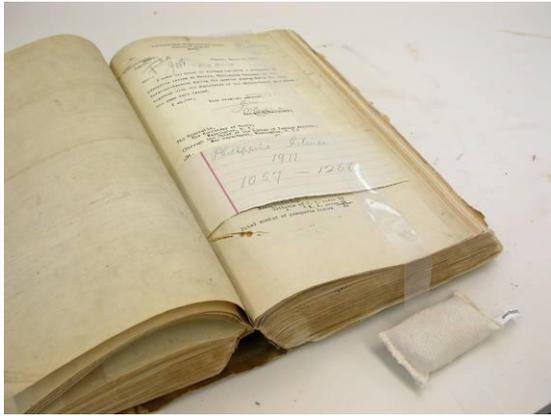
**Image 9**  
Support board under back cover  
(or front cover if in Arabic)



**Image 10**  
Distorted volume in cardboard cradle  
(note arrow pointing to cradle backstops to change the angle of opening)

- Pages may be too distorted to lay flat during imaging. If necessary, use the following methods to restrain “springy” or severely distorted pages:

- Drapery weights or bean bag weights. Please change soiled covers frequently on bean bag weights and contact Conservation for clean covers on drapery weights (see Image 10).
- Polyester sheet with rounded corners.
- Polyethylene strapping held with bean bag weights (Images 11 and 12).
- Tyvek or polyethylene strapping held with Velcro to the back of the cradle.



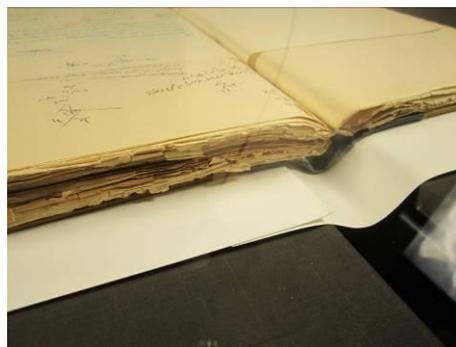
**Image 11**  
**Polyethylene strapping with weight**



**Image 12**  
**Detail of strapping**

Imaging with hinged glass on top of the object:

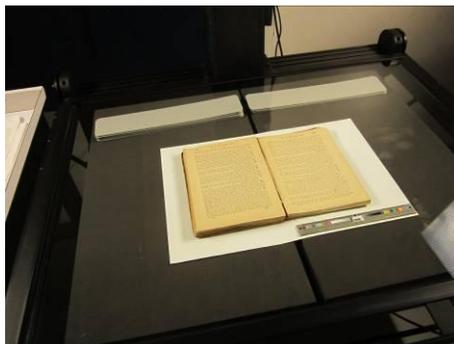
- Using the foot pedal, lower the integrated cradle to accommodate the thickness of the book. Thicker books will require a lower initial starting point.
- Adjust the space between the two platen halves to approximately the same width of a volume's spine (see Image 13).



**Image 13**  
**Integrated cradle spaced  
to accommodate the spine width**

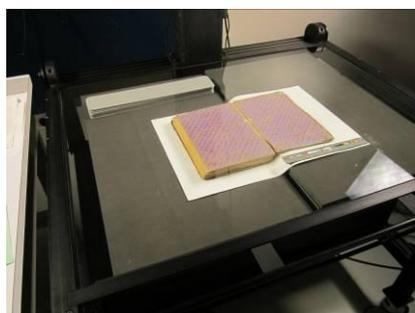
- Position the height of the integrated cradle first and then slowly lower the glass onto the book. Do not lower the glass first and then raise the integrated cradle. Testing revealed this to be the preferred positioning order safest for the volumes.
- Lower the glass to apply comfortable pressure to the volume. If closing the glass becomes difficult, stop, and lower the platen before attempting to lower the hinged glass onto the volume.

- Conservation will flag some books as “Glass - use spacers”. These spacers (see Image 14) will ease the pressure on the head of the book as the glass platen closes.



**Image 14**  
Corrugated spacers ease the pressure of the glass on the book

- For Hebrew and Arabic books, start with the spacers on the left side of the integrated cradle, and slowly transfer them to the right side of the cradle as imaging progresses (see Images 15-17).



**Image 15**  
Spacers start on the left



**Image 16**  
Spacers are evenly split in the middle of the book



**Image 17**  
Spacers end on the right

- Many of the books are brittle and/or distorted, but are flexible and still open well enough to be imaged under glass (see Images 18-19). These will be marked with a **green** flag.



**Image 18**  
Distorted book



**Image 19**  
Distorted book under glass

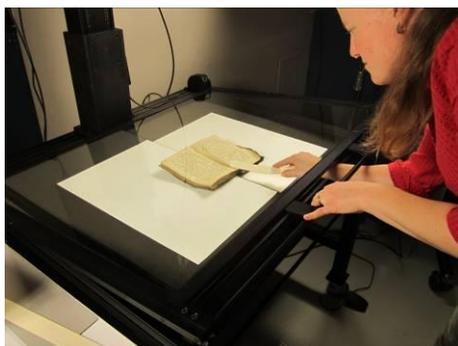
- Some book pages will crack if creased under glass. To prevent this, use the flat side of a matboard tool (provided by Conservation) to gently restrain distorted and springy pages while slowly lowering the hinged glass (see Images 20-23).



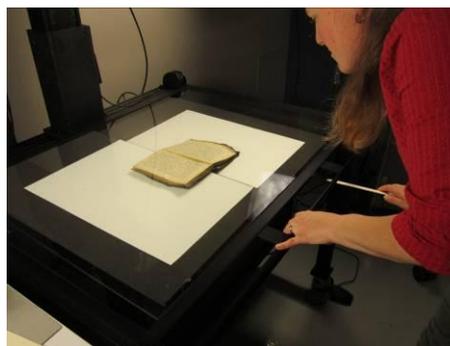
**Image 20**  
Distorted and springy page



**Image 21**  
Matboard tool



**Image 22**  
Gently lower glass  
while positioning the page with  
the matboard tool



**Image 23**  
Remove tool before completely  
lowering the hinged glass

**Additional Notes:**

- Many volumes contain loose or fragile pages at the front and back of the textblock (see Images 26 and 27). Occasionally, loose pages have been found in other areas of the volumes. The loose pages should be imaged where found and handled carefully.



**Image 26**

**Loose pages in back of volume**



**Image 27**

**Detail of loose pages**

- If for any reason you do not feel comfortable handling any object, please set the item aside and contact Conservation. Examples may include:
  - Books that cannot open adequately even to image one page at a time.
  - Creases and/or folds that obscure text and must be relaxed to permit full image capture.
  - Attachments that obscure underlying text or are too large or damaged to be handled.
  - Any other unusual conditions present that make imaging difficult.
- Some complex and challenging volumes may require handling by two camera operators.
- If a volume begins to incur damage during imaging, please stop and contact Conservation for assistance.

