



# Creating a Dedicated Collections Management Department: A Case Study

Ann Poulson, Director of Collections Management  
J'Laine Newcombe, Director of Registration

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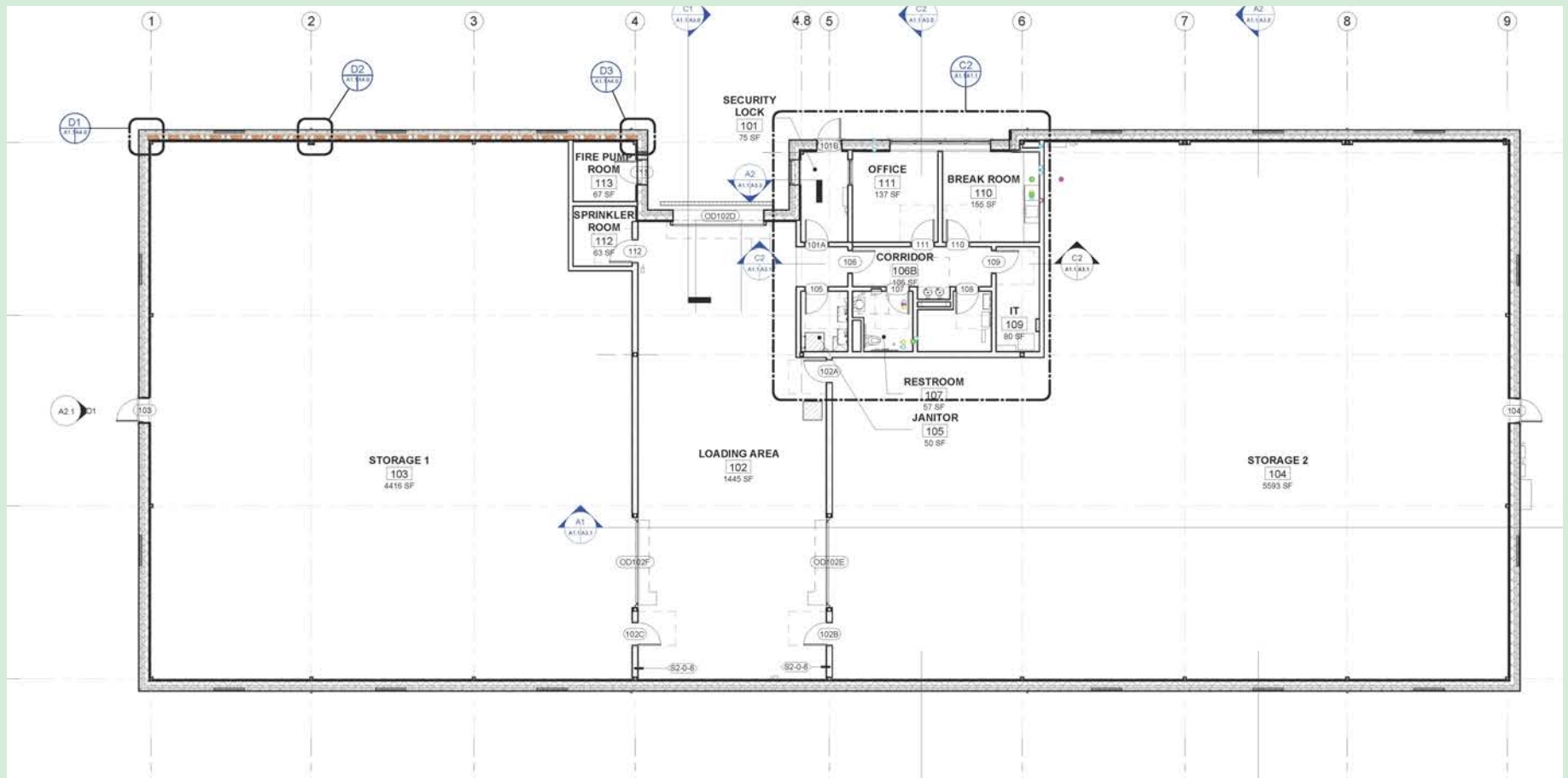


