

New to Archival Research

What is an Archive?

An archive is a place or collection containing records, documents, or other materials of historical interest.

What will I find in the Bermuda National Archives?

The Bermuda National Archives is a government archive that preserves documents and materials related to the Bermuda government and its Ministries. General records are sealed for 30 years and personal data 70 years.

The BNA houses some private records for the Bermuda National Trust and other such agencies however, one should expect only government records and call for any specialized queries before making an unnecessary trip.

What is the role of the archivist and archival staff?

The archivist should provide information about records in the Archive and make unsealed records available for use in their research room(s).

What kinds of questions are better answered in a library?

Questions relating to general historical or factual information, biographical information, and compiled statistical information are usually better answered in a library.

Points to note:

- **No students under 16 are admitted without parent or adult.**
- **There may be a fee to duplicate items**
- **Some originals are not available for use (view).**
- **When handling documents and photos white gloves should be supplied and worn.**
- **Many archives prohibit pen use to protect the documents.**

Handling your archival documents

What should I do with old documents in my, or my families, possession?

Family papers should be stored in appropriate sized enclosures, such as folders, boxes, portfolios, etc. that will provide physical protection from light and dust.

Family documents will last longer if they are stored between 60-70 degrees with 40-50% relative humidity in clean air with good circulation.

Remove all documents from damp environments that may result in mold growth and/or be conducive to pests that might use the documents for food or nesting material.

It is not recommended to permanently display valuable documents for this reason. Color photocopies or photographs work well as substitutes.

How should I frame and display my photographs?

Decorative frames, available at many stores, are appropriate for everyday use. However, important family photos or photographic artworks should be matted according to museum standards using high quality matboard for the window mat and the backboard.

Once a treasured photograph is properly matted and framed, it should not be displayed in direct sunlight, under bright lamps, near heat sources or in damp locations.

Photos you intend to pass on to future generations should not be displayed excessively in your lifetime. Instead, a duplicate copy should be made and displayed while the original is kept safe with other family keepsakes.

Remember, it is always best to hold a photograph by its edges, supporting it from underneath with your hand and never curl or peel back a photo from a self-stick page as the photo may be permanently cracked and curled in the process.

Is there any way I can properly store documents in my home?

Yes!

- Store photographs in the year-round coolest and driest spot in your home.
- Use PAT (Photographic Activity Test) standard storage materials.
- Photo albums are an ideal storage method, but don't overstuff this will break the binding and interleave any problem pages in an old album with high quality paper or plastic sheets to isolate each page from its neighbor.