



Conservation Guidelines for Handling, Housing, and Treatment

Iraqi Jewish Archive Preservation Project National Archives and Records Administration

Treatment Goals:

- Rehouse all materials in sturdy archival boxes that protect and contain their contents.
- Remediate mold on items to be digitized to protect the health and safety of staff and future researchers.
- Stabilize the physical condition of collection items to permit safe handling, full imaging, and access to information. Treatments that are out of scope for this project include structural binding repairs, tape and previous mend removal when legibility is not impeded, and surface cleaning after mold remediation.
- Perform more extensive conservation treatment on selected items to permit safe exhibition.

Mold Removal:

- Materials that are selected for imaging will receive thorough mold mitigation to allow them to be handled through all phases of the project. Some materials will not be imaged and thus not mitigated for mold.
- Mold mitigation will follow NARA's established Conservation protocols, modified to the needs of the project (see IJA Conservation Guideline: Procedure for Handling and Treating Mold-Damaged Records).

Maintaining Original Order:

- Materials grouped together into a single IJA entry will remain physically grouped together. They will not be separated or regrouped. Any intellectual connections to other IJA materials will be documented in the database. If connections are noticed, the work ticket will be used to alert the cataloger.
- During conservation, all physical evidence of arrangement will be retained. The only exception to this rule is that pages may be rotated so that they are upright.

Holdings Maintenance for Archival Materials:

- New, preservation-quality folders will be labeled with their IJA entry number printed on a NARA-approved pressure-sensitive adhesive label in the top right hand corner. If one IJA entry needs more than one folder, the folders will be labeled “IJA # 1 of 3”, “IJA # 2 of 3”, and “IJA # 3 of 3”. The first folder of a sequence will receive the adhesive IJA# label; subsequent folders will be labeled in pencil.
- Original fasteners (staples, pins, paperclips) that could cause damage will be removed and replaced with a strip of Permalife barrier paper and a new, stainless steel paper clip in order to retain original groupings. This method will be used to associate letters and their envelopes or other original groupings. Removed fasteners (e.g. string ties, metal clips) that hold together entire IJA entries do not need to be replaced with a new fastener.
- Ring binders are generally rusty, moldy, and distorted. They will be disassembled and the binder disposed of following NARA practice. Such entries will be indicated as “disbound/disassembled” in the database. Severely degraded folders will also be disposed of following NARA practice. Before disposal, unique information, such as titles and annotations, on the damaged ring binders and folders will be reproduced with a preservation photocopy. The photocopy will remain with the materials in the new file folders. If it is not possible to capture the unique information in this way, the original enclosures will be mold remediated and retained.
- For unstable photocopies where the media immediately flakes off the page an attempt will be made to capture the information with a preservation photocopy. Depending on the condition, the original will either be retained in its original location, or referred for disposal. The photocopy will include the phrase “Copy made at United States National Archives.”
- If duplicate pages are noticed during mold remediation, they will be placed in polyethylene bags and retained in their file location. They will not be mold remediated or imaged.

Retaining Associated Fragments or Parts:

- As a result of the flooding and subsequent drying attempts, thousands of paper fragments separated from their original locations and spread throughout the collection. When fragments are found with an IJA entry, they will be retained, but not always imaged. Small unrelated fragments will be gathered in a polyethylene bag and kept with the entry, but not mold remediated or imaged. When fragments with text are larger or when they appear to be related, they will be retained and imaged in place.

- Revenue stamps are frequently found in the collection and are almost always detached as a result of exposure to water. During mold removal, stamps will be reattached in their original position with methylcellulose. If the original position is not apparent, the stamps will be retained in polyester sleeves in their approximate location.
- Photographs will be treated according to NARA's established Conservation protocols, modified to the needs of the project (see IJA Conservation Guideline: Conservation Treatment of Photographs).

Unblocking:

- For materials that are selected for imaging, an attempt will be made to separate all the pages to allow imaging. Mechanical methods will be attempted first (spatula, palette knife, bonefolder), followed by aqueous treatment as time permits.

Flattening Distorted Pages:

- Flattening methods will be carried out to facilitate imaging and full information capture. Since the glass cover on the copy stand will flatten most pages to an acceptable depth of field, conservation treatment will address text that is obscured by complex folds.
- The following flattening methods will be used, depending on the condition and format of the materials:
 - pressing between blotters under weight, dry
 - reshaping in book press, dry
 - local humidification to relax creases
 - damp blotter or Tek-wipe interleaving of bound volumes
 - Tyvek humidification pack or humidity chamber followed by blotter drying
- Slow humidification methods that could reactivate existing mold will be avoided.

