

Works on Paper

Conservation of Art and Archival Materials

Guidelines for Packing and Shipping Objects to Works on Paper

Ship Only When Necessary

The best way to transport an irreplaceable document, map, photograph, or work of art on paper is to pack it securely and deliver it yourself. Whenever possible, bring your items to the Works on Paper conservation studio. A half-hour consultation with the conservator is provided at no charge.

It is also possible to ship your items to us. However, shipping does carry some risk since objects may be accidentally crushed, exposed to vibrations or to significant changes in temperature and relative humidity. You can reduce these risks by packing your item securely and by choosing a reliable carrier.

Insurance in Transit

Transit insurance can be purchased in any amount. For items of little known value, we recommend that you purchase some amount of the insurance offered by the carrier to encourage careful handling.

Shipping via USPS Registered Mail

U.S. Postal Service Registered Mail (not merely Insured or First Class)

We highly recommend using Registered Mail to ship art and other paper-based objects of moderate size and value as it provides the maximum amount of security and each package can be insured up to \$50,000. You can either deliver your packed object to the local post office, or you can schedule for the U.S.P.S to pick up the package from you. Arrangements can be made on their website at

http://www.usps.com/pickup/welcome.htm?from=home_header&page=schedulepickup

Packages shipped by Registered Mail are limited to 70 pounds and 108 inches. Size is determined by adding length (the longest dimension) to the girth (2 times the width plus 2 times the height). A crate measuring 40" x 25" x 5" would have a combined girth and length of 100" [40" + (25" x 2) + (5" x 2)]. The U. S. Postal Service requires that all seams on Registered Mail packages be sealed with brown paper packing tape (see Packing, below).

We suggest that you ship your items to us on a Monday or Tuesday to decrease transit time and ensure delivery during the work week. If possible, avoid shipping objects during extremely cold, humid, or stormy periods.

Packing Flat Paper Objects

If the objects are framed and you feel comfortable doing so, we highly recommend that you remove them from the frames. This will eliminate the potential of damage caused by broken glass during transit.

First Packing Layer: Wrap each object in a clean smooth paper such as acid-free glassine or tissue paper. Place a stiff, non-acidic paper or matboard behind especially fragile objects to support them.

Second Packing Layer: The object should be placed between stiff boards and secured to one of the boards with triangular envelope corners made from paper and tape. Make sure that the tape goes across the paper triangle corner and does not come in contact with the wrapping paper around the object. Always ensure that the boards are at least 4" larger than the object (providing a 2" margin on all sides). The boards should be taped together and wrapped in a sturdy paper such as Kraft paper.

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Second Packing Layer Continued

Objects of like size may be packaged together at this stage. Use of non-breathing, impermeable material such as plastic sheeting is not recommended. If the package is subjected to abrupt temperature drops, condensation can form inside the package and damage your object and possibly even result in mold growth.

The Box / Shipping Containers: Next, place the wrapped object(s) in the shipping container. If a small number of sheets are involved, it is acceptable to sandwich them between two rigid boards. For small objects, several layers of sturdy cardboard may be used. The cardboard must be rigid and dense enough to resist puncturing or bending. If layers of corrugated board are used, we recommend placing each sheet with the grain perpendicular to that of adjoining layers for increased rigidity.

For larger objects, a more rigid material such as half-inch plywood, Masonite®, or honeycomb board are recommended

The box/package dimensions should always be at least 4" larger than the second packing layer (rigid boards), providing a 2" margin on all sides.

The shipping package should be sealed at the edges with tape and wrapped with a sturdy material such as Kraft paper. All the seams on Registered Mail packages must be sealed with brown gummed paper tape (the post office will not accept packages with glossy, filament-reinforced or pressure-sensitive tapes). They will make you repack your item if you bring it to them with other tapes on the outside of the package.

It is often better to use professionally made crates for large objects. We are happy to recommend a professional art handling company in your area. Please contact us for more information.

Cushioning: Padding helps absorb shocks and keeps objects from shifting during transit. It can also provide thermal insulation and act as a humidity buffer. Cushioning materials are recommended especially for fragile objects and they are essential for objects that must be sent under glass. These materials are usually made of plastic or paper. Polyethylene or polypropylene foams with brand names like Ethafoam®, Volara®, or Microfoam® are especially popular with museums for packaging. They come in sheets of various thickness or in blocks that can be cut to cradle and support three-dimensional objects. Polystyrene foams such as Styrofoam® can also be used for cushioning but are not chemically stable enough for long-term storage. Filling the crate with plastic "peanuts" or shredded paper also provides an adequate cushion.

Packing the box/container with "bubble wrap" is another option, but because bubble wrap is a sheet that does not breathe, it should not be wrapped completely around the object. In addition, bubble wrap can stain and should never be placed directly in contact with an object.

Note: Packaging materials do not have to be acid-free if they are not in direct contact with the object and if the package will be unpacked right away.

PLEASE DO NOT SEND AN OBJECT TO THE CONSERVATION STUDIO WITHOUT NOTIFYING US FIRST.

We are happy to provide you with customized packing and shipping guidelines for your materials at no charge. Contact Carolyn at Works on Paper if you have any further questions.