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**POP**  
**TO PRESENT**



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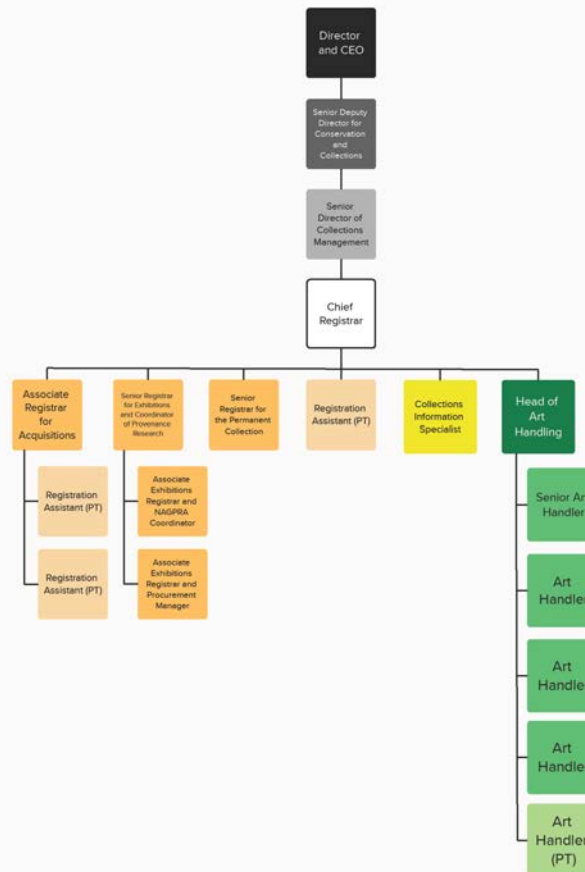


# Evolution of the Registration Department (2020–2023)

## VMFA's Registration Department

- Registrars
- Art handlers
- TMS Administrator

2020



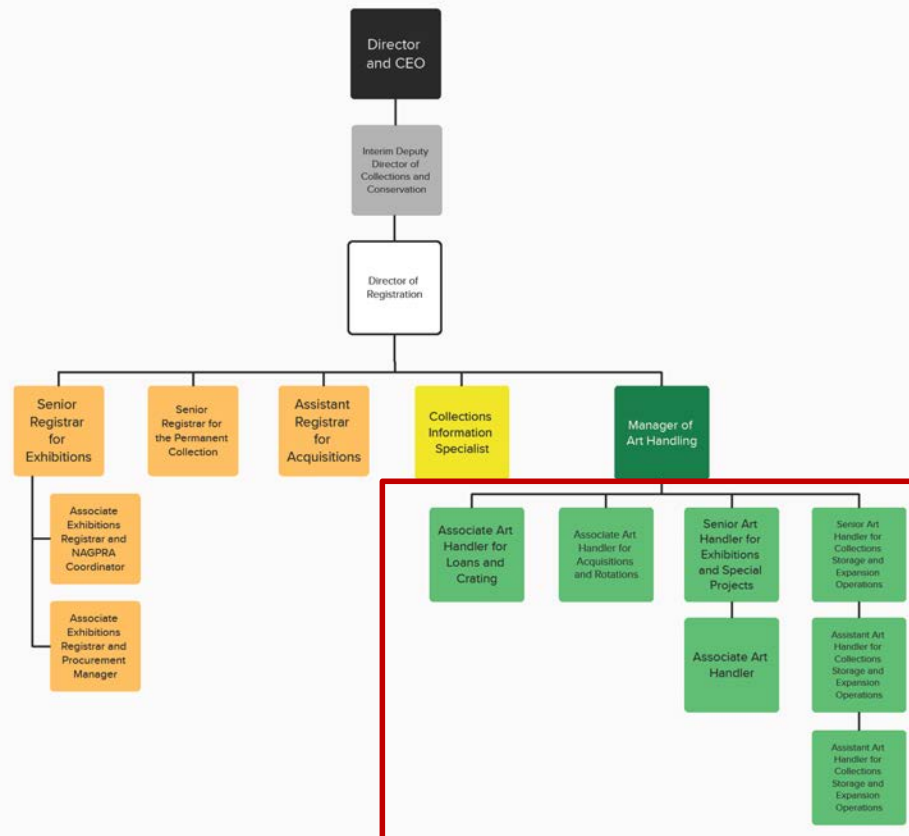
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# Organizational Refinements 2020-2022

- Development of specialized art handling roles
  - Rotations/Acquisitions
  - Incoming/Outgoing Loans
  - Exhibitions
  - Collections storage
- Dedicated Collections Storage mini-team established in 2022
  - Storage organization
  - Maintenance
  - Inventory
  - Rehousing

