Seasonal Affective Disorder: Caring for Collections During Seasonal Special Events

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Seasonal Affective Disorder

- General Guidelines for Special Events
- Seasonal Event Specifics
- Navigating Institutional Politics
General Guidelines for Special Events

What makes an event special?
• Unique activities
• Builds audience
• Raises revenue
• What’s a party without food and drink?
• Seasonal events are cherished
General Guidelines for Special Events

Write it down!

- Write a special event policy
- Be specific
- Get buy in from everyone involved
- Include collections protection language in contracts
General Guidelines for Special Events

• Keep food and drink away from collections areas
• Specify where and when food and drinks are allowed
• Use lots of signs!
General Guidelines for Special Events

• Use high tables or tray stands for drinks
• Clear empties throughout event
• Use mats to protect floors from spills
• Have catering set up away from collections
General Guidelines for Special Events

Protect collections on display if you must use galleries

• Place objects in cases
• Use stanchions or other barriers to protect objects in the open
• Move objects out of the way temporarily
General Guidelines for Special Events

Housekeeping is important!

• Before
• During
• After

“The Event Never Happened” policy
Tina Karl, National Museum of Natural History
General Guidelines for Special Events

- Encourage good behavior
- Communicate expectations
- Use signs
- Employ extra security, custodial and catering staff
General Guidelines for Special Events

Integrated Pest Management
• Monitor areas where food and plants are placed
• Green house flowers only
• No wild flowers
• Catering access and passage away from collections
• Remove waste and recycling promptly
• Clean immediately after event
General Guidelines for Special Events

- Noise causes vibration
- Monitor objects, especially on mezzanines, balconies.
- Control amplification if objects are affected
Winter Holiday Events

Hazards to collections
- Christmas trees
- Candles
- Lights
- Decorative food and plants
- Decorations on collections
- Objects used as decorations
Winter Holiday Events

Christmas Trees

- Use fake trees and garland
- Fire code may prohibit live trees
- Make sure there is sufficient electrical power for lights
- Make sure fire response is current, extinguishers charged, and staff trained
- Use barriers to protect surroundings from sap and water
Winter Holiday Events

- Avoid placing decorations on objects
- Use barrier layers if decorations must be on objects or building features
- Cleaning protocols once decorations are removed
- Consult a conservator if objects are damaged
Winter Holiday Events

IPM

- Increase monitoring near live decorations
- Use greenhouse plants
- Do not over water plants
- Avoid food based decorations, i.e. popcorn strings, etc.
- Clean areas before, during and after decorating
Spring Flower Events

- Communicate guidelines to participants ahead of time
- Supervise installation to make sure objects are protected
Spring Flower Events

IPM
- Use greenhouse flowers
- No wild flowers
- Inspect incoming products
- Increase monitoring in area during and after event
- Clean before, during, and after event
Spring Flower Events

- Remove stamen
- Spray loose bits with hair spray
- Do not spray near artwork
- Place flowers away from artwork
- Contain water
Spring Flower Events

- Temporary shields protect paintings
- Use new polyethylene or HDPE sheeting
- Tape to wall, not frame!
Spring Flower Events

- Give participants room to work
- Use floor coverings
- Clean area after installation
- Control water; clean spills immediately
Sleepovers

- Communicate guidelines to participants ahead of time
- Expect good behavior
- Enlist chaperones to supervise youth
- Emphasize the special nature of the event
- Safety for participants and collections
Sleepovers

- Secure storage for belongings
- Communicate guidelines again
- Restrict food and beverage to non-collections areas
- Plan activities: keep campers busy
Sleepovers

- Staff adequately
- Some staff should stay awake for safety and security
- Consistent messages about behavior
- Housekeeping
- Check for damage in morning
Halloween

- Safety and security at 21+ events
- Discourage masks; messy or large costumes
- Staff adequately
- Plan fun activities
Halloween

- Encourage good behavior
- Schedule extra security and custodial staff
- Price alcohol to limit consumption
- Clean during and after event
Halloween

IPM
• Avoid pumpkins and other plant based decorations if possible
• Increase monitoring during and after event
• Clean immediately after event
Politics

It’s our job to imagine the worst case scenario
Politics

It’s also our job to find workable solutions
Politics

- Know the players
- Understand why the event is important
Politics

Recognize overall benefit to institution

- Revenue
- Marketing
- Attendance
- New audiences
- Membership
- Visibility
- Donors
Politics

• Create allies among staff and stakeholders
• Align common interests
• Cultivate collections advocates
• Find someone else to say no
Politics

- Be proactive - suggest win win solutions
- Compromise for a reason-extreme measures to mitigate risk
- Event budget could be used to fund collections work
Don’t fear the event!
Have (collections safe) fun!
Thank you!

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Verne Anderson, cartoonist