Evaluating Collections Care Information Resources

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WHAT ARE WE GOING TO TALK ABOUT TODAY?

• Resources!
  • What is a good collections care resource?
  • Where can you find them?
  • What should you look for?
WHAT ARE COLLECTIONS CARE RESOURCES?

• Essentially, there are 3 types of resources
  • Colleagues
  • Print Publications
  • Web Resources
WHERE DO WE FIND THE MOST CREDIBLE INFORMATION?

Colleagues  Publications  Web Resources
WHERE DO WE FIND THE MOST CREDIBLE INFORMATION?

Colleagues

Publications

Web Resources
HISTORY OF COLLECTIONS CARE RESOURCES

• Collections are older than museums
• Collections have always been cared for, some just not very well
BOOKS ABOUT COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

• 1727
• Caspar Neickel (Kaspar Freidrich Jenequel)
  • *Museography or Instructions for the Better Understanding and useful Organization of Museums and Chambers of Rarities*
  • *Museographia oder Anleitung zum rechten Begriff und nützlicher Anlegung der Museorum oder Raritäten Kammern*
• Guidelines for the acquisition, organization, and care of collections
1753

- David Hultman
  - *Instructio Musei Rerum Naturalium*
  - *Instructions for the Natural Museum*
- Fireproof buildings
- North-facing windows
- Keep objects dry and out of direct sunlight
THE COLLECTIONS CARE PROFESSION

Training for museum work:

• 20\textsuperscript{th} century – first formal training for museum work
• 1908 – United States
• 1970s – Museum studies programs

Newly trained museum professionals at Newark Museum, 1926
THE COLLECTIONS CARE PROFESSION

Professional organizations:

• 1906 – AAM (American Association of Museums, now American Alliance of Museums)
  • 1918 – *Museum Work*
• 1940 – American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)
• 1946 – ICOM (International Council of Museums)
• 1972 – American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC)
THE COLLECTIONS CARE PROFESSION

- 1958 – *Museum Registration Methods*
  - Dorothy Dudley and Irma Bezold Wilkinson
  - Now in its fifth edition (MRM5)
- 1975 - *Introduction to Museum Work*
  - George Ellis Burcaw
- 1978 – *Registration Methods for the Small Museum*
  - Daniel B. Reibel
THE COLLECTIONS CARE PROFESSION

- 1978 – *The Museum Environment*
  - Gary Thompson
  - 2nd edition 1986
- Stable storage environments
- Light, relative humidity, temperature
- Preventive conservation
THE COLLECTIONS CARE PROFESSION

1998 – *Legal Primer on Managing Museum Collections*

- Marie Malaro

  3rd edition (2010), Marie Malaro and Ildiko DeAngelis
STANDARDS FOR COLLECTIONS CARE

- 2008 - National Standards and Best Practices for U.S. Museums (AAM)
  - Section IV, Collections Stewardship
- SPECTRUM 4.0
  - Collections Trust
WHY DO STANDARDS KEEP CHANGING?

We keep learning!

• Through research, observation, and time, our profession continues to learn more about how our collections interact with their environment.
• The more we know about these interactions, the more effective preventative measures we can put in place to protect our collections.
WHY DO STANDARDS KEEP CHANGING?

Refining standards

• 1970s – 50% relative humidity at 68°F, year-round
• Now – A range of temperature and relative humidity, based on materials
• Wood, glue, hide, bone, inlay, nylon strings all react differently to environmental changes
THE ROLE OF PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION IN COLLECTIONS CARE

• Goal is to prevent, or at least slow, the deterioration of objects through preventive conservation:
  • Stable storage environment
  • Identifying and understanding the agents of deterioration
  • Making better use of our resources
THE ROLE OF PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION IN COLLECTIONS CARE

• What is preventive conservation?
  • “Actions taken to minimize or slow the rate of deterioration and to prevent damage to collections; includes activities such as risk assessment, development and implementation of guidelines for continuing use and care, appropriate environmental conditions for storage and exhibition, and proper procedures for handling, packing, transport, and use. These responsibilities may be shared by collection managers, conservators, subject specialists, curators and other institutional administrators.”
THE ROLE OF PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION IN COLLECTIONS CARE

• Why preventive conservation?
  • Avoid or slow deterioration of the collection
  • Cost-effective
  • Make the best use of collection care resources
HOW CAN YOU TELL THE GOOD FROM THE BAD

1. What is the source?
2. Are you familiar with the source?
3. Who is the author?
4. Does it sound reasonable?
RAW POTATOES AND WHITE-OUT

• Watch out!
  • There is a lot of bad information there.
  • Just because your museum has always done it that way doesn’t mean you should keep doing it.
  • Every organization is different. What works great for one museum may not work for another.
INFORMATION RESOURCE LISTS