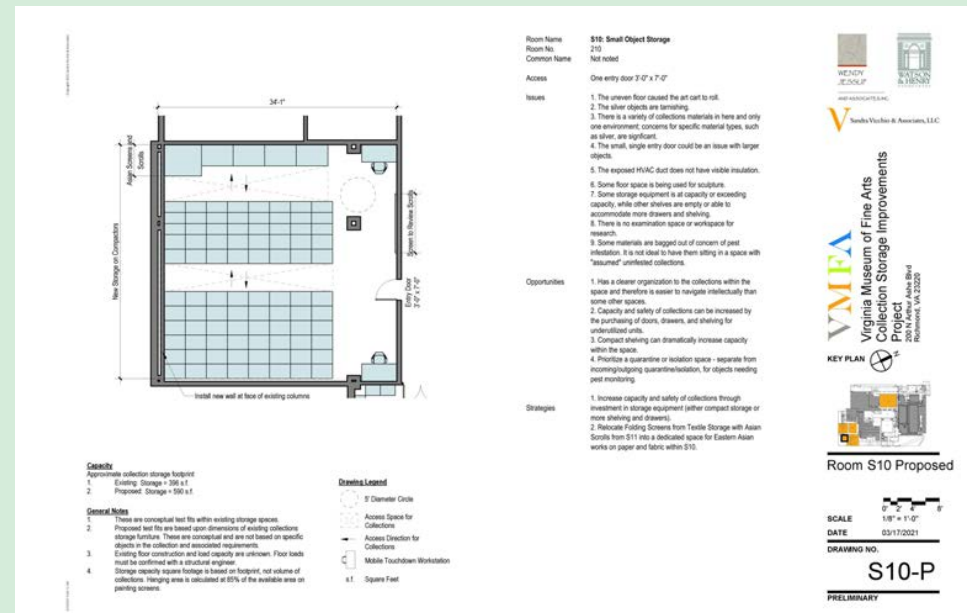
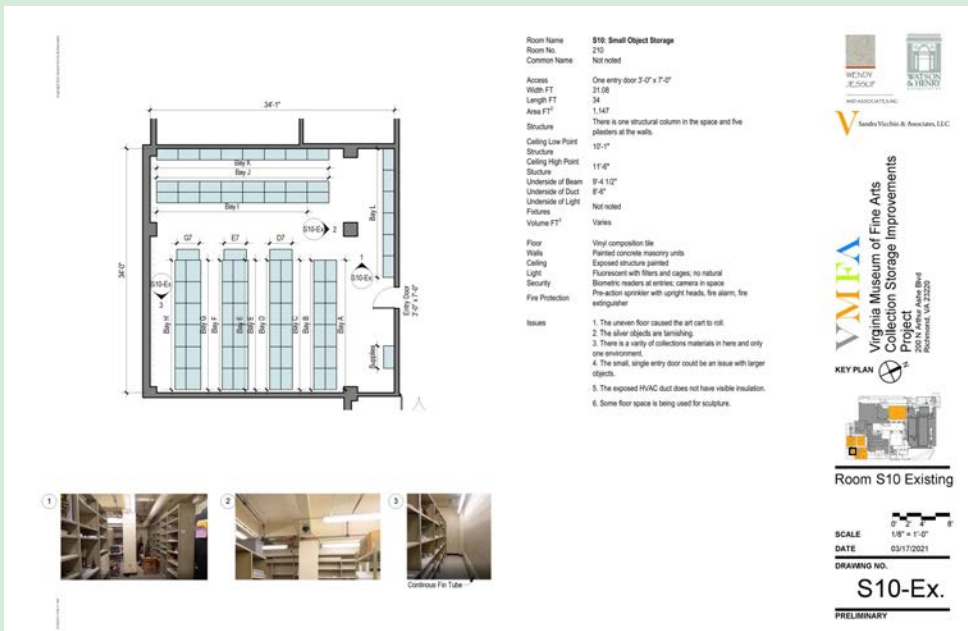
October 2022



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# 2021-2023 Storage Projects: Jessup & Associates Storage Assessment



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# 2021-2023 Storage Projects: Storage Reorganization





