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Flood victims urged to put documents on ice

Flood victims worried about what to do with precious mementos damaged by floodwaters should look to the power of the family freezer to help keep their keepsakes.

The State Library of Queensland is urging the state's flood affected residents and business owners to take some simple steps before throwing out damaged photographs, books, papers, videos and cassette tapes.

State Library Manager of Collection Preservation Grant Collins said the key to salvaging as many items as possible is "don't panic" and start with the most valuable.

"It can be an emotional time, and people may throw out cherished and irreplaceable possessions damaged by water," Mr Collins said.

"However, in some cases they can be saved by washing mud and silt off with clean water, and careful drying."

A *Salvaging Water Damaged Collections* fact sheet offers simple, home based solutions for preserving books, documents, photographs, films, tapes, and digital media.

"In many cases all you'll need is a kitchen table, pedestal fan, some absorbent paper, a clothesline and following the basic process in the fact sheet," Mr Collins said.

"It's important to prioritise based on deterioration time. We recommend people start with photographs and film, and move on to any paper documents and digital media."

"Wet paper can be held over for recovery just by popping it into a freezer, in a plastic bag, within 48 hours. Freezing is the best way to buy time as it reduces the risk of mould outbreak," he said.

"If no electricity is available, you may have to reassess your priorities based on the documents you feel most attached to."

"The key to recovering most of these documents is to get them dry as quickly as possible."

Tips for drying include pegging film and paper on an internal clothesline, using pedestal fans, lying loose papers flat on paper towel, and separating pages of books, and magazines.

Advice on how to rescue water damaged collections can be found on the State Library of Queensland's Preservation webpage www.slq.qld.gov.au/services/pres/advice. Badly damaged precious items may require professional conservation treatment.

The Collection Preservation staff offer advice to organisations and community members, they can be contacted by email conservation@slq.qld.gov.au.

Fact Sheet

<http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/services/pres/advice>

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