

*Other FAQs:*

1. Why can't I enjoy a Philly Cheesesteak while reading George Washington's diary? As our collections are primarily manuscripts (in other words *one-of-a-kind*) it is important to be extra careful with them. They are not replaceable. Even chewing gum, cough drops, mints and hard candies can pose a hazard; please refrain from consuming them in the Reading Room.
2. Why do I have to use a pencil? Pencils are considered archival because the graphite is removable if it accidentally gets on a document. Ink is not. Regular wood pencils are preferred because the lead in mechanical pencils snaps more easily. This tiny piece of lead can get lost under a document and mar the surface.
3. Can I use lotion after I wash my hands? Do not use lotions or creams while handling documents. The jury is still out on whether the ingredients will damage the paper in the future. Only time will tell. Thank you for helping us err on the side of caution!
4. Can I use hand sanitizer instead of washing my hands? As with lotion, we still don't know how the synthetic perfumes will affect the paper. We request that you don't use hand sanitizer either.

*Other important tips:*

- \*Be mindful of bracelets, watches and dangling jewelry. They could snag on the edges of a document. They can also scuff, or scrape across the surface of collections.
- \*When in doubt ask for help. Our friendly Reading Room staff is there to assist with fragile collection materials or boxes which might require Houdini's skills to open. Don't hesitate to ask.

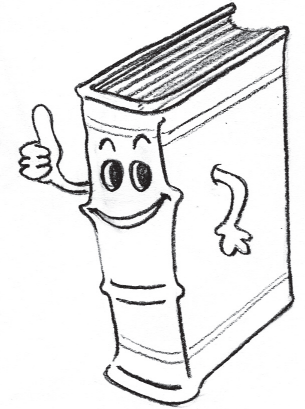
And remember...

*Take nothing but knowledge,  
leave nothing but call slips.*

This pamphlet has been compiled by HSP's Conservation Department. We thank you for reading all the way through! If you have any further questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact us: [conservation@hsp.org](mailto:conservation@hsp.org).



Historical Society  
of Pennsylvania



## HSP's Handy Guide to Collection Care: Only *YOU* can prevent Collection Damage

Are you a Rookie Researcher, Intermediate Investigator, or a Seasoned Sleuth? Take the collection handling challenge with this true/false quiz and find out!

1. *True or False:* I should wear white gloves when handling paper materials so that the oils from my hands don't damage the paper.
2. *True or False:* When I open a document box that appears to be disorderly and in disrepair, this must mean I don't have to be careful with the contents.
3. *True or False:* Most of these volumes have been around for hundreds of years; therefore they are practically indestructible!
4. *True or False:* The best way to turn the page of a book is to lick your finger so you can grip the paper better.

How did you do? Turn the page to grade yourself!

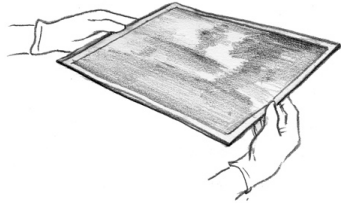
1. I should wear white gloves when handling paper materials so that the oils from my hands don't damage the paper. FALSE!

Have you ever seen evidence of the "oils from people's hands affecting the paper?" That's because there isn't any! And just think about hygiene in 1814. It was not what it is today!

What should you do?

- The best practice is to wash hands with soap and water and dry hands thoroughly before working with paper-based materials.
- No lotion until after you are finished researching.

## PHOTOGRAPHS ARE A DIFFERENT STORY!



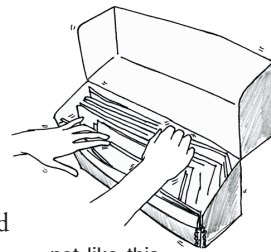
Always use gloves when handling photographs. Photographic chemistry is very different than paper. Cotton gloves still make you clumsy, snug fitting latex or nitril gloves protect the photograph and help keep hands steady. Please ask the librarian at the Restricted Desk for a pair of gloves.

2. When I open a document box that appears to be disorderly and in disrepair, this means I don't have to be careful with the contents. FALSE!

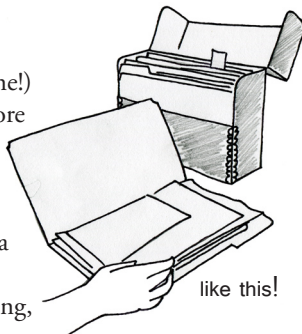
With over 21 million manuscripts in our collections, it would be impossible to clean, mend and flatten every document. The Conservation Dept. works hard to repair everything, but we need your help to keep these materials as they are, and by not exacerbate damage.

Tips:

- Before browsing the box, always remove a folder, (one at a time!) and place it on a flat surface. Return each folder to the box before pulling another one.
- If the folder isn't numbered, use a slip of paper to mark its location in the box.
- Turn the documents in the folder as if they were the pages of a book. Try to keep things in the order you found them.
- Be mindful of fragile or damaged items when opening, perusing, or closing a folder.



not like this



like this!



3. Most of these volumes have been around for hundreds of years; therefore they are practically indestructible! FALSE!

How would you feel about being mishandled at the ripe-old-age of 300? A good rule of thumb is to treat each volume like a newborn baby. Use a cradle.



- HSP has two kinds of cradles for your use, the green foam wedges and the one piece collapsible cradles. Both work the same way.
- When reading through a volume, reposition the cradles for optimal support. Collapsible cradles can be similarly adjusted, by opening and closing one side or the other.
- When needing a place marker, use a paper bookmark.
- If you need to help keeping the pages of a volume open, there are bag weights available at the Restricted Desk for your use.

4. The best way to turn the page of a book is to lick your finger so you can grip the paper better. FALSE!

Do not lick your finger to turn a page! Yuck! The book thanks you for not contributing your DNA to its pages.

Tips for turning pages carefully:

- Lightly lift the page with your fingertips from either the top or bottom corner. Gently slide the palm of your hand to the middle of the page and turn.
- When turning more than one page of a volume, reposition the book in the cradle so that the spine is balanced and supported.

During your research you may encounter brittle pages, tears, folded corners, and other significant damage preventing you from accessing valuable information. Please do not attempt to "fix" these issues. Bring the issue to the attention of a librarian and ask for help.