## 2021-2023 Storage Projects: Storage Reorganization



### March 2023

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graph TD; CEO[Director and CEO] --> IDCC[Interim Deputy Director of Collections and Conservation]; CEO --> DOR[Director of Registration]; CEO --> DDEAC[Deputy Director of Art and Education and Chief Curator]; IDCC --> SR[Senior Registrar for Exhibitions]; IDCC --> SRP[Senior Registrar for the Permanent Collection]; IDCC --> AR[Assistant Registrar for Acquisitions]; IDCC --> CIS[Collections Information Specialist]; IDCC --> MAH[Manager of Art Handling]; DOR --> SR; DOR --> SRP; DOR --> AR; DOR --> CIS; DOR --> MAH; MAH --> AAHL[Associate Art Handler for Loans and Crating]; MAH --> AAHA[Associate Art Handler for Acquisitions and Rotations]; MAH --> SAH[Senior Art Handler for Exhibitions and Special Projects]; MAH --> AAHC[Associate Art Handler for Collections Storage and Expansion Operations]; SAH --> AAH[Associate Art Handler]; AAHC --> AAHC1[Assistant Art Handler for Collections Storage and Expansion Operations]; AAHC1 --> AAHC2[Assistant Art Handler for Collections Storage and Expansion Operations]; DDEAC --> AS[Aaron Sokand Curator of Photography and Director of the Rayner Center]; AS --> CM[Collections Manager: Works on Paper];
```

The organizational chart for the Department of Art and Archaeology as of March 2023 is structured as follows:

- Director and CEO**
  - Interim Deputy Director of Collections and Conservation**
    - Senior Registrar for Exhibitions
      - Associate Exhibitions Registrar and NAGPRA Coordinator
      - Associate Exhibitions Registrar and Procurement Manager
    - Senior Registrar for the Permanent Collection
    - Assistant Registrar for Acquisitions
    - Collections Information Specialist
    - Manager of Art Handling**
      - Associate Art Handler for Loans and Crating
      - Associate Art Handler for Acquisitions and Rotations
      - Senior Art Handler for Exhibitions and Special Projects
        - Associate Art Handler
      - Associate Art Handler for Collections Storage and Expansion Operations
        - Assistant Art Handler for Collections Storage and Expansion Operations
          - Assistant Art Handler for Collections Storage and Expansion Operations
  - Director of Registration**
  - Deputy Director of Art and Education and Chief Curator**
    - Aaron Sokand Curator of Photography and Director of the Rayner Center
      - Collections Manager: Works on Paper**

- Director of Raysor Center for Works on Paper
- Collections Manager for Works on Paper

- Director of Raysor Center for Works on Paper
- Collections Manager for Works on Paper

# Planning for Collections Management Department

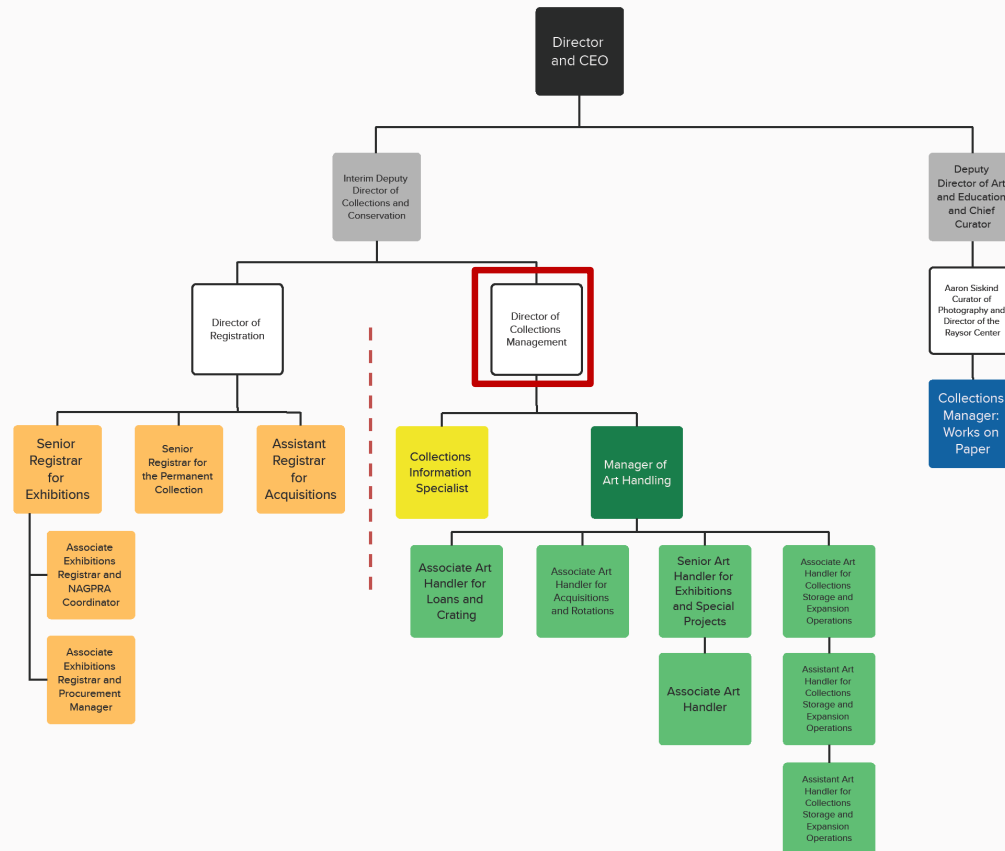
