

Great North Museum:
Hancock Library



Archive Item and Rare Book Handling Guidelines for Visitors

Materials held in the collections at the Great North Museum: Hancock Library can be fragile, of considerable age, and sometimes very rare, or unique and irreplaceable.

We ask for your help in trying to preserve the collections by observing the following guidelines.

Please:

- Use the lockers and coat hooks provided for stowing coats, bags and other bulky items.
- Ensure your hands are clean and lotion-free before handling material.
- Use the book supports and weights provided. You may need to adjust the support so that it cradles the book properly.
- Keep loose items in the correct order, and in the right box/packet/page.
- Where present, re-tie tapes around books/folders/bundles after use.
- Close binders and boxes carefully. Ensure that items are lying flat within the binder or box.
- Use a pencil or a laptop for taking notes.
- Report any damage you discover.
- Seek permission to take photographs. The use of flash photography is not permitted. Cameras/phones should be set to silent.
- Feel free to ask for assistance.
- Comply with Copyright and Data Protection legislation.

Please do not:

- Remove items from the Library.
- Bring food into the Library.
- Bring drinks into the Library when consulting archive material or rare books.
- Mark, or make erasures, in any item.
- Place open items face-down, lean, or rest anything on them.
- Cut untrimmed pages.
- Take coats or bags into the Controlled Access and Archive areas.

Always handle books and documents with care.

Specific guidelines for different items:

Books

- Do not force open or put pressure on the spine of a volume.
- Use a book pillow to support the book.
- Use weights to help keep the pages of a volume open.
- Do not lick your fingertips before turning pages over.
- Do not run your fingers over the surface of the page as some inks may smudge.
- If the pages are folded or stuck together, please do not try to open them. Ask for assistance.

Plans and maps

- Please allow plenty of table space to unroll or unfold the item. Don't let it hang over the edge of the table.
- Use weights provided to keep the item flat. Weight the entire outer edge of the document before starting to unroll, then place further weights as you unroll, before placing weights at the other end of the document.
- Be very careful when unrolling or unfolding a plan or map. If there is a tear in the item, stop unrolling/unfolding immediately and ask for assistance.
- When you have finished looking at the item, roll/fold it back carefully on the table following the unrolling/unfolding steps in reverse.
- If the item is folded, please ensure you fold it back up in the same way you opened it.
- Please don't lean on maps or plans to trace them. Ask about copying options.

Papers, parchment and loose documents

- Please keep loose items in folders in order. Look at one item at a time.
- Parchment documents can be folded and difficult to open. Take time to open them out and use weights on the edges to stop them springing back. Don't try to make the parchment entirely flat.
- Please don't touch the ink on parchment documents with your fingers as it can rub away easily.

Photographs, paintings, prints and drawings

- Handle with care and avoid touching the surface of the item.
- If the item is mounted on card, don't lift the edge or try to unstick it.
- If the item is in a protective sleeve, do not remove it.
- Only handle the edge of the item.
- You may need to wear gloves to handle some items. These will be provided if required.

Thank you for helping to preserve these items for the future.