

# Preserving Your Family History: Course Book

## Overview

Everyone has a closet or a computer filled with old "stuff". But how can you care for, organize, and share those materials with the next generation? This course on preserving your family history will help you care for and get your physical and digital heirlooms in order so they can last for another 100 years.

### Week 1: Preservation (October 12, 2020)

Materials of different types, such as photographs, letters, CDs, digital files, and more, have various storage needs. This session will cover how to care for physical and digital items, including storage options and environmental needs.

All physical, paper-based materials need:

- Moderate and consistent temperature and humidity with few extreme fluctuations.
  - Ideal levels are 65-70 degrees Fahrenheit and 40-60% relative humidity.
- Minimal exposure to light and pests. Minimal risk of flood, fire, or disaster.
- Housing, such as boxes, that are large enough to contain the materials without folding as well as acid-free and lignin free.

This might look like:

- Keeping your materials out of an attic or basement and instead in an interior closet.
- Making copies of photographs before putting them on display.

All digital or audiovisual materials on reels or tapes need:

- To be duplicated.
- To be reformatted.

### Week 2: Organization (October 19, 2020)

It's not enough to ensure your materials are physically safe--you must know what you have, too. This session will discuss how you can organize materials in a way that contextualizes them and makes them usable by you and your family members for future generations.

### Week 3: Digitization and Sharing (October 26, 2020)

Your materials and your history are unique and making copies available online or to family members means you can share your enjoyment of them. Making these materials available can be difficult without knowledge of the tools and standards for scanning and copying these items, and this session will provide an overview of how to do just that.

## Work Plan

What formats are in your collection? Circle all applicable.

Photographs

Books

Papers (letters, pamphlets, etc)

Digital Files

Newspaper Clippings

## Appendices

Collection Inventory

Guide to -YOUR NAME HERE- Family Papers

## Resources and Bibliography

### Preservation Concerns

- Overview of handling, storage, display, and digitization concerns for photographs, negatives, paper, books and scrapbooks, paper, and film and audio reels from the National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/preservation/formats>

### Recording Oral Histories

- StoryCorps Connect--<https://storycorps.org/participate/storycorps-connect/>

### Archival Supplies Sources

Archival Methods  
230-2 Middle Road  
Henrietta, NY 14467  
(866) 877-7050  
[www.archivalmethods.com](http://www.archivalmethods.com)

Gaylord Brothers  
Box 4901  
Syracuse, NY 13221  
(800) 962-9580  
[www.gaylord.com](http://www.gaylord.com)

Hollinger Metal Edge  
6340 Bandini Blvd.  
Commerce, CA 90040

(800) 862-2228

[www.hollingermetaledge.com](http://www.hollingermetaledge.com)

University Products

517 Main St.

Box 101

Holyoke, MA 01041

(800) 628-1912

[www.universityproducts.com](http://www.universityproducts.com)

## Preserving Your Family History Lesson Plans

### Week 1: Preservation (October 12, 2020)

Summary: Materials of different types, such as photographs, letters, CDs, digital files, and more, have various storage needs. This session will cover how to care for physical and digital items, including storage options and environmental needs.

Cover in class:

- Class Discussion: Introductions—include your name and why you were interested in this course
- Overview of what we'll discuss in this course
  - Preservation of physical and digital items
  - How you can organize your materials
  - How you can digitize and share your materials
- 
- Class Discussion: What kinds of material (i.e. formats) do you have? Where do you keep your family history materials?
- Class Discussion: What is one thing you heard today that you want to learn more about?  
If

### Week 2: Organization (October 19, 2020)

Summary: It's not enough to ensure your materials are physically safe--you must know what you have, too. This session will discuss how you can organize materials in a way that contextualizes them and makes them usable by you and your family members for future generations.

Cover in class:

- Class discussion: How do you use your family history materials? What is most important to you when it comes to using these items?
- As you may have gleaned from your answers, there is no one way that we use these materials.
- It's important you organize your materials in a way that makes sense to you and that you'll use.

### Week 3: Digitization and Sharing (October 26, 2020)

Summary: Your materials and your history are unique and making copies available online or to family members means you can share your enjoyment of them. Making these materials available can be difficult without knowledge of the tools and standards for scanning and copying these items, and this session will provide an overview of how to do just that.

Cover in class:

- Class discussion: what about the materials that only exist within you? What are you leaving behind, and will people know what you left behind?

Get an overview of what you have so you can make informed decisions.

Look for groups of materials—are there a number of things created by the same person? What about of the same format?

Decide what to keep, considering:

Importance: Is this valuable to you or your family?

Format: What type of material is this? Some items, like letters, contain more information than receipts.

Uniqueness: Is this one of a kind? Is it irreplaceable?

Completeness: Is this the most comprehensive content?

Age: How old is the material?

Quantity: How much material is there? Is it too much to keep? What's essential?

Quality: What condition are the materials in? Are they readable?

Consider giving away, selling, or donating (to an archive or relative) materials. These are items that are really important to you and you kept for a reason—don't force yourself to make decisions you're not ready for.