

## **System for safely flattening tightly folded or rolled documents**

### **SUPPLIES**

- ❖ Aluminum turkey roasting pan or other large, shallow equivalent with a flat bottom
- ❖ Rack to fit inside pan
- ❖ Thick sponge sheets or several layers of paper towels
- ❖ Plastic bag large enough to fit around pan
- ❖ Legal sized sheets of bond paper
- ❖ Acid free blotting paper if you can borrow it or afford to buy your own
- ❖ Ledger or larger sheets of plexiglass or double strength glass
- ❖ Weights such as a pile of books, lead shot in plastic boxes, lead weights, or cloth covered bricks or rocks

### **METHOD**

- ❖ Put sponge sheet or paper towels in bottom of roasting pan
- ❖ Make sponge very wet
- ❖ Place rack over sponge; it should not touch the sponge
- ❖ Put 2-3 sheets of bond paper over rack, making sure that entire surface of rack is covered
- ❖ Put a few documents on top of rack, again ensuring that they don't come in contact with wet sponge
- ❖ Put plastic bag around pan of documents and close tightly with a baggy tie
- ❖ Leave undisturbed for 3-4 days
- ❖ Open bag and check to see how limp documents are; if the paper is thin, take them out. If the paper is thick, you may need to leave them for another 1-3 days. **DO NOT** leave them too long as they will start to mold!
- ❖ Put 4-6 sheets bond paper or 2 sheets acid free blotting paper on a flat surface
- ❖ Begin to unfold very carefully each document. As it is unfolded place it on the bond or blotting paper and cover with 4-6 sheets bond paper or 1-2 sheets acid free blotting paper. Make doubly sure that all corners are flat and that there are no creases before putting the paper down.
- ❖ Put 4-6 sheets of paper on top of the stack
- ❖ Place glass or plexiglass over the top, covering as much of the stack as possible
- ❖ Place weights around plexiglass or glass to provide an even pressure
- ❖ Leave for 4-7 days undisturbed
- ❖ Remove weights and glass carefully
- ❖ Separate documents from bond paper or blotting paper
- ❖ These latter can be dried and reused as long as they remain clean
- ❖ Documents are now ready for light surface cleaning if appropriate (see separate Tips for cleaning)
- ❖ Repeat process with next batch of documents

esm

revised 4/08