



Out of the experiences of war comes an array of artifacts in different forms with different preservation and storage requirements. Inappropriate storage and handling can lead to deterioration of many heritage items. This resource provides basic handling and storage principles to ensure heritage material remains in good condition for future generations to appreciate.

Preparation

Before handling any artefact wash and dry your hands. This reduces skin oils and removes any hand or sun creams that could damage and stain collection items.

Handling

When handling heritage items use both hands to support their weight. Most items, even lightweight ones can be damaged if dropped.

Lightweight items and single pages can be more safely handled with a support of paper or lightweight card.

Books can be damaged by forcing open the binding beyond their natural range of movement.

When handling photographs or metal objects wear plain cotton or nitrile gloves, as skin oils can react with the emulsion and metal surfaces causing irreversible staining. While when handling fragile paper, books, glass or ceramics, clean hands may be preferred to reduce damage caused by loss of dexterity.

Storage

A wide range of archival storage options are available from conservation suppliers. Different types of objects will have different storage requirements which can be found on the fact sheets specific to each material type.

Generally speaking, good storage conditions are away from direct light, heat sources, high or fluctuating humidity, and pests.

The best way to protect your valuable memorabilia is through preventive measures like safe handling, careful storage and display. These measures will reduce the need for complex conservation treatments in the future.

Copies

Making copies of paper documents and photographs can limit the need to handle the original material and can be more easily circulated in paper or electronic form.

Please refer to the fact sheet '*Creating Copies*' for more information on how best to copy heritage items.

Copies and originals can be stored separately so that in the event of a disaster both are not lost.

Repairs

Approach any repair to your artefacts with caution – greater damage is often caused by the use of inappropriate repair materials than if the item was left unrepaired. Some repairs may be safely carried out yourself, but consultation with an appropriate conservation specialist is recommended.

Summary

- Limit the need to handle heritage items.
- Use clean dry hands when handling.
- For photographs and metal objects, wear plain cotton or nitrile gloves.
- Make copies of documents and paper items if possible, and store separately from originals.
- Consult with a conservation specialist prior to attempting any repairs.