- Mapped workflows and identified overlaps.
- Invited participation from stakeholders.
- Defined new roles.
- Created transition plan.



# Summer 2023 – Establishment of Collections Management Department

- Collections Management Department
  - Director of Collections Management
  - Art Handling (including Collections Storage mini-team)
  - TMS Administrator
- Registrations Department
  - Registrars for Permanent Collection (Acquisitions, Loans) and Exhibitions

August 2023



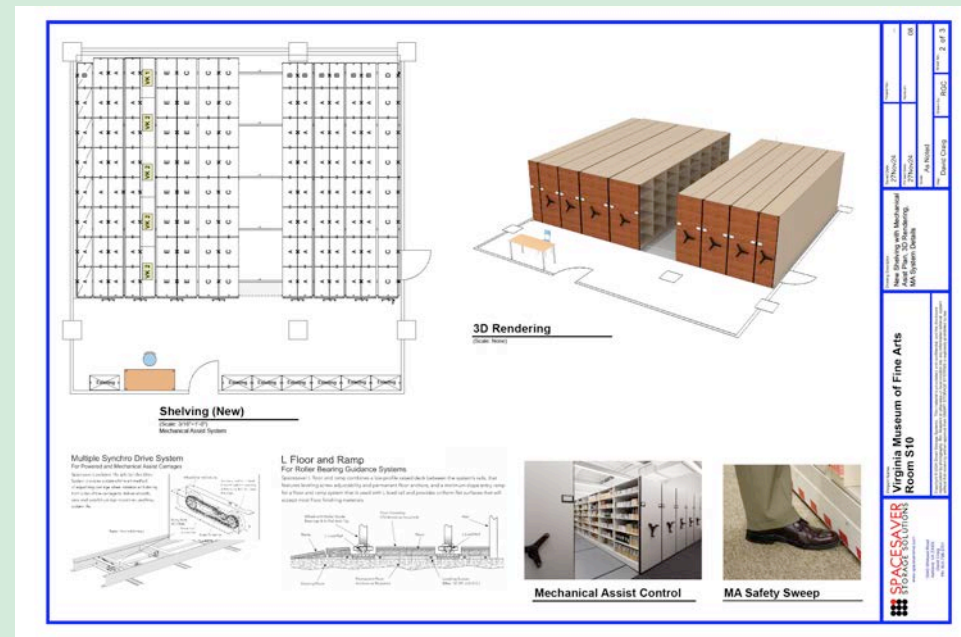
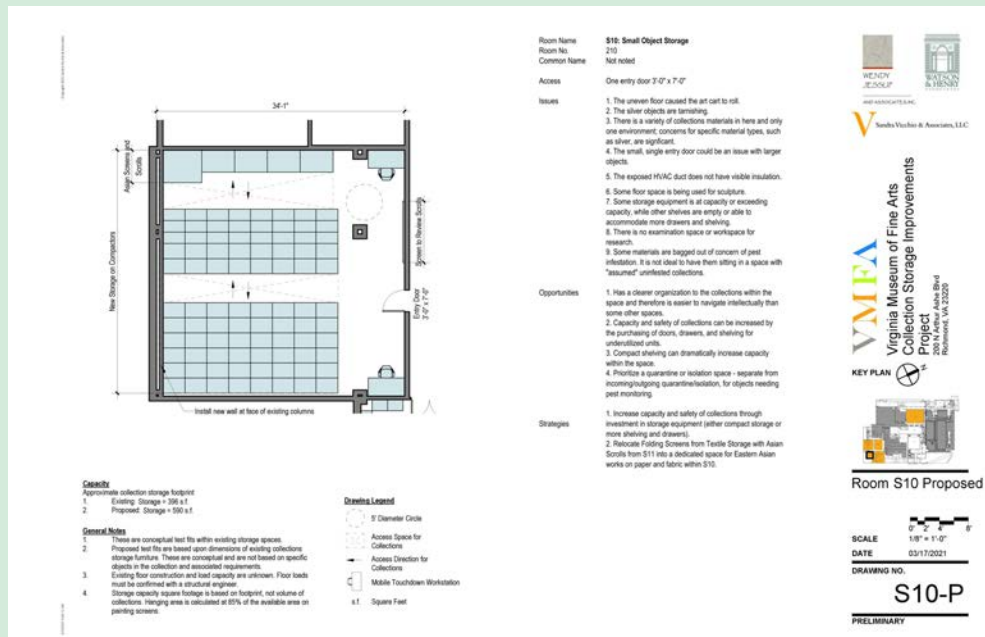
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# Operationalizing

- New SOPs for the acquisition process and other areas of significant overlap.
- Weekly coordination meetings between the Collections Management and Registration departments.
- Focusing on close collaboration with Registration and Conservation, regular meetings between department heads.
- Check-ins with the team members to hear thoughts and concerns.



# 2024-2025 Storage Projects: Jessup & Associates Storage Assessment next steps

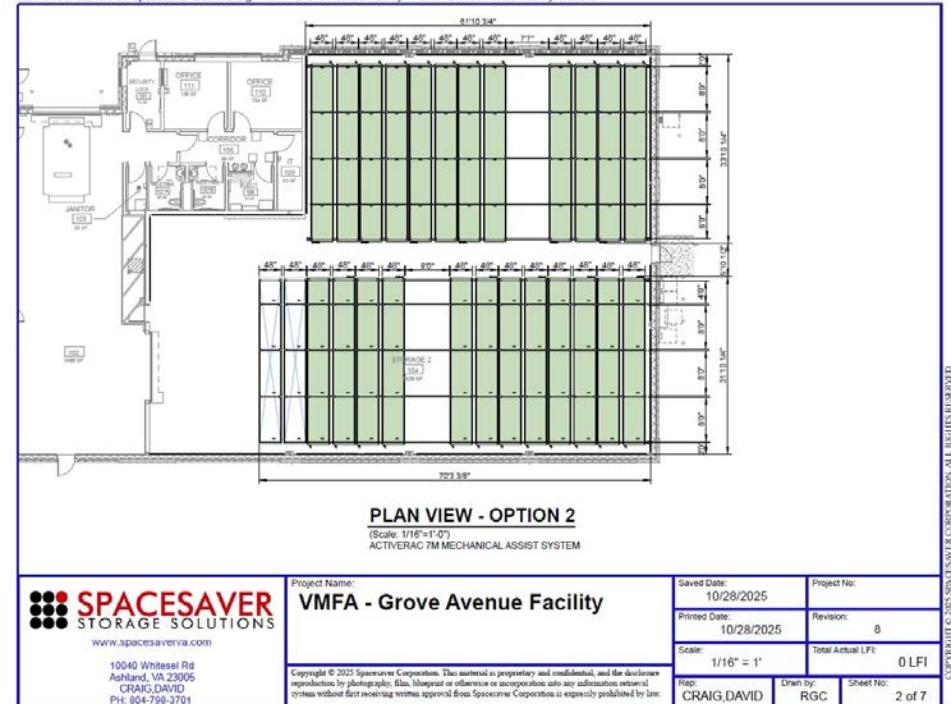


# 2024-2025 Storage Projects: The Grove Avenue Facility

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## Natural Progression Toward Reorganization – 2025

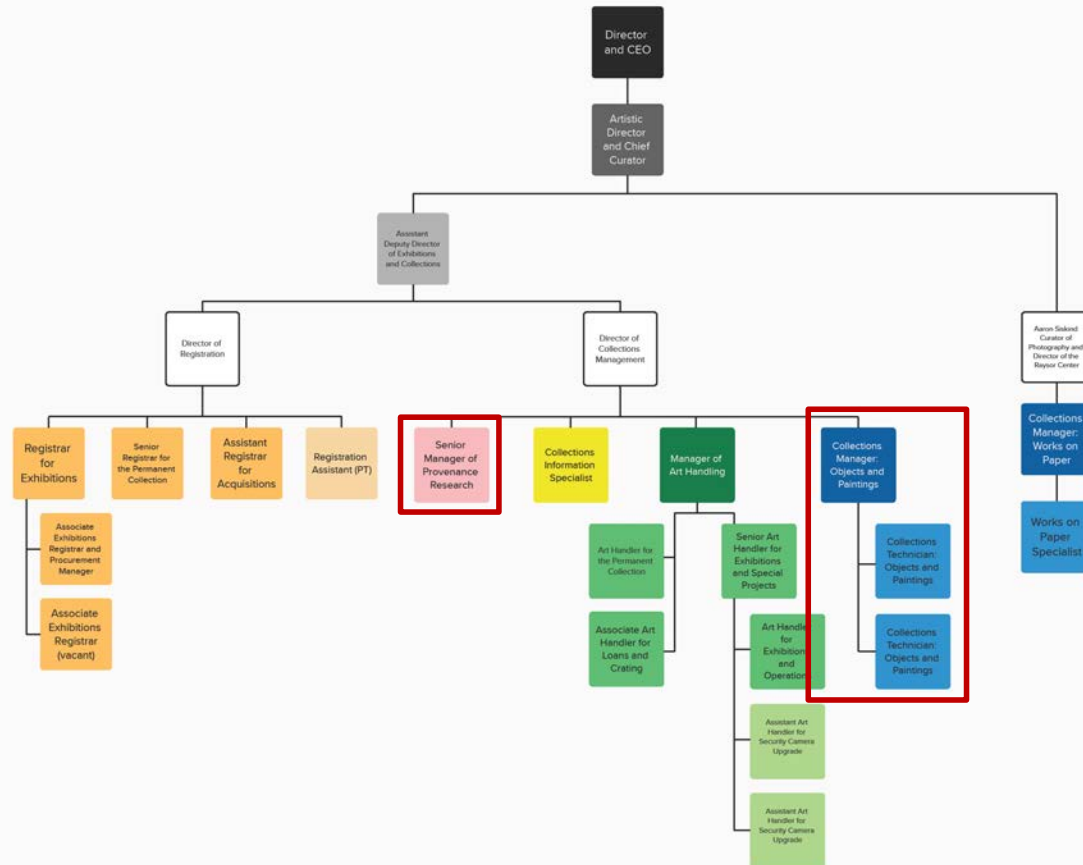
- As we prepared to move large portions of the collection in preparation for the expansion, we recognized the need for increased specialization.
- The group focusing on storage was separated from the Art Handling team and became the Collections Management: Objects and Paintings team.
- The Art Handling team retained their other specialties with a few title changes.

# The New Structure

- Before: One Art Handling team with a group focused on expansion and storage, among other specializations
- After:
  - Art Handling team – installations for exhibitions and rotations, packing and crating, some internal movement
  - Collections Management team – storage, viewings, some internal movement



March 2025



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# Why We Made the Change

- Professional specialization.
- Prepare for expansion and off-site storage.
- Clarify accountability.
- Scale for growth.
- Improve risk management.

# Planning

- Interviewed stakeholders.
- Mapped workflows and identified overlaps.
- Defined new roles and reporting lines.



Art Handling (current)							
	people	frequency	hours	wk/mth	hours per year	total hours	FT
Acquisitions							
coordinating receipt	1	1	1	52	52		
pick up	2	1	8	12	192		
receive	2	1	4	12	96		
unpack	2	1	8	12	192		
deliver to Cons/IR	2	1	0.5	52	52		
storage/housing	2	1	0.5	52	52		
						636	
Rotations							
