

## Housing Decision Making Case Study: Lincoln Letter

**Prioritization and selection for housing:** The letter was removed from its previous mount on a scrapbook page to reveal the back. A new housing was needed that would fit in a letter-sized document box.

**Object Needs:** The letter is hand written in ink on paper. The letter is two-sided, with one side being written by Abraham Lincoln (high scholarly interest) and the back being a fragment of a letter from another author. While it should be kept flat, both the paper and the media are in good condition. There are no unusual issues related to brittle paper or fragile media.

**Cost:** Housing of this single object is not part of a larger project. The object is highly valued and concerns related to the cost of the housing or staff time are not as critical to the library as that the housed object fit into an existing letter-sized document box.

**Protection of user:** The object does not present significant risk to the user.

**Accessibility:** The Lincoln side of the letter is of primary interest, however some may wish to see the fragment on the back. The object has been used multiple times during the last several years (high use) in classroom and show-and-tell situations.

**Presentation:** Because the object will be passed around a classroom and used in multiple, brief, curator-installed, 2-hour exhibits, it would be ideal if a housing could be intuitive to use and visually appealing. The object is not fine art, but warrants a higher level of aesthetic consideration than routine correspondence.

**Labeling:** The letter has media on both sides leaving little room for item identification to be inconspicuously applied.

**Storage environment:** The storage environment has moderately steady temperature and humidity, with low levels of light and pollutants.

### Storage solution

The primary housing is a polyester film L-seal with an alkaline backing sheet. The polyester film holds the object flat and the alkaline backing sheet provides an alkaline microenvironment. The format allows the object to be easily removed from the housing to view the back.

The secondary housing is a folder and mat structure that includes a digital image of the back of the letter to reduce handling. The mat adds to the physical protection by adding rigidity and protects from light. The housing can be closed as a folder or opened to display the matted letter. It can easily be passed around a classroom or displayed. This system is sturdier than a double sided window mat. Labeling on the mat provides object identification as well as noting the digital image.

The tertiary housing is a letter-sized document box. The box provides some mitigation from fluctuations in temperature and humidity as well as collection level labeling information.



This two-sided letter (right) is matted with a digital image of the reverse (enlarged, left)



It can be opened wide to stand for a show-and-tell or closed like a folder for storage

Courtesy Northwestern University Libraries