1. Basic print resources
2. Basic on-line resources
3. Basic video and webinar resources
4. Museum professional organizations
BASIC PRINT RESOURCES

• As our profession has grown, so has our body of knowledge.
  • Time-tested essential resources:
    • Buck and Gilmore’s *Museum Registration Methods*, 5th edition
    • *Health and Safety for Museum Professionals*
BASIC PRINT RESOURCES

• Image Permanence Institute’s *Guide to Sustainable Preservation Practices for Managing Storage Environments*
BASIC PRINT RESOURCES

• Angela Kipp (2016) - Managing Previously Unmanaged Collections: A Practical Guide for Museums
• Malaro and DeAngelis (2010) - A Legal Primer for Managing Museum Collections
• Heather Hope Kuruvilla (2016) – A Legal Dictionary for Museum Professionals
BASIC PRINT RESOURCES

National Park Service
- Conserve O Gram series
  - Short articles
  - 183 in 22 categories
- Museum Handbook
  - PDF
  - Download by section
BASIC PRINT RESOURCES

Forthcoming...

- *Preventive Conservation: Collection Storage*
  - 800+ pages
  - Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, American Institute for Conservation, Smithsonian Institution, and George Washington University
BASIC ONLINE RESOURCES

• American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC)
  • Conservation Wiki
  • “Caring for your Treasures”
  • STASH: Storage Techniques for Art, Science, and History Collections

• Association of Registrars and Collections Specialists (ARCS)

• Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI)
  • 125 CCI Notes in 19 categories
BASIC ONLINE RESOURCES

• Connecting to Collections Online Community
• MuseumPests.net (Integrated Pest Management working group)
• Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC)
• Things Great and Small: Collection Management policies
  • Download the free board game!
BASIC VIDEO AND WEBINAR

- Check the Publisher
  - Who produced it?
  - What’s their motive?
MUSEUM PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

• There are organizations at every level
  • International
    • International Council on Museums (ICOM)
  • National
    • American Alliance of Museums (AAM)
  • Regional
  • State
MUSEUM PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

• Networking is important
  • Our colleagues are often our best resources
  • Keeps us up to date on evolving professional standards
  • Life-long learning important for professional growth
CARE OF DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

Standards keep evolving and so do the objects we collect and care for.
WHAT WE COLLECT IS EVOLVING

• We are becoming a paperless society
• Digital donations are becoming (and will continue to become) more prevalent
• More an issue with archival collections but what museum doesn’t have archival collections?
  • If not in your collection, in your supporting documentation
DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

• Fortunately, resources are also becoming more prevalent but there still isn’t much
• Knowledge of how to manage and preserve these collections constantly evolving
• Often a paper surrogate is not a true replacement
  • Many digital documents can be manipulated
    • Not fixed in form
DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

• These collection objects require different means of care
  • Agents of Deterioration plus more
    • Hardware, software, and operating systems change
    • Proprietary file formats
    • Data decay, data rot, and bit rot, oh my!

• Duplication does not equal preservation, BUT…
SAFETY PRINCIPLES

• LOCKSS
  • Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe

• 3 – 2 – 1 Rule
  • 3 copies
  • 2 file formats
  • At least 1 other geographic location
DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

• There is a silver lining!
  • Storage keeps getting cheaper

• Cloud storage also offers a level of protection we cannot give our 3 dimensional objects:
  • Geographic dispersion

• Can be as easy as Google Drive or Dropbox
DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

• Stay ahead of the game
  • When considering donations:
    • Request file formats you can manage
    • And storage devices you can read
  • Resources to manage digital collections are going to change as quickly as the media is
    • Publications with less lead time
      • There are some Conserve O Grams on digital collections
    • Professional development opportunities
RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Never stop learning!
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

• It’s so easy, you’re doing it right now!
• On-line and face-to-face options
  • Webinars
  • Workshops
  • Training Courses
• Formal Education Options
  • Certificates & Graduate Degrees
    • Look for program listings on globalmuseum.org, AAM & SAA
BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL BOOKSHELF

“I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library.”
Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*
BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL BOOKSHELF

• Don’t be overwhelmed by all the resources you will be provided with today

• Identify the areas you have the most interest in and start there
  • Upcoming projects?
  • Serious areas of concern?

• Create your physical bookshelf and your virtual bookshelf
  • But print the really good online ones!
THE BUDGET BOOKSHELF

• Some print resources you will find you cannot live without - budget for them!
• Take advantage of online resources
• Get thee to a library!
QUESTIONS?

Enough about us, let's hear from you!
WRAP–UP

• Not all information is online!
• Never stop learning
THANK YOU!

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WE WOULD LOVE TO KNOW:

- What size institution do you work for?
- What type of collection do you care for? (art, natural history, material culture, archival...)
- Where do you get most of your collection care information?
- What is your favorite resource?
- How often do you participate in professional development opportunities?