Asana	1	1	8	12	96		
meetings	1	1	4	12	48		
communication	1	1	4	12	48		
install prep	1	4	1	52	208		
gallery work	4	4	1.5	52	1248		
						1648	
Special exhibitions							
prep	2	3	24	1	144		
gallery work	6	3	160	1	2880		
post	2	3	12	1	72		
						3096	
Fellowship							
receiving	1	2	3	1	6		
install	4	2	6	1	48		
packing	1	2	30	1	60		
						114	

	MAH	SAHE	AHE	AHPC	AAH	CMOP	CT1	CT2			people	frequency	hours	wk/mth	hours per year	total hours	FT
Acquisitions																	
coordinating receipt				1	52						1	1	1	1	52	52	
pick up			1	96	1	96					2	2	1	8	12	192	
receive				1	48		1	48			2	2	1	4	12	96	
unpack			1	96	1	96					2	2	1	8	12	192	
deliver to Cons/IR								1	26	1	26	2	2	1	0.5	52	52
storage/housing								1	26	1	26	2	2	1	0.5	52	52
																	636
Rotations																	
Asana				1	96						1	1	1	8	12	96	
meetings				1	48						1	1	1	4	12	48	
communication				1	48						1	1	1	4	12	48	
install prep				1	208						1	1	4	1	52	208	
gallery work	1	340	1	284	1	284	1	340			4	4	4	1.5	52	1248	
																	1648
Special exhibitions																	
prep			1	72	1	72					2	2	3	24	1	144	
gallery work	1	480	1	480	1	480	1	480	1	280	1	280	1	200	1	2880	2880
post			1	36	1	36					2	2	3	12	1	72	
																	3096
Fellowship																	
receiving				1	6						1	1	2	3	1	6	
install	1	12	1	12	1	12	1	12			4	4	2	6	1	48	
packing				1	60						1	1	2	30	1	60	
																	114
Statewide																	
prep					1	24					1	1	1	2	12	24	
install/deinstall				1	288	1	288				2	2	1	24	12	576	
																	600

Art Handling (separated)							
	people	frequency	hours	wk/mth	hours per year	total hours	FT
Acquisitions							
coordinating receipt	1	1	1	52	52		
pick up	2	1	8	12	192		
receive	2	1	4	12	96		
unpack	2	1	8	12	192		
deliver WoP to Raysor	2	1	0.5	52	52		
						584	
Rotations							
Asana	1	1	8	12	96		
meetings	1	1	4	12	48		
communication	1	1	4	12	48		
install prep	1	4	1	52	208		
gallery work	4	4	1.5	52	1248		
						1648	
Special exhibitions							
prep	2	3	24	1	144		
gallery work	6	3	160	1	2880		
post	2	3	12	1	72		
						3096	
Fellowship							
receiving	1	2	3	1	6		
install	4	2	6	1	48		
packing	1	2	30	1	60	114	
Statewide							
prep	1	1	2	12	24		
install/deinstall	2	1	24	12	576	600	

Collections Management (separated)							
	people	frequency	hours	wk/mth	hours per year	total hours	FT
Acquisitions							
deliver to Cons/IR	2	1	0.5	52	52		
storage/housing	2	1	0.5	52	52		
						104	
Storage							
building projects	2	3	25	1	150		
general maintenance	3	1	8	12	288		
object care	3	1	16	52	2496		
documentation	3	1	8	52	1248		
planning (Grove, etc.)	1	1	2	52	104		
						4286	
Art movement							
prep	3	1	8	52	1248		
movement	3	1	8	52	1248		
post	3	1	2	52	312		
						2808	
Admin							
general	3	1	2	52	312		
