

PRESERVATION OPTIONS FOR SCRAPBOOK AND ALBUM FORMATS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Scrapbooks and albums are a unique, often highly imaginative form of human record which exist in abundance. Because of their great numbers, preservation of every scrapbook and album in the original format is impossible - the money and human power to do the job do not exist. Some must indeed be preserved in the original form retaining as much artifactual integrity as possible, regardless of cost. However, for many scrapbooks and albums, other choices need to be made. These include duplication, basic stabilization rather than complete treatment, substitution of the scrapbook format with another storage format, or some combination of all three. A variety of scrapbooks and albums have been treated at Northeast Document Conservation Center over the past ten years. Several of these projects are discussed below.

2. CAUSES OF DETERIORATION / INHERENT PROBLEMS

Poor storage conditions, inappropriate handling and heavy use contribute greatly to the deterioration of scrapbooks and albums just as they do to the deterioration of all bound materials. However, much of the deterioration experienced by scrapbooks and albums is caused by the nature of the books themselves.¹ The bindings vary widely in the materials out of which they are made. Many have been mass-produced out of inexpensive materials so that the books would be affordable by the general public. More often than not these

The enclosures contained in scrapbooks and albums also vary widely in the materials out of which they are made and in condition. Since these books often contain ephemera, which is intended to be transient, enclosures are frequently made of inexpensive and poor quality materials which deteriorate rapidly. Enclosures vary in size, weight, thickness and format. Often they are larger than their space in the book, and they extend beyond the binding and are damaged. Sometimes they are too heavy to be supported by the book's leaf, and they pull loose from the leaf and are damaged or lost. Another problem is that the format or nature of the enclosure may not be appropriate for inclusion in a book. For example, a poster may have been folded several times to fit into a book, creasing it and causing damage every time it is opened for viewing. The method used to attach enclosures may also be a problem. A variety of means have been used, including adhesives, tapes, straps, slits and ribbons. All vary in quality and long-term stability, with some being very destructive to the enclosures. Placement of attachment may also create problems since enclosures are often attached together, one on top of another, or side-by-side, overlapping each other.

3. CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT OF A TREATMENT PROPOSAL

VALUE OF BOOK AND ACCEPTABILITY FOR USE OF COPIES

Several interrelated factors need to be considered when developing a treatment proposal for scrapbooks and albums. One is acceptability for use of copies of the enclosures contained in the books. Microfilming, photocopying and photographic copying are the

primary means of duplication for preservation purposes. Microfilming is the method of duplication chosen most often in spite of user difficulty and loss of image detail, because it is generally most cost effective. When considering copying it is important to consider another factor, the nature of the value of the book. This is of critical importance. If the volume is valuable solely for its informational content, duplication is an acceptable option. However, if the book has associational value because of a particular person, place or institution associated with it, or if the book has artifactual value because of its age, design, structure or artistry, preservation of the original is of great importance and duplication alone is not appropriate. Sometimes the artifactual integrity of the whole does not need to be retained. Often the enclosures in a book will have associational or artifactual value, but the scrapbook or album itself will have none. In this case removal of the enclosures from the book and placement in another storage format is acceptable.

CONDITION

Another factor to consider when developing a treatment proposal is condition of the book and enclosures, and nature of the materials out of which they are made. Copying needs to be considered for books containing enclosures made of ground wood pulp paper in advanced stages of deterioration, whereas basic stabilization such as nonaqueous alkalization and boxing may be appropriate for books and enclosures made of relatively stable materials.

SECURITY AND USE

Security is another factor to be considered, particularly if removal of enclosures from

the book format, and storage in another format is considered. For example, enclosures which have been removed from acidic book leaves, treated and placed in acid-free folders and then stored in boxes may be more vulnerable to theft and loss than they were when attached to book pages. This may not be a problem if enclosures are rarely consulted, but if they are frequently consulted this should be taken into account. Thus use also becomes an important factor for consideration.

COST

Finally, the cost of various treatment options should be compared when developing a treatment proposal. Cost should be considered in terms of both staff time and dollars. Costs can range from one or two hours or about \$50 at the low end for microfilming a scrapbook to hundreds of hours and many thousands of dollars at the high end for complete treatment and retention of the original format, depending on size, condition and complexity of the book.

4. SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF PRESERVATION OPTIONS

BOOK VALUABLE ONLY FOR INFORMATIONAL CONTENT

Duplication is the most practical preservation measure for scrapbooks which are valuable solely for the information they contain. For example, physical treatment of books which consist of ground wood pulp newspaper clippings on poor quality leaves would require hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars. Even if these resources were available, the wisdom of treating massive amounts of ground wood pulp paper which will continue to

deteriorate at a very rapid rate is questionable.

Frequently scrapbooks of purely informational value contain a few enclosures which are valuable as artifacts. The Dan Kempner Scrapbook Number One belonging to the Rosenberg Library in Galveston, Texas is an example. The library contains approximately sixty scrapbooks filled with newspapers, magazines, advertisements, letters and telegrams. The library cannot afford to treat each scrapbook as an artifact. As a pilot project all the enclosures in one scrapbook were microfilmed. Those enclosures of artifactual value were identified by the curator and then removed from the scrapbook by the conservator and treated as needed. Following treatment these enclosures were placed in acid-free folders and in archival storage boxes. Because ease of use was a special concern in this case, a hard copy of the scrapbook on acid-free paper was produced from the microfilm copy.

ENCLOSURES OF ARTIFACTUAL VALUE

Often the enclosures in a scrapbook or album have artifactual value but the book itself does not. If the book contributes in any way to the deterioration of the enclosures, they should be removed, treated and placed in another storage format. The Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City has over 200 albums of garment sketches in its Berley Studio collection. These pencil sketches were the originals from which copies were made for distribution to garment designers and manufacturers as design ideas. Covering the years 1919 through 1959, these drawings are of significant artifactual value as unique visual resources but not as works of art. Thirty-seven albums containing over 10,000 drawings,

received heavy use. The drawings were adhered to very brittle, acidic album leaves. As the leaves were turned they broke, tearing the drawings. The drawings needed to be stabilized for use. Because of the numbers involved this had to be done in the most cost-effective way possible. The decision was made to remove the drawings from each leaf, wash and aqueously alkalize them, and repair only the most serious tears. The drawings were returned to Fashion Institute where they were placed in acid-free folders, with ten to fifteen drawings to a folder, and boxed in acid-free archival storage boxes.

Five scrapbooks belonging to choreographer Jerome Robbins were severely water and mold-damaged while kept in a storage vault. The scrapbooks contained a total of approximately 6,200 newspaper clippings and miscellaneous enclosures relating to some of the most important work of Robbins' career. The scrapbooks were of enormous research value for the information they contained. The clippings were extremely degraded, weak, brittle and pulpy. They were adhered to leaves with a variety of adhesives. They were so stained from the adhesives, mold and water damage that they were difficult to read and in many instances illegible. Major portions of numerous clippings were disintegrated. Many clippings were adhered to adjacent pages and were irreparably damaged. Because the scrapbooks were valuable primarily for their informational content, duplication was the first preservation option considered. However, because of the severity of the damage, the majority of clippings would have required treatment prior to duplication. Replacement of clippings with photocopies made from newspapers in good condition was also considered. But, many of the clippings were from esoteric newspapers and other periodicals which were

no longer obtainable. The decision was made to save as much information as possible in any reasonable way. The clippings were treated whenever feasible. Those clippings which were too deteriorated to sustain treatment were photocopied onto acid-free paper. A researcher was hired to obtain copies of clippings which had been partly or completely destroyed by the water and mold damage. Unfortunately copies of only about 45% of the clippings were obtainable. Storage of the clippings in folders and boxes was not appropriate. The original clippings were still too fragile after treatment to be grouped in folders, and the scrapbook format was preferred to maintain consistency with other scrapbooks in Robbins' collection. For this reason the clippings and photocopies were attached to sheets of acid-free and buffered paper in their original order and were encapsulated in polyester film. They were post bound in cloth.

