

A “Small” Collections Move

Improving Access and Care in the Albert
H. Small Washingtoniana Collection at the
GW Museum and the Textile Museum

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Lauren Holt, Registrar



Washingtoniana at GW

- Albert H. Small, philanthropist and real estate developer
- Nearly 2,000 maps, prints, manuscripts, and ephemera
- Founding and evolution of D.C.
- Housed in a renovated historical site, accessible to all



Motivating Challenges

- Moving the collection, a lot
- Storage in multiple locations
- Access restrictions
 - Physical limitations
 - Limited collection photography

Bethesda, MD > Washington, D.C.



Storage Locations



Reading Room
(Museum)



Processing
(Museum)



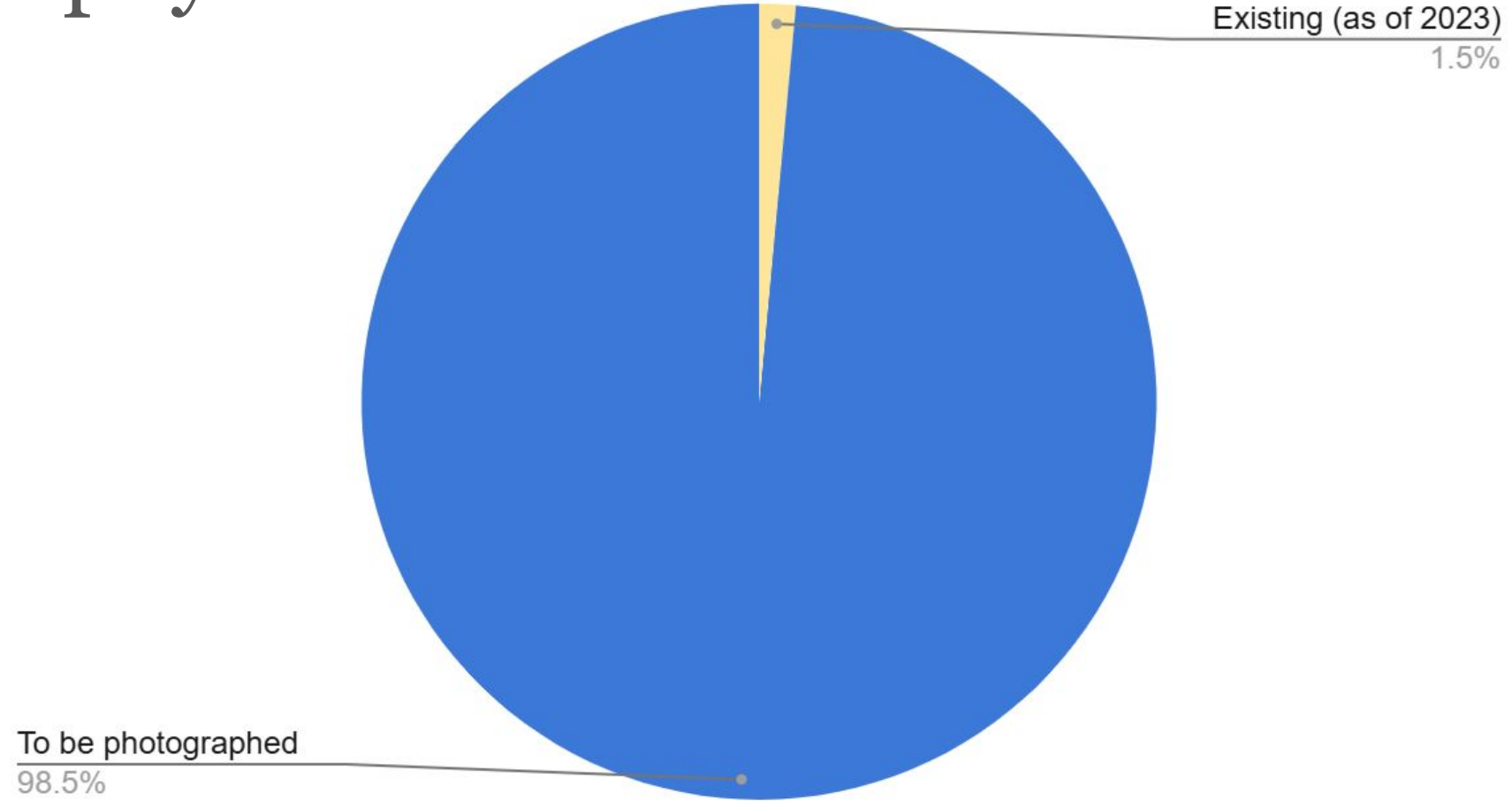
Storage
(Off-site)