supervision	1	1	2	52	104		
						416	
						7614	3.7

# Communicating the Change

- The groundwork had been laid for this change, but this step required more of a shift in mentality.
- Announcements with explanations were sent by email and made in meetings.
- Updated org charts were created and shared.
- A reference page was created and shared.



## Art Handling or Collections Management: whom should I call?

Acquisitions	Installations and Gallery Activity	Internal Movement	Packing and Crating	Storage	Viewings
<b>ART HANDLING</b> Receives shipments, handles local pickups, and unpacks the art	<b>ART HANDLING</b>	<b>ART HANDLING</b> Will usually handle Works on Paper requests	<b>ART HANDLING</b>	<b>COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT</b>  Please submit a <a href="#">Viewing Request Form</a>
<b>COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT</b> Allocates storage space, builds/facilitates housing, and updates labels		<b>COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT</b> (O&P) will usually handle Objects and Paintings requests  Please submit an <a href="#">Art Movement Request Form</a>			

When in doubt, feel free to email any/all of the below:

Art Handling  
[arthandling@vmfa.museum](mailto:arthandling@vmfa.museum)

Collections Management: Objects and Paintings  
[collectionsmanagement@vmfa.museum](mailto:collectionsmanagement@vmfa.museum)

Collections Management: Works on Paper  
[samantha.richardson@vmfa.museum](mailto:samantha.richardson@vmfa.museum)

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VMFA Art and Education Division  
10/23/25

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ACTIVITY ROLE SUMMARY -  
COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENTS

ACTIVITY: NEW ACQUISITIONS	REGISTRATION DEPT	ART HANDLING GROUP (AH)	COLLECTIONS MGMT GROUP (CM)	COLLECTIONS MGMT DEPT/DIRECTOR	WORKS ON PAPER COLLECTIONS MGMT	CONSERVATION	TBD/QUESTIONS
<b>Shipping</b>	Books fine art shippers. Schedules AH for local pickups. Schedules art dock usage. Creates calendar items for deliveries.	Handles packing & pickup from local donors/vendors.					
<b>Receiving</b>	Receives shipments with AH. Labels crates with Fact Sheet.	Receives shipments with Registrar. Determines temp storage in Packing Room or other.	Receives shipments w/Registrar (backup for AH).				
<b>Unpacking</b>	Schedules unpacking at weekly sessions and other times as needed, provides weekly agenda. Attends unpackings. Notifies art damage group (to be identified but including conservation) if damage is found or caused during unpacking.	Unpacks artwork during weekly sessions and other times as needed.	Assists with unpacking as needed. Attends unpacking sessions for storage, housing and location planning.			Attends unpacking when conservator deems necessary or when requested by other parties. In case of damage found on unpacking, communicates with curator and registrar and treats object as necessary.	
