Care and Handling of Archival and Special Collections Materials

Guidance for Archives and Library Users

Prepared by
The Harvard University Archives and Weissman Preservation Center
Harvard University Library
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Archives and Library User Responsibilities

• Handle archival and library materials gently.
• Safeguard archival and library materials for future users.
Always have clean, dry hands.
Wear gloves when handling photographs.
Always use a pencil, never a pen or marker.
Do not rest your hand, arm, or any object on a book or manuscript.
Keep volumes flat on table, do not hold in hands.
Volumes

Use a book cradle and special weights, if they are provided.
Remove only one folder at a time.
Use only the acid-free strips provided by the repository as place markers.
Manuscripts

Keep folders and pages flat on table, do not hold in hands.
Maintain the order in each folder.
Never remove manuscript pages from folders.
Do not tap pages to realign them within a folder. Consult Reference staff.
Manuscripts

Use a folder to turn over fragile or large items.
When leaving for a short time, close the volume, folder or box.
Please notify Reference staff if any materials are damaged or out of sequence.
Food and drink are not permitted because they can damage collections and attract vermin and insects.
Researchers who mishandle materials may be denied further access to the collections.
Thank you for helping us take care of Harvard’s collections.