A scrapbook of 57 drawings, prints and one photograph by the architect Richard Upjohn also required the protection provided by polyester film encapsulation. The binding had broken in several places. The enclosures were attached to different colored leaves of paper which were of poor quality and were deteriorated and damaged. Several leaves were detached and torn. The prints and drawings were in fragile condition as a result of contact with the scrapbook leaves, the degraded adhesive used to attach them, and mishandling. Several had been torn out of the book and only fragments remained. After entering the collection of the Avery Library, Columbia University, the volume was expected to receive much use and the enclosures to be frequently needed for exhibition. However the enclosures were vulnerable to serious damage in their present condition. For this reason they were

removed from the scrapbook leaves, washed, and alkalized where media permitted. Tears were repaired as needed. Encapsulation of enclosures in polyester film and post binding was selected as a storage format not only because the polyester film provided adequate protection for the fragile enclosures, but also because the post binding, unlike most other binding structures, could be dismantled for exhibition and put back together again. This made it possible to lend only a few enclosures for exhibition rather than the entire book. Because this scrapbook is of high value, being able to lend only part of it rather than all of it for exhibition was of importance. To maintain the feel of the original scrapbook, the post-binding was covered in leather and cloth and titled with a decorative label sympathetic to the book's original binding. In addition, each encapsulation was interleaved with paper hand made to match the colors and texture of the original leaves.

BOOK OF ARTIFACTUAL VALUE / RECORD BOOKS USED AS SCRAPBOOKS

Sometimes the scrapbook or album is of artifactual value but the enclosures are not. Manuscript record books were frequently used as scrapbooks in the latter half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. Enclosures of various sorts were adhered to leaves of these books, obliterating the manuscript information. Recognizing how valuable this information is for research, historians and town record clerks now seek to have the enclosures removed. This usually requires that the book be disbound and the leaves immersed in water to release the adhesive and remove the enclosures. Because the book is often already in pieces, this does not necessitate the disbinding of a book which is structurally sound. The enclosures swell the book and place numerous stresses on the

binding. Thus the sewing has usually already broken, the leaves become detached and the binding very damaged. Two ledger books belonging to Bethany College in Bethany, West Virginia were not rebound following treatment of the leaves and removal of the enclosures because of financial constraints. Instead, the leaves and enclosures were placed in acid-free folders and boxed in archival storage boxes. This was acceptable because the books are only occasionally consulted. However, if a book must withstand frequent use, it will need to be rebound. Often the original binding is too deteriorated to reuse and a new binding needs to be made for the book. An eighteenth century bridge ledger belonging to the Massasoit Historical Association in Warren, Rhode Island is an example. The volume was microfilmed prior to treatment to record the appearance of the leaves and the placement of the enclosures. The book was then disbound and the clippings removed from the leaves by immersion in water. The leaves were aqueously alkalized, tears repaired and the volume rebound in a quarter leather laced-in binding. The clippings were placed in groups in polyester film sleeves and then positioned inside the original binding for permanent storage. The clippings, original binding, and the rebound volume were boxed together in a phase box.

ENCLOSURES AND BOOK OF ARTIFACTUAL VALUE

When both the volume and the enclosures are of artifactual value, the integrity of the whole must be maintained. Duplication is valuable in this situation as well in that it can reduce the need to handle fragile original materials through use of a copy instead. This makes minimal treatment adequate for volumes which would otherwise require more extensive treatment. An example is the personal scrapbook of Igor Sikorski, a pioneer in

aviation. The cloth stationery binding was in fragile condition, and the enclosures varied from fair to poor condition. The leaves and enclosures were treated minimally and the book was boxed. Even though the binding was too fragile to sustain frequent use, it was not repaired because this would have altered the book's significant associational and artifactual value. Instead, a microfilm copy was made and is used by researchers for study of the book which is in the collection of the Corporate Archives of United Technologies Corporation. The original is consulted only in special instances.