<b>Routing</b>	Determines routing steps (Conservation, Photography, storage) with all depts.	Moves artwork (Works on Paper) for routing steps. Inputs location moves in TMS.	Moves artwork (Paintings and Objects) for routing steps. Inputs location moves in TMS.			Communicates with Registration to determine what works come to Conservation...	
<b>Storage</b>	Notifies AH and CM of incoming acquisitions. Strategizes for oversize objects and potential offsite storage.	Ensures sufficient space on art dock and in packing room to receive.	Determines storage locations. Inputs location moves in TMS.	Oversees art storage planning and organization.		Advises CM proactively on storage needs when works have known vulnerabilities and when requested by CM...	
<b>Object Numbering</b>	Assigns accession numbers.		Prepares and attaches accession tags.				Physical numbering of 3D objects TBD.
<b>Object Dimensions</b>	Inputs dimensions in TMS; updates Consideration measurements as needed.		Assists Registrar in measuring objects during unpacking, as needed.				

# Operationalizing the Change

- New SOPs for movement, storage, and TMS updates.
- Weekly coordination meetings between the Art Handling and Collections Management teams.
- Weekly meetings between the Manager of Art Handling, Collections Manager, and myself
- Check-ins with the team members to hear thoughts and concerns

# Measuring Success

- Improved location accuracy.
- Faster movement turnaround.
- Storage efficiency increased and organization improved.
- Staff clarity and satisfaction up.
- Readiness for expansion, renovation, and off-site storage.



# What Worked Well

- ✓ Clearer roles and accountability.
- ✓ Better focus on care and logistics.
- ✓ Improved object flow and planning.
- ✓ Ready(ish) for expansion and off-site storage.

# Challenges & Lessons Learned

- ⚠ Role confusion and overlap.
- ⚠ Policy and SOP lag.
- ⚠ Culture change required.
- ⚠ Ongoing need for coordination and metrics.

## Recommendations for Others

- Map workflows before restructuring.
- Engage all departments early.
- Define hand-offs clearly.
- Communicate often.
- Update policies and train staff.
- Build metrics and monitor.
- Be patient—change takes time.

## Reflections & Conclusion

- Specialization supports growth and care.
- Change requires planning and patience.
- Collaboration between departments is vital.
- Structure still evolving—but beneficial.

# Questions & Discussion

- Thank you!
- Questions?