

A quill pen is shown in an inkwell on the left side of the slide. The quill is dark brown with a white tip and is partially submerged in a dark red inkwell. The background is a solid dark red color with a subtle gradient and a dark, wavy shadow-like shape at the bottom.

Emergency Drying Procedures for Water Damaged Collections

Collection care – Disaster Planning
Collection Care Conservator – Lorna
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Health & Safety

- Wear protective, latex gloves and long sleeves.
 - If mould is present, wear a respirator. Some mould species are toxic; if any health effects are observed, contact a doctor and/or mycologist.
- When cleaning items with dry mould, make sure the mould spores are drawn away from you, i.e. by the use of a vacuum cleaner. Wash your hands after handling materials with mould.



Air Drying

- Use fans to provide maximum air circulation but do not aim fans directly at the drying materials.
- Absorb excess moisture using a clean sponge, paper or bath towels, etc. Do not blot on hand-written ink or fragile surfaces. Do not use printed newsprint for blotting; ink can transfer.



Air-drying Paper Documents, Maps, Posters, etc:

- Paper is very fragile when wet and must be handled with care, provide adequate support.
- Blot excess water off the documents.
- Do not attempt to separate individual items while very wet. You may leave them in stacks no higher than 1/4” to dry.
- If pages can be separated safely they can be interleaved using absorbent or separating materials, such as waxed paper. Change interleaving materials until item is dry.

Air-drying Paper Documents, Maps, Posters, etc:

- Clean, unruined window-screens stacked with bricks or wood blocks between them will provide a drying surface with maximum air circulation. If drying items on a hard surface, cover area with absorbent materials and change when wet. When items are almost dry, place them between protective sheets such as unprinted newsprint and put a light weight on them to flatten.
- **Note:** If the item is too wet when placed under weights, you may create a micro-environment for mould.



Air-drying Framed Items:

- Place the frame glass-side down and remove the backing materials.
- Carefully remove object and air-dry.
- If the object is stuck to the glass, do not remove; instead dry frame with object inside, glass side down on a flat surface.



Air-Drying Books

- Fan books open and stand on top or bottom edge; never stand them on the front edge.
- Stand books on driest edge first to provide support. As the book dries turn it upside-down to the opposite edge every few hours.
- Place a sheet of waxed paper larger than the pages between the front and back cover and adjacent page before standing on edges. Replace the interleaving as it becomes saturated.
- When the book is no longer wet, but still cool to the touch, close and place on a solid surface with a slight weight to keep distortion to a minimum. Check frequently to ensure that no mould is growing.



Air-drying Photographic Materials:

- Some historical photographs are very sensitive to water damage and may not be recoverable.
- Most prints, negatives and color slides can be air-dried. The emulsion (picture or image) side should be face up.
- Avoid touching the front surface of wet or damp photographic prints or negatives.
- **Note:** The emulsion side often appears less glossy on negatives and colour slides. To speed drying time, dry items on a clothesline using wooden or non-abrasive plastic clothespins. If the photographs or negatives are stuck together or the emulsion is damaged, contact a photographic conservator or your local historical society or museum for advice.
- If photographic materials are covered with mud or dirt and are still wet, they may be gently rinsed in a bucket of cold, clean water, or a light stream of cold water, and then dried.

Recovery of Water-damaged Collections with Mould:

- Active mould looks either fuzzy or slimy.
- Do not attempt to remove active mould.
- Dormant mould is dry and powdery. See safety precautions above for handling mould.
- Stop mould outbreaks by improving environmental conditions. Humidity levels should be as low as possible below 50%. Use a dehumidifier. Low temperatures -- below 68° F -- are recommended.
- Short exposure to sunlight and circulating air outdoors may help to dry mouldy items more rapidly.

After care

- When the mould has become dormant through drying it can be removed, using a vacuum cleaner and/or a soft brush. After vacuuming, dispose of bag. Clean brushes to prevent spreading the mold spores. Safety precautions are particularly important in this stage.
- Water damage to materials may be irreversible. The treatment of items of high monetary, historic or sentimental value should be referred to a conservator.