



## Dear Dr. Book

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*Dear Dr. Book:*

*I have just received some oversized Colorado history posters for Christmas. What is the best way to store these posters for the long term?*

*Colorado History Buff*

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Dear Colorado History Buff:

What a nice Christmas present!

While regular sized documents (up to 8 ½ x 11 inches) are easily stored flat or in a file cabinet, oversized materials, whether posters, prints, blueprints, or maps, can pose a challenge. While it may be tempting to fold the posters into a more manageable size, it is much better to store them without folding or ceasing to prevent potential stress points that may lead to tearing in the future.

Any storage system should protect the posters from the environment (light, temperature and relative humidity extremes, air pollutants, and pests) and inadvertent damage.

The simplest flat storage method is to house the posters in a large folder, made out of either heavy weight acid-free paper or folder stock. Preservation vendors offer folders from 11 x 17 inches up to 36 x 48 inches. Posters of similar size can be housed in one folder separated by acid-free tissue paper. The challenge is to find a large enough flat space to store the folders so that it remains flat and protected from the environment. Although they usually have space, basements and attics are not environmentally sound locations.

Preservation supply vendors also offer various types of large archival document storage boxes in stock sizes or they will construct a customized box to your specifications. Any box should be made out of acid-free, lignin free paper stock and pass the Photographic Activity Test (P.A.T.). The boxes can be stored either horizontally or vertically, with the caveat that if stored vertically, the box should be full enough so that the posters remain upright. Housing the individual posters in acid-free file folders within the box will help. The file folder will also offer support and protect the poster when it is removed from the box for viewing. If the box is to be housed horizontally, single posters within a box can be separated by acid-free tissue paper cut to size. While vendors also offer folders of inert plastic (trade name Melinex®), paper folders are preferred.

A third option is archival roll storage tubes, especially for very large posters. The poster is wrapped around the tube and covered by archival tissue. The tube and poster are overwrapped with another archival material, such as unbleached, unsized cotton muslin or Melinex® and tied. Optionally the tube is then put into a muslin cover or storage box. Storage tubes come in different diameters up to 12 feet long. The caveat for use of storage tubes is that poster should be regularly unrolled so that it do not become permanently curled, but will flatten easily.

For additional information on preservation in general, please write to “Dear Dr. Book” in care of *Stay Connected*, Colorado State University Libraries, Fort Collins, CO 80523-1019.

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