Mending / Tear Stabilization:

- Mending will be carried out to facilitate imaging on the following:
 - Tears that make the record vulnerable to further damage during handling or which would distract from the appearance of the page.
 - Pages torn in two or more pieces.

Mending methods include:

- Long fiber, conservation-quality mending papers, such as Hiromi MMN-1 Tengucho, and with stable, water-reversible adhesives, such as wheat starch paste or methylcellulose.
- Long fiber, conservation-quality mending papers with stable, heat or solvent-set adhesives, such as Crompton Coated Tissue.
- Mending will be in response to the vulnerability of the paper to damage. Fragile paper will generally require more reinforcement, but with more delicate materials. Mending paper will be toned with dilute acrylic paints, not to perfectly match the original's tone but to avoid a stark contrast during imaging.
- The following alternatives or modifications to mending can be used when appropriate:
 - Polyester, sealed on one or two sides, to stabilize torn or mold-deteriorated paper. This is the preferred method for loose sheets when the tears do not affect text.
 - Full linings with heat-set tissue instead of individually shaped mends.

Mending Bound Volumes:

- All tears that cross or threaten text will be mended. Small edge tears may not be mended if the paper is otherwise stable. Outermost leaves and the title page are generally more vulnerable to damage and may require close attention to small tears.
- When books cannot be handled safely at the camera or fully imaged due to a combination of brittle paper and binding structure, tight bindings may be loosened by removing staples and/or selectively cutting sewing threads. This will be documented in the Other Treatment field in the database and, if appropriate, with pre-treatment photographs uploaded to the database. The goal is to allow the book to open to at least 95-100 degrees in the cradle at the camera.
- Stiff leather sewing supports may be slipped out of oversewing and retained separately with the book to prevent damage to book pages.

Mending Flat Paper:

- Archival documents frequently present the opportunity to mend on the blank verso with a thicker, stronger tissue than would be used over text. In this situation it is acceptable to mend with large patches of tissue or pre-cut strips, rather than individually shaped mends. Strips should not overlap.

- Untoned heat-set tissue is acceptable for slightly off-white paper, but toned mends are preferred for darker papers. The legibility of the text is the most important element to retain; care will be taken when selecting the tone and opacity of tissue to not impede legibility.
- For large brittle newspapers, it may be acceptable to flatten and realign tears, but not mend them.

Other Treatment:

- Treatments that deviate from the protocols above will be documented at the item level in the Other Treatment field in the database and, if appropriate, with pre-treatment photographs uploaded to the database.

Exhibition Treatment / Major Item Treatment:

- A small number of items chosen for exhibition or which are determined to have high intrinsic/artifactual value will receive more extensive treatment. Treatment will be in consultation with the exhibition curator and with senior staff with the IJA project, specifically to discuss how much the appearance of the object may or may not change during treatment and how much evidence of damage to retain. The methods used will be consistent with the AIC *Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice*.

Rehousing:

- All the materials in the IJA will be rehousing in preservation-quality folders and/or boxes, depending on format. The housings will:
 - Be custom-sized created with a KaseMake boxmaking machine. These come in various box styles and could include interior foam, board, or paper spacers.
 - Use standard legal-size size bond and Permalife folders, polyester sleeves, and document boxes. Where necessary, additional standard folder sizes will be used for drop-front flat storage of oversized items.
 - Not be improved when items are determined to have been adequately rehousing (e.g. tiks).
- In order to allow boxes to be shelved in reasonable order at the end of the project, the following actions will be undertaken:
 - A single IJA entry will generally be housed in its own custom-sized box, folder, or series of folders.
 - When a single IJA entry contains objects of very different size, it may be split it into several different-sized boxes.

- When there is a long series of similarly-sized, thin IJA entries in sequential number order, the series may be foldered or sleeved in a single standard-sized or custom sized box.
- Boxes containing more than one IJA object will contain contiguous IJA entries wherever possible, but oversize items will be housed in appropriate oversize boxes.
- Non-mold mitigated items will be placed in polyethylene bags within folders or in custom-sized boxes. The folders will go in document boxes.