Collections at Risk: Why you need a comprehensive collection care plan

Collections Care Network of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works

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Session supported by:

American Museum of Natural History

ARCS
Association of Registrars and Collections Specialists

AIC
American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works

Protect Heritage
Bridging Past and Future

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About AIC

The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) is the national membership organization supporting conservation professionals in preserving cultural heritage by establishing and upholding professional standards, promoting research and publications, providing educational opportunities, and fostering the exchange of knowledge among conservators, allied professionals, and the public.

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About CCN

• The Collection Care Network (CCN) is a network within AIC for all members who are interested in collection care
• Membership in AIC is open to everyone
• CCN is the voice for preventive care within AIC

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Meet Your Presenters

• Robert Waller
  President and Senior Risk Analyst
  Protect Heritage Corp.

• Lisa Elkin
  Chief Registrar and Director of Conservation
  American Museum of Natural History
A sampling of early CCN initiatives

- Collection care staff survey report
- Reaching out to related organizations
- Special session for SPNHC 2012
- Liaisons between organizations
- STASH
- AIC 2014 Sustainability and Preventive Conservation

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Collection care staff survey report – referred from:

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Collection care staff survey report – we heard from:

- Conservator
- Collection Manager
- Collection [Care] Specialist
- Registrar
- Curator (including disciplines)
- Installer/Preparator
- Managers of Cons / Coll
- Technician
- Curatorial Assistant
- Librarian
- Museum Administrator
- Educators and Consultants
- Archivist
- Students (including interns)
- Museum Specialist
- Conservation Scientists
- Facilities, Architects, Engineers, etc.
- Board Member

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Collection care staff survey report – we heard from:

- Conservator: 194
- Collection Manager: 114
- Collection [Care] Specialist: 58
- Registrar: 38
- Curator (including disciplines): 37
- Installer/Preparator: 34
- Managers of Cons / Coll: 28
- Technician: 17
- Curatorial Assistant: 14
- Librarian: 12
- Museum Administrator: 11
- Educators and Consultants: 11
- Archivist: 10
- Students (including interns): 9
- Museum Specialist: 8
- Conservation Scientists: 8
- Facilities, Architects, Engineers, etc.: 3
- Board Member: 3

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Collection care staff survey report – we heard from:

- Conservator: 194
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Collection care staff survey report – *training needed*:

**Deficiency of expertise / responsibility**

- Preservation planning
- Collection risk assessment
- Emergency preparedness
- Documentation
- Environmental monitoring
- Preparation and installation
- Collection project management
- Integrated pest management
- Collection database management
- Mountmaking
- Registration activities
- Specimen preparation
- Cataloging

Skills are adequate | training needed

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Evolution of preservation management

Condition:
- ✔ Broken
- ✔ Fix it

Preservation needs:
- ✔ Inventory
- ✔ Control fire
- ✔ Avoid damp

Mitigate this outstanding risk

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What do I think the chances are?

- Coin toss – heads or tails?
- Unlikely
- Probable
- Fair chance
- Significant
- Highly probable
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unlikely</th>
<th>Probable</th>
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</thead>
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Unlikely

“unlikely that an accidental surface or subsurface oil spill would occur from the proposed activities.”

BP's 52-page exploration plan for the Deepwater Horizon Well

Filed with the federal Minerals Management Service
"due to the distance to shore (48 miles) and the response capabilities that would be implemented, no significant adverse impacts are expected."
Define risks clearly

Source → Path → Effect
Magnitude of Risk
MR

Part of collection value expected to be lost
The Forest

Risk / Century

Collection Unit

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1998 Total Risk to CMN Collection

Objects lost per year

Generic Risk

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1998 Facilities management share of risks

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2008 Projected Facilities share of risks

Objects lost per year

Generic risk

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Measure Risk
Then Plan Preservation

Lisa Elkin
American Museum of Natural History
‘Pedestrians struck by cars are most often hit while in the crosswalk, with the signal on their side.’
Physical Forces Type 1: Pedestrian hit by moving vehicle

Preservation Strategies

- Look both ways; even with the ‘WALK’ sign
- Stay alert - Don’t text while crossing
- Use sidewalks to the right of moving traffic
- Don’t jay walk
- Stay away from left-turning men
Standards Regarding Collections Stewardship

- **AAM**: ‘Regular assessment of, and planning for collection needs (development, conservation, risk management, etc.) takes place’

- **U.S. National Park Service**: ‘Each Park and Center has identified threats to the security and protection of its museum collection’

- **Museums Australia**: ‘All current and potential threats to the collection are identified through regular risk assessments’
Museum Risk Management
Everyone Else is Doin’ It!

- Property Risk
- Income Risk
- Liability Risk
- Health and Safety
- Reputation
- Governance and Fiduciary Risks
Museum Risk Management
Everyone Else is Doin’ It!

