

Salvaging Important Papers, Books, and Photos

- ◆ Dry papers, books and photos before mold sets in. For best results, dry them slowly.
- ◆ Before drying, wipe book covers with a solution of one part rubbing or denatured alcohol and one part water.
- ◆ Carefully remove framed items from their frames. If an object is stuck to the glass, do not remove it; take out the backing material and dry the object inside the frame, glass side down.
- ◆ If papers or photos are muddy or dirty and are still wet, rinse them very gently in a bucket of cold, clean water before drying. Do not rinse books.
- ◆ **If the items are very damp:**
 - Blot them gently with a clean, dry sponge, clean paper or bath towels. Do not blot on hand-written ink or fragile surfaces. Do not use newspaper for blotting.
 - Sprinkle papers, photos, and book pages with cornstarch or talcum powder to absorb moisture. Leave the powder for several hours and then brush it off.
- ◆ To dry papers and photos, lay them flat on a surface covered with absorbent material. Separate the papers if possible
- ◆ You might have to wait until they are partially dry before you can separate them. Place books on the top or bottom edge with the leaves separated. Do not stand books on the front edge.
- ◆ Dry items out of direct sunlight. Use an oscillating fan to increase air circulation but don't let it blow directly on the items.
- ◆ When books are partially dry, place them on a flat surface with a slight weight to keep the pages from warping.
- ◆ Alternate drying and pressing the books until they are thoroughly dry. This helps prevent mildew.
- ◆ For valuable books that are nearly dry, consider pressing the pages with an electric iron set on low. Although this is a tedious process, it may be worth the effort. Separate the pages to prevent musty odors.
- ◆ **When books are thoroughly dry:**
 - Close them and use C-clamps to help them retain their shape.
 - Wipe vinyl and leather book covers with a light coating of petroleum jelly or leather or vinyl dressing.
- ◆ **If you don't have time to clean and dry your books and papers immediately:**
 - Put each book or paper in a sealed plastic bag in the freezer to prevent mildew.
 - Place wax paper between the layers of paper bundles or books so they can be separated easily when removed.
- ◆ Even if your papers appear to have dried successfully, they may disintegrate because of substances that were in the floodwater or rainwater. To be certain valuable or historic papers and photos are preserved, take them to a professional conservator. To find one near you, contact the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation at 202-452-9545 or by e-mail at info@aic-faic.org.