Access Restrictions

- Research at off-site conservation center
- Storage in staff-only areas
- Limited digital access
 - Collection photography

Photography



Objectives

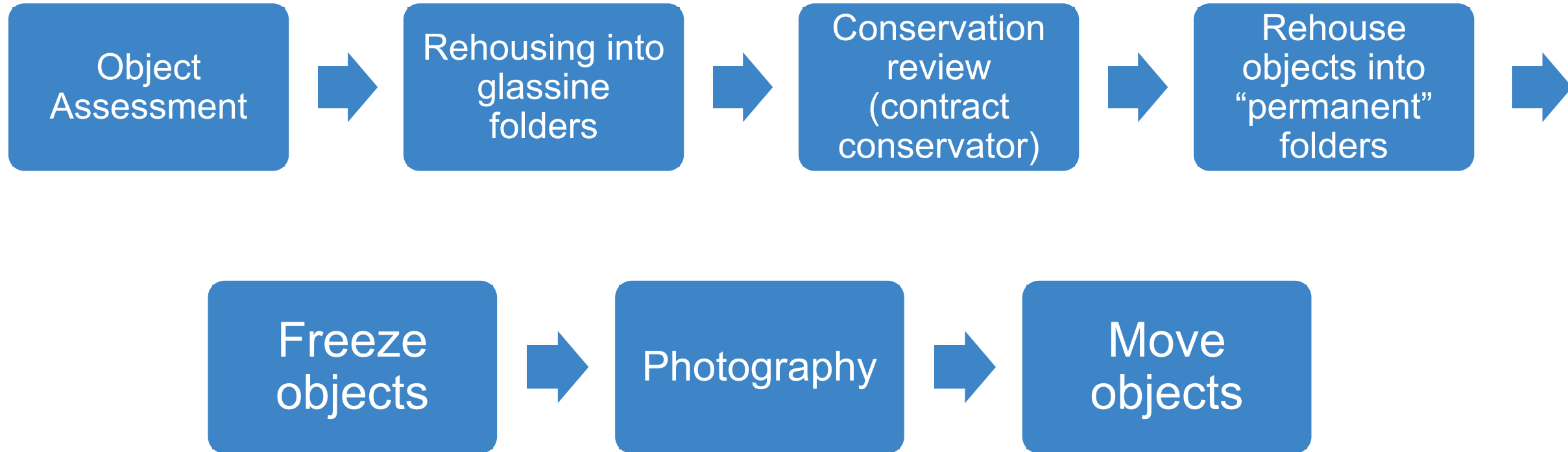
- Increase collections access
- Improve storage safety and organization
- Maximize onsite space
- Stay in budget
- Photograph most of the collection



The Plan(s)

- **Phase 1:** Expand collections storage to seminar room
 - Proposal to donor foundation
 - Custom furniture design, order, and installation
 - University-funded tech upgrade
- **Phase 2:** Photograph and rehouse collection objects
 - Updated and expanded proposal to donor foundation
 - Assess objects stored in processing
 - Conservation review w/ contractor
 - Prepare storage supplies:
 - For custom furniture
 - For shelf expansion
 - Plan photography logistics at museum

