

The  
CHARLOTTE MUSEUM  
of HISTORY



WHERE HISTORY HAS A HOME

## Preserving Newspapers (and other papers)

Newspapers, being made of cheap paper, suffer from what we museum folk call “inherent vice.” This means that, no matter what you do, most newspapers will deteriorate fairly quickly, becoming first brown and then crumbly. This is because the acids in the paper literally burn it up from within. There are things you can do to slow this process.

**Environment** – High or fluctuating temperatures and, especially, high or fluctuating humidity or exposure to dampness can damage the structure of paper over time and also encourage mold growth. Paper likes to be kept dry and cool. It also likes to be kept in the dark, since both visible and ultraviolet light from the sun or from electric lights damage paper.

**Storage Materials** – Corrugated or other cardboard boxes, ordinary manila folders, plastic bags from stores or dry cleaners, and wooden furniture are all materials that offgas substances that can harm things you store in them. Newspapers are happiest in acid-free boxes, folders made from acid-free materials, or, in a pinch, wrapped in old sheets or pillowcases. Wooden chests or drawers can be lined with acid-free papers or aluminum foil to block offgasing.

**Treatment** – There are sprays that you can use to de-acidify papers. Two brands are Bookkeeper and Archival Mist. You can purchase them from the suppliers mentioned at the end of this article. Follow directions closely, and store your deacidified papers in archival containers afterward.

**Other Preservation Methods** – Many museums and libraries digitize newspapers instead of saving the originals, thus preserving the information on them but not having to go to the expense of caring for something that is almost impossible to preserve. You might consider photocopying articles that are important to you, especially if you want to display them or use them for reference. You can put the originals away in optimal storage conditions, taking them out only for special occasions or to donate them to a museum.

**Gaylord Archival** has supplies for preserving newspapers, and their customer service department is knowledgeable and happy to give advice. Their website is [www.gaylord.com](http://www.gaylord.com). Their order number is 1-800-448-6160, their customer service number is 1-800-634-6307, and their email is [customerservice@gaylord.com](mailto:customerservice@gaylord.com).

**University Products** is another large archival supplier. Their website is [www.universityproducts.com](http://www.universityproducts.com), their email is [info@universityproducts.com](mailto:info@universityproducts.com), their order number is 1-800-532-9281, and their customer service number is 1-800-628-1912.

Both these suppliers have print catalogues – just call or email to order one.

You may also call the museum with questions about preservation – 704-568-1774, ext. 110.

3500 SHAMROCK DRIVE CHARLOTTE, NC 28215 P 704.568.1774 F 704.566.1817

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