Duplication was also invaluable in the preservation of the Mary Moody Northen Debut Scrapbook. Compiled by the young daughter of an influential Galveston, Texas family, the book has great associational value especially to the institution which owns it, a foundation established by the Northen family. The scrapbook bulged with ribbons, cords, tassels, bouquets, dance cards, telegrams, party invitations and other memorabilia. The book required stabilization and also preservation as an artifact. This was a problem because the structure of the book and the placement of the enclosures on the leaves caused damage to the enclosures which were already deteriorated and fragile. In addition, some of the plant materials were too deteriorated to remove from the leaves without causing further damage. The decision was made to microfilm the book and restrict research use to the film copy. The cover of the book was already detached, but the sewing was intact. The sewing was removed to release stress on the enclosures, particularly the bulky materials adhered close to the inner margin. Leaves and enclosures made of paper were surface cleaned and nonaqueously alkalized where appropriate. Each folio was interleaved with a folio of

polyester film to help support the enclosures when the leaves were turned. Plant materials were a special problem because most of them were so deteriorated they were disintegrating. Where plant materials were loose they were encapsulated in polyester film and reattached in their original position. Where they were still attached to leaves, polyester film was placed over them and fastened into position. Two drop spine boxes were constructed to house the volume, one for the leaves and enclosures and one for the binding and pink leather over-cover which originally wrapped around the binding.

The album Flora of Maine contained ninety-three drawings and watercolors with identifying labels. This album is one of a series of sixteen produced by the artist Kate Furbish between 1870 and 1908 which are now in the collection of Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine. The artist not only produced the drawings, but also designed the binding and selected all the materials for it. Both the binding and the enclosures had artifactual value and needed to be considered as a whole. The binding was in relatively good condition. However, the cloth hinges which attached the leaves to the binding were very deteriorated, weak and torn in places. The drawings, watercolors and identifying labels were in relatively good condition, but were adhered to acidic, brittle leaves with discoloring adhesive. Because the drawings were of great value it was decided that they should be treated as extensively as necessary. This meant treating the album as well because it was part of the artifactual value of the drawings. The book was disbound. The watercolors were removed from the acidic album leaves, surface cleaned and washed. The leaves were washed and aqueously alkalized. All previous adhesives were removed. The watercolors were reattached to album

leaves with paper corners of handmade paper or by spot adhering. The cloth hinges were replaced with new ones of unbleached linen which were thicker but similar in appearance to the originals. The leaves were re sewn and rebound in the original binding which was enlarged with goat leather to accommodate the increased thickness caused by the new cloth hinges.

5. CONCLUSION

Preservation options for scrapbooks and albums range from photoduplication to complete conservation treatment of both the enclosures and the volume. The choice of option depends upon several interrelated factors including condition, security, use, cost and nature of the value of the book. Examples of actual treatment choices have been discussed for books of purely informational value, for books containing enclosures of artifactual value where the volume itself is not of value, for books where the volume is of artifactual value but the enclosures are not, and for books where both the enclosures and the volumes are of artifactual value and must be considered as a whole. What has not been discussed is the treatment of scrapbooks where the whole is of artifactual value and is experienced on a tactile and visual level as well as on an intellectual one. The diaries of photographer Peter Beard are an example. Beard describes his dozens of mixed media scrapbooks as a "time capsule collage of the past thirty years." ² The books consist of layers of enclosures attached to the leaves of journals which are splayed from the added thickness of the materials they contain. The enclosures include photographs, flag fragments, newspaper clippings, receipts, cigarette packages, cheese wrappers, plant materials, cords, insects, feathers, coins, animal

teeth, stones, snake skins, labels from canned food and bottled beverages, rubber gloves and tubes of glue. Sketches, designs and textual entries in a variety of inks, dyes, watercolors and graphite pencil surround and often extend onto the enclosures. Special effects are achieved, sometimes unintentionally perhaps, through the use of coffee, mud, ink and blood spilled and smeared onto pages. These books illustrate the sorts of preservation problems which will be faced more and more in the future. Curators and conservators of several different disciplines will need to bring all their experience to bear in treatment of books such as these. Preserving scrapbooks and albums can be complex and challenging and require that difficult decisions be made. By matching appropriate preservation options with books, conservators and curators help insure that these unique materials continue to inform, enlighten and delight for years to come.

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ENDNOTES

1. The problems inherent in scrapbooks are also discussed by Merrily Smith in Scrapbooks in the library of congress. In *Preserving america's performing arts*, ed. B. Cohen-Stratyner and B. Kneppers. New York: Theatre Library Association. 1985. 73-77.
2. Athill, L.C. 1990. Into Africa. *House and garden*. 37124 (November): 145.

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