

OVERVIEW: AGENTS OF DETERIORATION AND THE NEED FOR COLLECTIONS CARE

Definitions

Although we all work with cultural heritage materials, libraries, archives, and museums often speak a slightly different language.

Definitions

Collections Care:
The range of activities that preserve cultural heritage collections. Activities include collection management, environmental management, proper storage and handling practices, and monitoring. Collections care is also known as preventive conservation in some circles.

Definitions

Preservation:
The global activities associated with maintaining collection materials for use or display, whether in their original format or in some other usable format.

Definitions

Conservation:
Techniques and procedures that are used in the treatment of individual items, usually after some damage has occurred.

People

Who performs collections care, preservation, and conservation activities?

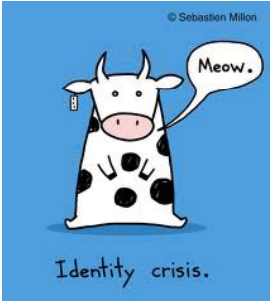
- Collections care and preservation
 - ▣ All staff and most volunteers can be trained to perform these activities.
 - ▣ For anyone, match skills and interests with tasks.
- Conservation
 - ▣ Professionals only, please!
 - ▣ Most conservators have areas of specialty so be sure to match your damaged collections with the appropriate conservator.

Policies

Policies provide the framework for the institution, they do not provide tasks or procedures for accomplishing the work.

Mission Statements

- Probably the most important “policy” your institution will have.
- Ensures the institution has a clear identity with stated goals and for an identified audience.
- Brief but poignant
- The foundation for all other policies



Poll question

- How many of you know and understand the implications of the mission statement for your institution?
 - ▣ Yes/No or raise hand

Sample Mission Statement

- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is America’s national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history, and serves as this country’s memorial to the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust. The Museum’s primary mission is to advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy; to preserve the memory of those who suffered; and to encourage its visitors to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.

- ## Collection Policies
1. Collection as a verb - what the institution intends to collect, what the scope of these collections will be, and criteria for determining if something fits this policy – aka Collections Policy
 2. Collection as a noun - how the institution will manage what it does collect. The collection management policy includes guidelines for storage, care and handling, security, conservation and preservation, and deaccessioning – aka Collections Management policy

Other Policies to Consider

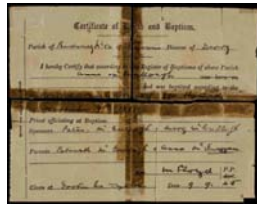
- Disaster Preparedness
- Deaccessioning
- Volunteer
- User/Reader/Access
- Exhibit
- Donor
- Security
- Events

The Agents of Deterioration

All of our collections are deteriorating in many different ways. For a little fun (while you are learning!) see the National Museums Liverpool's great game on the Agents of Deterioration at <http://www.diduknow.info/agents/>

Chemical

- Organic materials degrade by two primary mechanisms: hydrolysis, oxidation.
 - Oxidation: the gain of oxygen – oxidizing agents are the source of this oxygen.
 - Oxidizing agents include ozone, chlorine and chlorine-based elements, peroxides, and nitric acid.
 - Hydrolysis: for many elements, the gain of hydrogen – water is often the source of this hydrogen
 - For cultural heritage materials, this water comes in the form of relative humidity.
- Chemical degradation is catalyzed by inappropriate temperatures and relative humidity, light and pollutants.



Don't forget the Red Rot!



Featured Video:
Red Rot Cocktail

how2chem

□ <http://drinkboston.com/2009/07/24/red-rot-cocktail-now-on-video/>

Biological

- Mold, Insects & other pests
- Exacerbated by inappropriate temperature and relative humidity levels, water incidents, and poor storage locations





Physical

- Poor storage & handling practices
- Physical forces that can be brought to bear on collections include pressure, abrasion, and impact.








Image courtesy of Alex Allard, Arizona Resources



Incidental

- Water emergencies
- Fire
- Vandalism
- Theft

Pop Quiz

- Most of the deterioration to our collections is caused by:
 1. Dust bunnies
 2. Improper temperature and humidity settings in storage areas
 3. Children
 4. Pterodactyls

Selection


We cannot save everything!

Selection

- How do we choose?? First and foremost, select materials that fit with the institution's collection policy. Also consider:
 - ▣ High use collections
 - ▣ Materials going on exhibit/loan
 - ▣ Materials that directly support teaching/research at your institution
 - ▣ Iconic materials from your collection
 - ▣ Materials that are valuable to the institution in some way

Value

- Artifactual
- Evidential
- Informational
- Contextual
- Monetary



Wall Disney ©

Lucius Campbell
 Lucius J. Campbell, 86, Gracely, died at 7:15 p.m. Monday at Jane Chinn Memorial Hospital, Wash. City, where he had been a patient 15 days. He had been in ill health the past year.
 Mr. Campbell was born March 18, 1861, at Chase, Kan., and had lived in Gracely 28 years. He was a father, farmer, and a member of the Gracely Methodist Church.
 Surviving are his widow, Mrs. Dorothy Campbell; four daughters, Mrs. Pauline Schaeff, Okla., Miss Mrs. Phyllis Dinkert, Larned, Kan., Mrs. Rosalee Wiggins, Kansas City, Kan., and Mrs. Helen Paul, Independence, Kan.; 11 grand-children and three great-grand-children.
 Services will be held at 2 p.m. Thursday in the Gracely United Methodist Church. The Rev. Lloyd Mackenney will officiate assisted by the Rev. Clark Waggoner. Burial will be in the Gracely Memorial Cemetery under the direction of the Stanslake Funeral Home of Gracely.
 Friends may call at the funeral home from 2 p.m. Wednesday until noon Thursday and then at the church from 1 p.m. until the funeral hour.

Selection


- At-risk objects and collections
 - ▣ acetate and nitrate negatives, media for which you don't have playback machines, flaking paintings, insect infested collections
 - ▣ when is at-risk too damaged to be able to get a good copy without too much time or money – think about your return on investment




Selection: Intellectual Control

- Do you know
 - ▣ what you have?
 - ▣ where it is?
 - ▣ what format?
 - ▣ what condition?
 - ▣ what value?
- If you don't know what you have, how can you prioritize for care, let alone justifying the cost of maintaining it?

Questions?



"Harris, when I said 'any questions' I was using only a figure of speech."
 MORRIS

Homework

- Describe an item in your collections that is showing signs of deterioration. How is it deteriorating?
- Complete and submit homework via <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/basics1>
- Homework link and links to additional resources will be posted on the Collections Care Basics page at <http://www.connectingtocollections.org/courses/collections-care-basics/>