Creative Solutions to Collections Care

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Creative Solutions for Collections Care

Before & After
Understand the priority order of museum management & preservation goals: funding is often awarded with the same priorities.

1<sup>st</sup> - Mission Statements, Policies, Procedures, Planning
2<sup>nd</sup> - Building & Climate Control
3<sup>rd</sup> - Storage & Exhibition Facilities
4<sup>th</sup> - Collections Maintenance
5<sup>th</sup> - Single-Item Conservation Treatment
Fundraising

Seek local, state and federal donations & funds:
• Private individuals for collections and cash donations
• Fire & Police for assessments and disaster training
• Businesses for money, services, supplies, & publicity
• Local and state political representatives

www.heritagepreservation.org
www.imls.gov/
http://www.neh.gov/grants
Planning

Strategic planning includes:
• Short-term goals (projects that can be done within resources)
• Long-term goals (large-scale projects)
• Fundraising milestones
Assessments are a great way to get started

“CAP provides a general conservation assessment of your museum's collection, environmental conditions, and site. Conservation priorities are identified by professionals who spend 2 days on-site and 3 days writing a report. The report can help your museum develop strategies for improved collections care and provide a tool for long-range planning and fundraising.”  http://www.heritagepreservation.org/cap/
Use templates from professional organizations & associations of similar museums, and sister institutions.

http://www.aam-us.org/resources/professional-resources
http://www.archives.gov/preservation/
http://www.ala.org/tools/guidelines
Establish cooperative relationships & shared resources with similar institutions or by geographic proximity

- Buy supplies in purchasing co-ops
- Create training opportunities & community outreach with other local institutions
The Building

- Understand & move towards ideal museum standards
- Make progressive improvements
- Balance environmental conditions as much as possible
- Secure funds for equipment upgrades & replacement
Professional assessments are preferred; Self-Assessments are very useful:

• Efficient Space Use
• Building Envelop
• Mechanical Systems
• Safety & Security
Environmental Control

Canadian Conservation Institute/10 Agents of Deterioration

• Relative Humidity & Temperature
• Light
• Housekeeping
• Pests
Relative Humidity

Ideal Relative Humidity: 55% +/-5%

- Seasonal changes are less stressful to collections than daily changes
- Paper, textiles, & ethnographic collections are the most sensitive
Use the equipment within the institution’s budget:

- Humidistrips - $20 each
- Electronic Thermo-Hygrometers - $90 each
- Hygrothermographs - $4,000 each
- Dataloggers – prices vary but system can easily be expanded as needed & funds allow
• Undertake regular inspections, maintenance, & repairs
• Run all equipment 24/7
• Only use free-standing equipment when absolutely necessary
• Hardwire electrical cords and locate drainpipes into plumbing
• Use window coverings modify temperatures
• Seal air leaks around windows, doors, chimneys, etc.
Light damage is cumulative:
• The results of low light levels for long durations is the same as intense light levels for short durations
Light Control

• Choose your lamps for the least damaging light emission
• Install filters &/or coverings on lights & windows
• Position lights at the appropriate distance and angle
• Do not use lighting inside of display cases
• Use motion detectors & timers to turn on lights
Choose lamps that emit light in the middle of the spectrum
Which emit low heat and low ultraviolet radiation

See:
*Canadian Conservation Institute/10 Agents of Deterioration*
Disaster Planning and Preparation

- Undertake self-assessments of risks
- Establish a Disaster Plan (templates are available)
- Train staff in disaster response & safety
- Keep computer back-ups kept offsite
- Purchase adequate insurance coverage
- Have contractors available & supplies on-hand

See: [www.heritagepreservation.org/programs/TASKFER.HTM](http://www.heritagepreservation.org/programs/TASKFER.HTM)
• Collections control & organization stabilizes collections & makes them easier to find & replace.
• Quality housing and storage provides chemical & physical support for collections.

“If you make things look precious, people will treat them as precious.”
Shelving Options

- Powder-coated steel is ideal
- Modular wire shelves are a good alternative
- Adapt existing shelves by lining with Marvelseal™ or other barriers (mat board, Mylar, etc.)
Large Format Storage Files

• Purchase used furniture stores & auctions
• Build your own
Frame Racks

- Hang paintings on wire fencing bolted to the wall
- Make paintings bins out of high-grade plywood
- Cover L-brackets with short pile carpet for frame storage
- Cover 2” x 4” lumber with short pile carpet for supports
Collection Storage Housings & Enclosures

Supplies are:
• Less expensive to buy in bulk
• Less expensive to buy in rolls rather than pre-cut
• Less expensive to construct but takes more staff time
• Consider using volunteers
Volunteers

Match volunteer skills & abilities

- Senior Citizens
- High School & College Students/Interns
- Graduate Students
Staff & Volunteer Training

If funds are limited for workshops, use web resources:

www.connectingtocollections.org
www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm
ww.archives.gov/preservation/
Build on Your Successes

- Think creatively
- Undertaking projects in order increases eligibility for grants
- Use photos for press releases, newsletters, & fundraising
- Make progressive improvements
- Know that making any small step is a step forward
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