

STORAGE AND PRESERVATION OF ARCHIVES

Your job as archivist is to identify and guard against those things that can cause harm to the archives.

Heading the top of the list is human beings—people

Keep areas locked: no access without permission and under supervision of the archivist

No food or drink in the archives

Wash hands frequently. Use gloves when handling important records and photographs.

Use pencils when working with archives—no ink pens

See guidelines from Bahá'í World Centre—eventually you will be working with acid-free archival materials, removing paper clips, pins, staples, rubber bands, and other extraneous items, and taking other preservation measures.

Heat and humidity

No attics or basements

Temperature fluctuations – cellulose things (paper, wood) expand and contract

15-20 degrees C (60-68 degrees F), with storage areas cooler if possible

45-60% humidity; mold will not grow below 65% humidity. Invest in a good dehumidifier to control humidity.

Air conditioning with good filtration and humidity controls is one of the best investments an archives can make.

If permanent air conditioning is not available, consider portable air conditioners

Water and fire

Protect against flooding and seepage and take every precaution to guard against fire

Avoid proximity to water pipes and make sure heat is reliable to prevent frozen pipes

Install smoke detectors and have baking soda fire extinguishers on hand

Consider purchasing a fireproof safe for more valuable records, artifacts, and items of monetary value, or rent a safe deposit box at the bank

Eventually you will want to develop a disaster recovery plan, so that you can act at a moment's notice in case disaster does strike

A preliminary step that you can take is to make copies of vital documents and store a copy off-site (NSA minutes, property records, etc.)

Vermin

Many types of insects and rodents like to feast on archival material

Especially silverfish

If they are discovered, call in a professional exterminator

Light

The ultraviolet rays in sunlight and fluorescent lighting damage paper and other archival material. Archives should be in a windowless room or windows should be covered up.

Filtering sleeves can be purchased to slide over fluorescent tubes. Materials should never be left lying out during processing where sunlight can reach them, or displayed where they are accessible to sunlight or fluorescent light.