

Looking after your papers and artwork in a professional way

This brief guide will help you organise and look after your working papers during their active life with you. Such attention may also ensure their long-term survival. Researchers are interested in the creation of books for young people, and your records are an important part of that process as well as the preservation of children's literature as cultural products.

The Lu Rees Archives of Australian Children's Literature looks after the papers, manuscripts and artwork of a number of Australians who create works for young people. Based on our experience caring for these materials, we offer this simple guide to assist you. Only a minimal amount of time, effort and expense is involved.

Quick tips

If you read no further than this paragraph, your papers will benefit. Many of the ways we presently keep paper materials can shorten their survival. Have a look at the list below.

Metal paper clips

Staples

Glue

Sticky labels

Self-stick removable notes

Metal clips

Pins

Sticky tape

Rubber bands

Liquid paper and correction tape

It includes just about everything we commonly use. Metal rusts very quickly and leaves permanent marks. Rubber bands quickly disintegrate, leaving marks. Self-stick removable notes easily fall off, and when they do remain, may shift from the desired spot and leave a sticky residue. Sticky tape eventually loses its sticking capability and leaves marks as well as a residue. Liquid paper and correction tape wear off and crack.

Storing your collection

So what can you do that's simple and reasonable in cost? Start with storage. Choose a storage place with an even temperature, low light, no dampness and no pests. This place should be easily accessible while allowing you to get on with your work. Some options for storing material include suspension files in a filing cabinet, an envelope or a box. When choosing, consider the size and shape of your materials and your storage capacity.

Gathering supplies

You will need a few supplies. These are readily available at office supply stores. Gather the following items: foolscap buff-coloured manila folders; envelopes large enough for oversized galleys and proofs; HB pencils; A4 plastic sleeves labelled 'Copy Safe' and plastic clips.

Labelling

Manila folders are a good way to keep similar materials together. Use a single folder for each book you are working on. Where you have a lot of material, use different folders for your manuscripts, correspondence, reviews and other material. Label each folder using an HB pencil. Pencil has lasted for centuries and does not damage like some inks and pens. Your label can be as simple as Book Title: Manuscripts or Book Title: Correspondence or Book Title: Reviews. Terms you normally use in your profession are fine.

Arranging

A chronological arrangement often is a logical way to arrange your materials, though use whatever system works for you. Manuscripts can be easily arranged by labelling drafts with their title and dating (preferred) or numbering drafts. Correspondence, by letter or email, is easily arranged in date order, with your oldest on the bottom. Larger collections of correspondence may be divided, for example, Book Title: Correspondence, Book Title: Publishers or Book Title: Correspondence - overseas editions.

Oversized material

Artwork, galleys and proofs are examples of oversized material. Large envelopes are good for storage and protection against dust and light. Labelling each envelope is important, for

example, Book Title: Galleys or Book Title: Artwork. Ensure materials are identified using pencil on the back, indicating title and date, as these are an important record of their creation.

Manuscripts

While we all wish to conserve our environment, we advise you to print out major changes to your manuscripts (assuming you are using a computer). Printing back to back is fine. Keeping all your manuscripts in electronic form may create problems in the future. Will the software exist to read them? Will researchers wish to read them online? The best solution is still the old-fashioned paper copy. Tying large manuscripts together using cotton tape protects and keeps them together. Remember to keep your research notes and journals too.

Special formats

Photographs are fragile, and we recommend that you consider our advice on storage. Rather than writing on the photographs, place photographs in envelopes or 'Copy Safe' sleeves accompanied by a piece of paper identifying their content.

Children's books may be promoted in various ways including stuffed toys, feather boas, puzzles, games and DVDs. These give an insight into how children's books are promoted as cultural products. They should be kept and stored carefully to ensure their survival.

Newspapers

Many publishers provide you with newspaper reviews and articles, and these are valuable historical records. Unfortunately, if these are newspaper originals, they will damage adjacent material. Newspapers leave a brown imprint on adjacent material, change colour and become brittle with age. Photocopying these is the best solution. Avoid photocopying onto A3 size paper, as this creates storage problems when related material is generally in A4 size. When photocopying, you may reduce the original, but avoid reducing to microscopic print. Generally, the paper used in photocopy machines is safe to use and will last.

Thermal copies

Remember the shiny, plastic variety of thermal copy paper from the 1980s and 1990s? These are rapidly fading away. If the information contained is important enough to keep, these need to be photocopied.

Small items

Envelopes can safely hold small items. Plastic sleeves, labelled 'Copy Safe', are inexpensive and come in A4 size. These are safe to use for housing small items, such as small notebook pages, bookmarks, or other small items. Be sure the 'Copy Safe' label appears on the box.

Folding

Avoid folding material as this causes wear over time.

A final word

Institutions, such as the Lu Rees Archives, use specialist supplies to protect your material and ensure its long-term survival. We purchase acid-free envelopes and boxes, plastic clips, cotton tape and other items from archival suppliers. You may decide to invest in such supplies or to use interim solutions and less expensive alternatives. If you have chosen the latter option, we recommend that you use manila folders, ordinary envelopes, cotton tape, 'Copy Safe' sleeves, and pencils, all of which are readily available.

We hope this brief guide has been helpful. We would be pleased to hear from you if you have any questions or wish to enquire about donating your material. You can contact us by email at lu.rees@canberra.edu.au, by post at Lu Rees Archives, The Library, University of Canberra ACT 2601 or by phone on (02) 6201 5075.

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