MUSEUM TEXTILE SERVICES

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

Conservators and collections-care specialists rely on stable, high-quality materials to provide a safe enclosures and mounts for artifacts. Museum supply companies are the best place to find archival materials. Prices vary, so comparison shopping is recommended. In some cases, commercial products are also suitable for museum use, but quality can vary from one purchase to another. This handout will review which materials are most commonly used at MTS, along with their pros and cons.

	Use	*Characteristics*	*Pros*	*Cons*	*Commercial Alternatives*	*Commercial Pros & Cons*
Unbuffered Acid-free Tissue	Packing, interleaving. Good for all fiber types	Acid-free	Safe to use on all textiles		Small packs available at Container Store	Limited selection
Buffered Acid-free Tissue	Packing, interleaving. Use on plant fibers only (cotton, linen, etc.) Can be harmful to wool and silk	Acid-free, buffered with 3% calcium carbonate	Good for cotton, linen, and other plant fibers	Hard to distinguish from un-buffered, better to use unbuffered for all artifacts		
Mylar/ Melinex	Encapsulating, interleaving, packing	Clear polyester film	Varying thicknesses	Electrostatic	Art supply stores	May contain impurities
Marvelseal	Lining to prevent off-gassing of exposed wood	Aluminized polyethylene and nylon film	Can position until ironed into place, cheaper than other archival products		Aluminum foil	Cheap but easily tears, not as long lasting, can stick to artifacts
Tyvek (smooth structure)	Liner and barrier for non-archival surfaces. Good for enclosures and envelopes	Spunbonded polyethylene, smooth, inert, non-abrasive, water and dust proof	Smooth and paper-like	Electrostatic, expensive,	Tyvek Home Wrap	Cheaper, anti-static coated, printed side should not touch the artifact.
Tyvek (soft structure)	Packing, lining, cover for artifacts and supports	Spunbonded polyethylene, flexible, inert, resistant to water, abrasion	Soft and smooth sides, machine washable	Electrostatic, expensive. Smoother side against artifact	Muslin	Cheap, not water resistant, not a dust barrier
Polyethylene Sheeting	Packing, covering	Plastic (polyethylene) sheeting	Water-proof, can be used to keep pests from getting in boxes		Available at most hardware stores	Low cost

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PTFE Film (Polytetra-fluoroethylene)	Barrier in packing or storage	Inert, smooth, non-toxic, non-absorbent	Stretches, conforms, non-abrasive	May shrink over time		
Polyester Batting	Lining, packing, mounting	Resin- and adhesive-free Polyester fiber	High and low density	Sheds fibers onto artifacts	Fairfield and other store brands	May contain adhesives or resins
Ethafoam	Packing, mounting	Rigid, inert, closed-cell polyethylene	Varying densities, easy to carve		Various packing foams	May not be made with inert gas
Volara	Lining boxes, etc., packing, mounting	Thin, flexible, closed-cell polyethylene sheet foam	Versatile, safe against artifacts	Opaque	Various packing foams	May not be made with inert gas
Cellu-Cushion	Lining boxes, etc., packing, mounting	Close cell, polyethylene sheet-foam	Good for padding	Translucent	Various packing foams	May not be made with inert gas
Coroplast	Making boxes, mounting, framing	Corrugated plastic (polypropylene)	Long-lasting, easy to clean, safe from water, hard to cut in one direction	Electrostatic	Available from industrial distributors	May be dirty depending on how it is stored
Perma/Dur Barrier Board	Making boxes	Acid-free, lignin-free, can be buffered (3% calcium carbonate)	Non-corrugated, easy to cut	Will not keep artifacts dry in case of water exposure		
Perma/Cor Corrugated Board	Making boxes, mounting	Acid-free, lignin-free, buffered with 3% calcium carbonate	Can come in single wall or double wall for added strength	Will not keep artifacts dry in case of water exposure	Small selection of boxes available at Container Store	Limited selection