Matting 2D Artwork

Calculating Dimensions for Matting

Assumptions:

1. You intend to frame the work (eventually.)
2. You want the outside dimensions to be whole numbers, rather than fractional numbers, so you won’t need a custom frame.
3. You intend to “mat over” the paper your work is on rather than “floating” the work in a shadow box frame.
4. You have a sharp utility and/or X-Acto knife, some gummed tape, a piece of matboard (archival 4-ply), and a piece of mountboard (archival foam board.)

Step 1: Measure the width of your work (the image area, or the papers’ width.) Subtract ¼” from this number (¼” from each side of the image that will be covered by the mat.) Write this number on a sheet of paper.

Step 2: Decide what nominal\(^1\) mat size you want and multiply that number by “2.” Write it down.

Step 3: Add the numbers you have written down (you will, at this point, probably NOT have a whole number. If you do have a whole number, skip to Step 4.) If you have a fractional number (such as 16 ¼”) round up, or down, to a whole number. Take what you added or subtracted (from rounding up or down) and divide that number by 2 (this sum is to be added to the “nominal” size of each mat side.)

Step 4: Repeat steps 1 through 3 for the height of the mat/image. If needed, always add any excess to the bottom of the mat. See Step 5 (on the right) for an example of how this is done.

\(\text{Nominal:}\) An approximate, rather than an actual, number that is more or less than the actual, final, number.