- Property Risk
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Collections Risk Management

- **Framework for Preventive Conservation**, (Michalski, 1990)
- **Cultural Property Risk Analysis Model** (Waller, 2003)
- **Collection Risk Management – The Next Frontier** (Brokerhoff, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. The Nine Agents of Deterioration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agent of Deterioration</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct physical forces e.g., shock, vibration, abrasion, and gravity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thieves, vandals, displacers i.e. unauthorized human access and removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pests</td>
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</tbody>
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Collections Risk Management

- Framework for Preventive Conservation, (Michalski, 1990)
- Cultural Property Risk Analysis Model (Waller, 2003)
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Collections Risk Management

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‘I fear that we have not been looking at the big picture in choosing best practice solutions to improve our situation as opposed to the tougher course of action: Risk Assessment.’
Challenges: Choosing the Best Methodology

• Many methodologies to choose from:
  – Waller, CPRAM
  – National Park Service
  – CCI/Michalski (rank order approach)

• Must rely on collection of hard data, experience of staff & research in the field

• Must be applied consistently

• Must be systematic and comprehensive!
Challenges - It’s hard!

• Gain Support from Partners
  – Management
  – Collections
  – Facilities/Operations

• Educate Staff

• Make sure you have the right tools
Challenges - Embrace your Risks!

• Museums must manage risks

• Eliminating and/or avoiding risk is not always possible
Benefits of the Process

• **Teamwork at its Best**
  – Provides a vehicle for staff buy in
  – Shared Responsibility
  – Prevents competition

• **Extraordinary Opportunity for Data Capture**
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• Extraordinary Opportunity for Data Capture
Summary

• Collection Risk Management is not only a skill, it’s an attitude. Carry it with you.

• Get started: Soon is better than never. There’s a lot of support out there.

• Stop fighting fires and muddling through!

• Begin to think in terms of value lost.

• Look at the bigger picture – take a step back.
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Reaching out … in 2013

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Special SPNHC 2012 Session on Preventive Conservation

Special Issue: Preventive Conservation

Preface __________________________ Lisa Elkin and Catharine Hawks 1

Articles

Resources for preventive conservation and collections care ___________________ Rebecca Fifield, Rachael P. Arenstein, and Molly Gleeson 3

The state of the art in cultural property risk analysis: Reflections on the Lisbon 2011 International Symposium and Workshop on Cultural Property Risk Analysis ____________________________ Robert Waller 18

Research on energy savings in collections environments: A case study of Yale University’s Sterling Memorial Library ____________________________ Jeremy Linden, James Reilly, and Peter Herzog 26

Effectiveness of entomological collection storage cabinets in maintaining stable relative humidity and temperature in a historic museum building ____________ Hanna Szczepańska, Floyd W. Shockley, David G. Furth, __________________________ Patricia Gentili, Darnell Bell, Paula T. DePristo, ________________ Marion Mecklenburg, and Catharine Hawks 43

Microfading: The state of the art for natural history collections ____________________________ Bruce Ford and Jim Druzik 54

Defensible collections: Designing a safe exhibit space ____________________________ Jeffrey Hirsch and Casey Gallagher 72

Application of preventive conservation to solve the coming crisis in collections management ____________________________ John E. Simmons 89

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A Textile-Hanging System Composed of Readily Available Materials

Opitz, C., Collections Manager, Museum of Natural History, The University of Iowa, 11 Macbride

Purpose
Best practices for long-term storage of flat textiles call for rolling them on archival tubes and suspending the tubes, to avoid damage to textile fibers caused by folding and stacking. A simple wall rack for hanging textiles can be built using materials that are available at most home-improvement or hardware stores.

Description
This multi-row textile-hanging system consists of wall-mounted shelf standards, shelf brackets, closet poles, J-bolts, and nuts from a local big-box home-improvement store. Each row of brackets can accommodate multiple poles, and each pole can accommodate one wide roll or multiple narrower rolls.

Materials, Tools & Supplies
- 2 dual-track, heavy-duty, powder-coated steel shelf standards
- Dual-track, powder-coated steel shelf brackets, 2 for each row desired
- Hollow, powder-coated steel closet poles, 1–4 for each row
- 5/16” J-bolts with hex nuts, 2 for each pole (available in 5” or 7” lengths)
- Additional 5/16” hex nuts, 2 for each pole
- Screws, fastening standards to the wall
- Screwdriver (manual or electric)
- Drill with metal bit
- Hack saw or powersaw, metal blade (optional)

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CCN at AIC 2014
Sustainability and Preventive Conservation

Meeting and discussions with liaisons
Experiences with HVAC systems and lessons learned
CCN technical session
STASH FLASH
Workshops proposed:
  Environmental monitoring
  Assessing risks to your collections

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Handout

Selection of the Collection Care Network's Favorite Resources
ARCS Inaugural Conference, November 2, 2013

PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS
- American Institute for Conservation (AIC) – www.conservation-us.org
- Heritage Preservation (HP) - http://www.heritagepreservation.org/
- Institute for Museum & Library Services (IMLS) - http://www.imls.gov/
- American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) - http://www.aaslh.org/

ONLINE TOOLS
General Resources
- AIC’s Collection Care Network - www.conservation-us.org/collectioncare
- Connecting to Collections Online Community - www.connectingtocollections.org
- National Park Service
- Canadian Conservation Institute
- Knole House Blog - http://knolenationaltrust.wordpress.com

Assessments
- Protect Heritage - www.protectheritage.com
- Benchmarks in Collection Care - www.collectionslink.org.uk
- Conservation Assessment Program - www.heritagepreservation.org/cap/index.html
THANK YOU