



# SAVING YOUR Treasures

*A Website about what you can do to protect and preserve the things of importance in your life*



## Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center Nebraska State Historical Society

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### RECOMMENDED ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS FOR COLLECTIONS

The storage and exhibition environment best suited for the long term survival of art materials is one in which the relative humidity is as **stable** as possible and the temperature is as low as practically possible. For Nebraska collections, relative humidity levels in the range of 50% to 30% are thought to be best for general collections; however, it is actually the **stability of the relative humidity** that is paramount rather than the actual value. This is certainly true in an arid environment like that in western Nebraska where 50% RH may be difficult to maintain particularly in the cold winter months. Fifty percent relative humidity is not essential; it is the stability that is most important. As an example, materials observed by the conservators at the Ford Center, such as the nitrate film collections, have been stored in stored in very stable but dry conditions for many, many years and are in very good condition. Therefore, if the relative humidity is more stable at 45%, then all efforts should be focused on maintaining that relative humidity. Temperatures that fall in a range below 72° F and above freezing are acceptable provided that relative humidity is controlled.

Each degree the temperature is lowered, under stable relative humidity conditions, will slow the rate of deterioration of collection materials. We recommend conditions that will provide:

***a stable relative humidity in a range falling below 50% and above 30%  
and a temperature in a range falling below 72° F and above freezing.***

Above 50% RH mold and mildew can form and below 30% RH serious dehydration of organic materials can occur. Above 72° F some materials begin to soften and flow and below 32° F any materials containing water will begin to freeze and expand. Lower room temperatures with stable relative humidity will prolong the life of the collections, but may interfere with human comfort.

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