BASIC CONDITION REPORTING

Deborah Rose Van Horn, Registrar
Kentucky Historical Society
What is a condition report?

- Tells you the condition of an object at a specific day and time
- Examines a specific piece and looks at the piece’s stability, any damage to the piece, any inherent problems with the piece, etc.
Why do condition reports?

- They can document change in the condition of a piece over time.
- Shows if the item needs conservation.
- Shows if it is stable enough for exhibition or loan.
- Insurance evaluations.
- A and C.
- All of the above.
When should I do a Condition Report?

- A- When an item is pulled out for an exhibit
- B- Before an item goes out on loan
- C- When the object first enters the collection (first time cataloged)
- D- While doing inventory
- E- Any time you touch an object
- F- All of the above
When should I do a Condition Report?

- When an item is pulled out for an exhibit
- Before an item goes out on loan
- When an item comes back from loan
- When the object first enters the collection (first time cataloged)
- When the item is pulled for research
- Before the piece is sent to a conservator
- While doing inventory
BEST PRACTICE: IF YOU TOUCH IT CHECK IT!
What do I need to get started?

- Support board
- Measuring tools
- Magnification tools
- Brushes and probes
- Weights and padding materials
- Camera
- Gloves
Getting Started

- Gather your documentation and review notes and photos on previous condition
- Fill out the basic information on your form or in your database such as object id number, date of the report, examiner, etc.
Examining your piece

- Determine the best method of examination
  - Can you use a grid system to describe where damage is?
  - If not, where is your starting point?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TL</th>
<th>TC</th>
<th>TR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>BC</td>
<td>BR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The grid can help explain where damage such as this paper loss is on a piece. This is in the center left section of the painting.
Designate your starting point
Designating the starting point

- Use terms like proper left/ viewer’s left
- If there are common terms such as “driver’s side” use them
- Make sure someone else can find the starting point
Game time! Name that Condition

- Excellent- Like new or new in the package. No visible damage.
- Good- Minor damage but the piece is stable and can easily be displayed.
- Fair- Minor to moderate damage but there are some issues with the piece that may prevent it from being displayed.
- Poor- This piece is in unstable condition and needs to be considered for conservation or deaccession.
Name that condition

A. Excellent
B. Good
C. Fair
D. Poor
Name that condition

A. Excellent
B. Good
C. Fair
D. Poor
Name that condition

A. Excellent
B. Good
C. Fair
D. Poor
Name that condition

A. Excellent
B. Good
C. Fair
D. Poor
Name that condition

A. Excellent
B. Good
C. Fair
D. Poor
Name that condition

A. Excellent
B. Good
C. Fair
D. Poor
Condition terms can be subjective. That is why the description is so important!
Tips and tricks

- Use numbers or symbols on your pictures to match up with your report.
Tips and tricks

- Bullet points make it easier to read
- Take close ups of the damage
How do I describe what is happening?

- If you do not know the term describe what you see and photograph or draw it.
How do I describe what is happening?

• Use common terms
• Use “landmarks” to help describe where the damage is

These letters can be used as a landmark.
Kentucky Historical Society
Condition Report

Accession Number: 1904.4


Current Location: HC-HG - left wall - center

Name of Examiner: Deborah Rose, Assistant Registrar

Date of Examination: August 15, 2005

Condition: excellent good fair poor

Examination Remarks:
1. Cracked surface paint
2. Heavy scuffing w/some paint loss along all sides of frame
3. 1 1/2" long scratch in frame (approx 2" from rt side on bottom)
4. 1 1/2" long scratch in frame (approx 2" from top on rt side)
5. Drip marks along top of frame
Common damage types

- The following are types of damage that can be found on a variety of material types
Loss

Loss- area that is missing a piece
Scratch

Scratch - mark left on one piece by something leaving a line on the surface
Tear

Tear - area where fabric or paper has ripped
Crease- fold in fabric, paper, etc. that has left a heavy line in the piece that may or may not be removed
Accretion

Accretion- accumulation or encrustation of material on the surface of a piece such as dirt, paint or frass.
Pest Damage

Pest damage- holes, fraying, powdering, discoloration caused by a insect, rodent or other pest.
SOMETIMES THERE ARE TYPES OF DAMAGE THAT ARE MORE SPECIFIC TO A MATERIAL TYPE.
Basketry

Distortion: warping or misshaping of an object’s original form.

Use wear/ modification/ repair: evidence of how a basket was used and modified or repaired from use.
Glass

Iridescence: Partial decomposition of the Surface into thin scales, resulting in a lustrous Color effect and an uneven, flaky surface in a glass object.
Leather

Red rot: Powdering of leather in which the fibrous structure is broken down as a result of sulfuric acid.
Wood

Lifting: raising of inlaid surfaces or veneer away from wooden surfaces

Bloom: white discoloration on the surface of wood indicating that moisture has penetrated the surface.
Metals

Corrosion/ Rusting: Chemically induced formation of mineral encrustations as the metal reverts to its constituents.

Dent: Concave deformation of a surface caused by hitting
Metals

Tarnish: to lose or cause to lose the shine, especially by exposure to air or moisture resulting in surface oxidation and discoloration.
Paintings

Crackle/craquelure: network of fine cracks in the ground, paint layer or surface coating as the materials age or dry.

Blister: Bulge in the paint surface indicating cleavage of paint or ground layers from each other or their support.
Crease, fold: Line or mark made by, or as if by folding.
Discoloration: A change in color, such as darkening or fading.

