



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Reading Room Rules

Using the Archives Reading Room

- The Reading Room is open to scholars and the general public; however, children under the age of twelve are not permitted.
- When they visit, all researchers must sign and complete the “Smithsonian Archives Use Record,” indicating that they have read the rules and regulations for the use of Smithsonian Institution Archives collections.
- Researchers must produce some form of official photographic identification such as a driver's license, employee identification badge, or passport.
- Researchers must leave coats, briefcases, and other personal items in secure lockers provided by the Archives.
- Food, drink, tobacco, electronic cigarettes or similar devices, and ink pens are not allowed in the Reading Room.
- All cell phones must be silenced or in vibrate mode. Researchers are asked to leave the Reading Room to answer calls and carry on conversations so as not to disturb other researchers.
- Reference archivists will deliver a maximum of one book cart of records upon request. Material delivered is recorded on the “Smithsonian Archives Use Record,” and researchers will be asked to accept responsibility for returning all the contents in the same condition they were delivered.
- All material in cartons or boxes should be kept in the order received. Please **remove one folder at a time** using a stiff board you will receive from the reference archivist as a place marker.
- The Archives may restrict the use of some records because of [fragility, special format problems, or proprietary rights](#), and some records are available only on microfilm.
- The use of personal computers, cameras, or scanners is allowed as long as they do not harm the records or disturb other researchers.
- Researchers may make photocopies unless records are deemed too fragile.
- Researchers are responsible for the correct citation of records copied or photographed. Please use the following citation information:

Smithsonian Institution Archives
Record Unit / Accession # and/or Collection Title
Negative # or Film/Audio/Video Title



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Guidelines for Handling Collections

- Please ensure that your **hands are clean**.
- All material in cartons or boxes should be kept in the order received. Please **remove one folder at a time** using a stiff board you will receive from the reference archivist as a place marker.
- **Use a pencil to take notes**. Pens or markers of any kind are not permitted in the Reading Room.
- No marks should be added or erased from Archives' material.
- **Do not rest anything on top of manuscript or printed items**. If you need to mark your place, please use the file markers available on the reference tables. If you need assistance holding an item flat, please see the reference archivist.
- When a folder is in use it should remain flat on the table. Contents should remain flat and in order in their opened folder while being read.
- **Paper documents and book leaves should be handled as little as possible** and turned gently one at a time, with fingers in the non-text areas of the sheet whenever possible.
- Finger cots can be provided to better grip pages when necessary.
- Staff may present book cradles with bound volumes, which are designed to reduce possible damages to the spine of the book. Please keep the volume in the cradle, which should stay squarely on the table at all times.
- Gloves will be provided with material that is especially sensitive to damage from direct handling, such as photographs and negatives (many Archives photographs are encapsulated in Mylar and do not require the use of gloves). **Gloves are available in the Reading Room**.
- Videotapes must be rewound completely after using, and should never be left in "pause" on the videotape playback machine.
- When leaving your area for more than a few minutes, please return folders to their boxes and close books.
- **When photocopying, take the entire folder to the copy area**. Please see the rules for photocopying below for further information about handling documents at the copier.

Rules for Photocopying

- Before proceeding to the copier, please show the reference archivist what you would like to copy. Certain fragile or deteriorating documents should not be copied.
- Consult a reference archivist before removing fasteners from original documents.
- **Never** run archival documents through the automatic feeder.
- Please maintain the order of the documents within folders, and folders within boxes.
- When taking a break from copying, please return documents and folders to boxes.
- Researchers are responsible for the [correct citation](#) of records photocopied. Ink stamp templates are available for writing citations on photocopies.
- Please keep a count of copies made and report your total at the reception desk. The number will be entered on the Smithsonian Archives Use Record."