

Washington Public Library

20 West Carlton Avenue, Washington, NJ 07882
(908) 689-0201

Guidelines for Use of the Historical Collections

The historical collections of the Washington Public Library are now located in the Board Room, in locked archival bookcases. Items stored here have been selected for special treatment for two major reasons: they are either old (or rare and irreplaceable) or their content pertains to local history, or both. As these items are no longer in the direct line of vision for library staff working at the circulation desk the following guidelines have been established:

When a patron wishes to use the collection, s/he will sign in at the circulation desk; a staff member will escort him or her into the room and unlock the appropriate case. Requested materials will be moved to the table for use, and the case relocked. Library staff will reshelve items used. The library staff will access further materials as needed.

- Patrons will not be allowed to take bags or briefcases into the room. Purses may not be taken in, but patrons may take their wallets into the room with them while they work.
- The patron should use only paper and pencil in the room while handling these materials, and archival gloves, if provided, must be used.
- The staff will occasionally check with the patron to see if there are any other services needed by the patron.
- There shall be no eating or drinking in the room while these materials are in use and the door to the library shall remain open.
- Photocopies of fragile materials may only be made at the discretion of the library staff. A limited number of photocopies of newer items that can open flat will be permitted.
- If more than one patron wishes to use the collection simultaneously, they will be allowed to so do as long as there is enough workspace available. Should workspace not be available for the number of patrons wishing to use the room, there will be a time limit of one hour placed on each user, unless the library staff can make some other accommodation.
- Items are housed in these special shelves for several reasons (their age, their New Jersey-related content, their fragility). Only three items per patron will be out of the case at a time. If there is a question about the suitability of the item for photocopying, the senior staff member on duty will decide the issue.
- Patrons wishing to use photographs from the special collections will be asked to use them in their protective covers. They must not be touched on the photograph, and anyone who needs to remove one from its cover must wear archival cotton gloves. It is permissible to photocopy these through the protective covers. Removal of the protective covers for any reason requires the permission of the director or the senior library assistant.

At this time the microfilm collection remains in the main reading room, and may be accessed by requesting the key to the cabinet from library staff members. The machine is a reader/copier and uses a dry copy method. It can print either a positive or negative of the image on the screen.

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Staff Guidelines

When a patron wishes to use the materials housed in the Boardroom, you will have him/her sign in, retrieve the keys to the cases and accompany the patron into the room. Patrons are limited to three items from the cases at a time. Thus, you will provide the items requested, and relock the case. When the patron is ready for more items, you may exchange them for the ones he has finished using. These items do not circulate except under rare conditions or when the library owns duplicate copies of recently published local history items. If a patron wishes to borrow an item, s/he must have the approval of the director or a designated staff member.

Patrons are not allowed to have anything but paper and pencil with them as they use these materials. They should take their wallets or other money holder with them into the room, however. If there is not room behind the desk, items may be stored in the director's office. If the patron wishes, items may be locked in the cabinet in the director's office or in a locked file cabinet.

The door to the Boardroom is to remain open at all times while patrons are using special collection materials. Further, there must not be food or drink used there during this time. This includes water bottles! Water bottles may be left at the circulation desk while patrons work.

When the room is being used this way, try to check on the patron every 15 minutes or so, both to meet their needs and provide security for the materials. If a patron needs something photocopied, use your judgment. If the original is strong enough and will open flat enough to copy safely, do so, but if it is fragile and/or will not open all the way, or if the strong light or other requirements of the copier will damage the material, do not let the patron copy it. If there is a disagreement, it should be resolved by the senior staff member on duty.

Keys to the bookcases will be on a special ring similar to those for the microfilm reader, and should be treated in the same manner. When the room is in use, leave the keys on the counter where they are obvious to other staff members. When the special items have been returned to their shelves, return the keys to their normal location and close the door to the Boardroom.

The photographs in the Harpster Collection can not be replaced and must be treated with care and respect. That means that no one is to touch the face of the photograph. If someone does, the photo should be carefully cleaned with a soft cloth. While these photographs have previously received less than ideal care, we will not be able to duplicate these, and must preserve them. Once a photograph is placed into a page-protector it should stay there. If it must be removed, cotton gloves must be worn when handling the photo.