Foxing: Brown or reddish brown spots; probably caused by mold or the oxidation of iron particles in the paper, mount or backing.
Paper

Acid burn/mat burn- discoloration caused by an acidic wood pulp in paper mat board or other materials composing a piece.

Pop Quiz: What other damage do you see in this book?
- tears
- accretion
- staining
Embrittlement: loss of flexibility causing the material to break where bent or curled. The areas of loss on this photo are due to embrittlement of the support.

Cracking: surface fracture or fissure across or through a material.
Plastics

Blistering: raised pockets or bubbles on a laminated surface

Spalling: chunks or fragments separating from the whole
Textiles

Shattering: A term used for chemically treated silk that exhibits deterioration and losses.
Practice: What do you see?

- Water staining or tide lines
- Tears or area of loss
- Acid burn
- Staining
Digital Condition Reporting

- There are several apps on the market to help with condition reporting.
Digital Condition Reporting

- You can create digital condition reports without an app
- You can mark up a photo with a paint program on your computer
- Use other apps like a .pdf editor
- Take notes on a tablet or laptop
Sample Digital Photo
SAMPLE REPORTS
Types of Condition Reports

- Loan
- Inventory
- Conservation
- Damage
- Cataloging
Loan Report

- Lender: Report should be done before items go out on loan and when it comes back.
- Borrower: Report should be done when item is unpacked and before it is packed to ship back.
- Report should be detailed and include photos for comparison.
Is it an incoming or outgoing report?
Loan Report
Inventory Report

- Should be done when the item is inventoried.
- Can be a simple check against prior reports.
- Can be fast! Do 1-3 bullet points and move on!
### Inventory Report

**Detail Condition Report**  2013.36.3 Pillow  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>04/07/2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Report created by</td>
<td>Clates, Stephen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Inventory Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Condition of Surface**
- The pillow is heavily stained but structurally sound.
- There is a tiny hole on one side.
- There are some loose threads on a couple of the corners.

**Work Required**
- 0.00

**Estimated Cost**  
- / /
Conservation Report

- Usually written by a conservator or conservation assistant
- Often done prior to conservation/restoration work being done
- A report is also done at the end of the treatment telling you what types of work have been done by the conservator
Damage Report

- Usually written after an accident or incident of vandalism
- Should include when the incident occurred or was reported
- Should include details of what happened
- Should include what damage occurred to the piece
Damage Report

Detail Condition Report  1904.9 Painting
08/26/2016

Date: 09/18/2014
Report created by: Elliott, Sara L.
Type: Damage Report
Condition: Fair
Conservator: 
Condition of Surface: 
State of Cleanliness: 
Condition of Parts: 
Condition of Structure: 
Condition of Material: 
Parts Missing: 
Mechanism Operation: 

Damage Information:

*Painting was damaged in move:
10 ½” from top and 5 ½” from right edge is a 5 ¾” vertical tear
10 1/2” from top and 18 1/2” from the right edge is 5” vertical tear
10 ½” from top edge and 5 ½” from right edge is a 18” horizontal tear

Description of Condition:

*Painting was damaged in move:
10 ½” from top and 5 ½” from right edge is a 5 ¾” vertical tear
10 1/2” from top and 18 1/2” from the right edge is 5” vertical tear
10 ½” from top edge and 5 ½” from right edge is a 18” horizontal tear
*Canvas is dry and cracking
*Upper right corner there is some paint loss
*The frame is missing some of the decorative elements
9” vertical section in upper left
Section on bottom center
*Scratch in paint in lower left corner
*Previous repair on back: 21 3/4” from side edge and 7 1/4” from top there is a 3 1/2” x 3 1/4” patch
*White paint drips on back stretcher
*Frame is soiled and there is gilding missing in several areas
*Frame is worn on all sides

Work Required:
Damage Report
Cataloging Report

- Sometimes this is the first condition report done for an item
- Creates your baseline for future checks
- Should be detailed and contain photos
# Detail Condition Report

**2009.4 Pin, Occupational**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>08/25/2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Report created by</td>
<td>Stupperich, Andy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>catalog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition of Surface</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Cleanliness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition of Parts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition of Structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition of Material</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parts Missing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanism Operation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Condition</td>
<td>Loss of majority of blue enamel paint on lettering, remnants left on “REYN” in Reynolds, other letters have no paint extent; nickel plating has worn from around edges of badge exposing brass underneath, see especially lower front edge; metal with shallow scratches all over; celluloid is slightly yellowed; celluloid with scratches; celluloid has trapped iron and dirt particles underneath touching image; circular ring appears on celluloid? or photographic image? at center; metal plate on back with scattered patches of rust throughout; clasp is rusted shut, locking mechanism will not turn; pin with slight bend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Cost</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est Completion Date</td>
<td>//</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cataloging Report
RESOURCES
Resources: Books

- Museum Registration Methods, 5th Edition
- Basic Condition Reporting, Fourth Edition
- CCI Notes
Resources: Websites

- The Fine Arts Conservancy’s Glossary for Paintings: http://www.art-conservation.org/?page_id=1170
Resources: Forms

- Sample forms can be found on the following institutions’ websites:
  - Registrars Committee-American Alliance of Museums
  - American Association for State and Local History
  - Southeastern Registrars Association
QUESTIONS?