

Session 7: Conservation 101 – No Junk



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Outline



- Collections Care Procedures and Protocols
- Agents of Deterioration
- Recommendations for Care and Handling
- Recommended Materials and Supplies

Heritage Health Index



A national comprehensive survey by Heritage Preservation and Institute of Library and Museum Services found:

- **26%** of surveyed institutions have no environmental controls
- **59%** have had their collections damaged by light
- **53%** have had their collections damaged by water
- **65%** have had damage to collections due to improper storage

Mission Statement



A good mission statement will help determine priorities for:

- Collecting practices
- Budgetary resources
- Preservation initiatives
- Staff time

Documentation



Good recordkeeping is vital to the care of an object

- Object documentation
- History
- Database
- Location and Condition

Procedures and Protocols



Develop a Collections Management Policy that includes protocols and procedures that address the specific needs of your institution.

Protocols vs. Procedures

- What you will do
- How you will do it

Collections Management Policy



Items to Consider for your CMP:

- Acquisitions
- Deaccessioning
- Access to Collections
- Loans (Incoming and Outgoing)
- Security
- Documentation
- Preservation Policy

Collections Management Policy



- Handling guidelines for collection items
- How to number collections material, along with acceptable methods and materials
- Housekeeping policy and procedures
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy
- Environmental Controls and Monitoring Guidelines
- Disaster Preparedness/Emergency Response Plan

Handling Collection Items



Handling Collections

- Personal Effects
- Gloves – Nitrile vs. Cotton
- Clean, Dry Hands – Paper, Books, Photographs and sometimes Ceramics/Glass
- Never lift objects by weak points
- Planning
- Common Sense
- No Exceptions!

Storage/Housing



Storage Units

- Use cabinets and storage units made of non-corrosive metals (stainless steel, anodized aluminum or powder coated steel).
- If wood must be used, use formaldehyde-free particle board (Medite II) sealed with a water-based polyurethane sealant.
- Do not place collection items on unstable surfaces without a barrier in place

Storage/Housing



Housing and Shelf Lining*

- Acid-free, lignin-free materials
- Inert plastics such as polyethylene and polyester (Tyvek, Volara, Ethafoam, Mylar)
- Cotton rag mat board
- Unbleached Cotton muslin
- Acid-free tissue

* Purchase from a reputable source

* Consider mechanical structure

Storage/Housing



Test housing materials with a pH pen

- Draw a line on the item to be tested.
- The chemical in the pen (chlorophenol red) will make the line appear purple on materials that have a pH higher than 6.8.
- Your line will be clear or yellow if the pH is lower than 6, which means your material is acidic.

Storage/Housing



PAT (Photographic Activity Test)

- The National Archives and Records Administration's developed the PHOTOGRAPHIC ACTIVITY TEST, to ensure that materials used to make albums that will not cause fading or staining in the materials they house.
- An album will specifically say it was "PAT tested and passed."

Numbering Collections



Do Not Use:

- Anything sticky or sharp directly on the object (tape, labels, pins of any kind)
- Ball point pen or marker

Do Use:

- Pencil
- Color fast acrylic paint and inks
- Acid-free paper tags with cotton string
- Twill tape
- Semi-permanent numbering methods using appropriate, tested chemicals

Environmental Controls



Environmental controls are the most effective way to preserve collections.

Environmental Controls - Light



- Light damage is cumulative and irreversible.
- It causes fading, yellowing and weakening of the object's structure.
- No object made of organic materials such as wood, paper, textiles or leather should ever be left on view permanently.
- $(\text{Light level}) \times (\text{Hours per day} \times \text{Number of Days}) = \text{Cumulative Light Exposure}$

Environmental Controls - Light



- Invest in or borrow a light meter to monitor light levels.
- Consider lower light levels for artifacts.
- If possible, install motion sensors.
- Turn off lights in spaces not in use.

Environmental Controls - Light



- Avoid placing artifacts in direct natural light and use shades or drapes as much as possible.
- If natural light cannot be avoided, consider UV film on your doors/windows and a consistent check of these spaces with a UV light meter.
- UV filters/sleeves placed over fluorescent bulbs can block full UV spectrum.

Environmental Controls - Light



The recommended length of time to display materials sensitive to light including works on paper, textiles, photographs and organic material such as leather is:

- Three months at 5 foot candles.

Environmental Controls - Light



Moderately sensitive materials such as oil paintings, acrylic paintings on board and composite inorganic materials should be displayed at:

- Three months at a maximum of 15 foot candles.

Environmental Controls - Light



The levels recommended for the least sensitive objects such as ceramics, metals, glass and stone is:

- Three months at a maximum of 30 foot candles.

Environmental Controls - Light



If an object is to remain on permanent view, the light level should be:

- Between 3 to 5 foot candles.

Environmental Controls – Temperature/RH



Temperature/Relative Humidity

- Avoid rapid changes in temperature and humidity

Optimum levels depend on:

- The nature of a collection
- The building in which it is housed
- The climate in which you are located
- HVAC system

Environmental Controls – Temperature/RH



Recommendations:

- Temperature may be kept between 65 and 72 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Lower temperature will inhibit mold growth.
- Humidity may be kept between 45 – 55%, but 50% works for most collections.
- Humidity levels above 50% will increase the risk of rust.

Environmental Controls - Monitoring



- Do not prop open exterior doors that are located near artifacts.
- Make routine visual checks of your spaces.
- Monitor your environments with a data logger.



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Housekeeping



A regular schedule of dusting and cleaning artifacts should be maintained.

- It is best to eliminate food and beverage consumption from areas where collections are stored or displayed.
- Dusting artifacts is best done with a soft brush made of natural fibers or microfiber cleaning cloth and with a very gentle hand.
- Objects may require vacuuming but should only be done with a vacuum that has variable speed settings, preferably a HEPA filter and using a mesh screen.

Pest Management



The goal of the Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM) is to keep pest activity to a minimum by using proactive methods:

- Monitoring
- Food and plant restrictions
- Good housekeeping and building maintenance

Pest Monitoring



- Perform regular flash light inspections.
- Glue traps marked with the date and its location can be placed approximately every twenty to thirty feet in a collections storage area, as well as in corners, vents, doors and any other potential entryway.
- Areas containing especially vulnerable materials, such as clothing and paper, should also be monitored with traps.

Disaster Preparedness



- Develop a written procedure on how to salvage each kind of item in your collection.
- Determine priorities.
- Determine what supplies are needed and what your budget and space allows.

Disaster Preparedness



- Determine what vendors are necessary to aid in recovery and include their contact information.
- Include personal contact information for staff.
- Remember to keep a copy at home and in your car.
- Update annually.