Workflow: Bringing It All Together



Object Assessment

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Object Number	Status	Prep Notes	Object Dimensions	Rehousing Recommendations	Description
2	AS 2017.267	Ready to Freeze	Removed from non-archival(?) folder; interleaved with glassine; placed in temporary glassine folder	15" W x 13" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
3	AS 12-a	Ready to Freeze	Removed from mylar sleeve; placed in temporary glassine folder; label transferred to glassine	9.25" W x 31.5" L	Oversized archival folder	Flat paper object
4	AS 149	Ready to Freeze	Removed from waxy glassine paper; placed in temporary glassine folder	11.5" W x 16" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
5	AS 87	Ready to Freeze	Removed from waxy glassine paper; placed in temporary glassine folder	9" W x 22.5" L	Oversized archival folder	Flat paper object
6	AS 72	Ready to Freeze	Removed from waxy glassine paper; placed in temporary glassine folder	13.5" W x 10.5" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
7	AS 469	Ready to Freeze	Removed from waxy glassine paper; placed in temporary glassine folder	7" W x 8.5" L Matte: 11.5" W x 13" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
8	AS 993	Ready to Freeze	Removed from waxy glassine paper; placed in temporary glassine folder	13.5" W x 10.75" L Board: 14" W x 11.25" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
9	AS 213	Ready to Freeze	Removed from waxy glassine paper; placed in temporary glassine folder	11" W x 8" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
10	AS 2019.48	Ready to Freeze	Removed from non-archival(?) folder; interleaved with glassine; placed in temporary glassine folder	8.25" W x 8.25" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
11	AS 196	Ready to Freeze	Removed from non-archival(?) folder; interleaved with glassine; placed in temporary glassine folder	21.75" W x 16.625" L	Oversized archival folder	Flat paper object
12	AS 133	Ready to Freeze	Removed from non-archival(?) folder; interleaved with glassine; placed in temporary glassine folder	15.5" W x 11.5" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
13	AS 32	Ready to Freeze	Removed from non-archival(?) folder; interleaved with glassine; placed in temporary glassine folder	16.5" W x 10.5" L Descriptive paper: 8.5" W x 4" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
14	AS 222	Ready to Freeze	Removed from non-archival(?) folder; interleaved with glassine; placed in temporary glassine folder	10" W x 7.625" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
15	AS 201	Ready to Freeze	Removed from non-archival(?) folder; placed in temporary glassine folder	12.5" W x 8.5" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
16	AS 24	Ready to Freeze	Removed from non-archival(?) folder; placed in temporary glassine folder	7.625" W x 11.25" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
17	AS 111	Ready to Freeze	Removed from non-archival(?) folder; placed in temporary glassine folder	8" W x 6.75" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
18	AS 204	Ready to Freeze	Removed yellowed matte; placed in temporary glassine folder	10.75" W x 8.25" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
19	AS 29	Ready to Freeze	Removed non-archival folder(?) which had been taped to matte; placed in temporary glassine folder; 2 pages stuck in matte and would require removal by a paper conservator	Framed matte: 15" W x 12" L	Archival folder	Flat paper object
20	AS 961	DO NOT FREEZE	Metal sign; no need to freeze; exam and vacuum; keep sealed until upstairs	12" W x 18" L	Archival folder, box?	Metal sign
21	AS 2019.73A-B	Ready to Freeze	Paper menus removed from sleeves; interleaved with glassine; placed in temporary glassine folder; ask Kasey about storage after freezing and numbering One menu sleeve labeled as "AS 2019.72", which does not match in M+	Menu 1: 11" W x 17" L (2 pages with an interleaving support) Menu 2 (lunch): 8.5" W x 14" L (4 pages with one interleaving support between each set)	To be determined - consult Kasey on housing	Menus in plastic sleeves

- 375 objects assessed
- Detailed spreadsheet created with dimensions, recommendations for rehousing
- Objects temporarily rehoused into glassine folders

Rehousing Supplies

Seminar Room

- Sliders (allow for shelving units to be moved)
- Folders
- Bags (for freezing)
- Blueboard

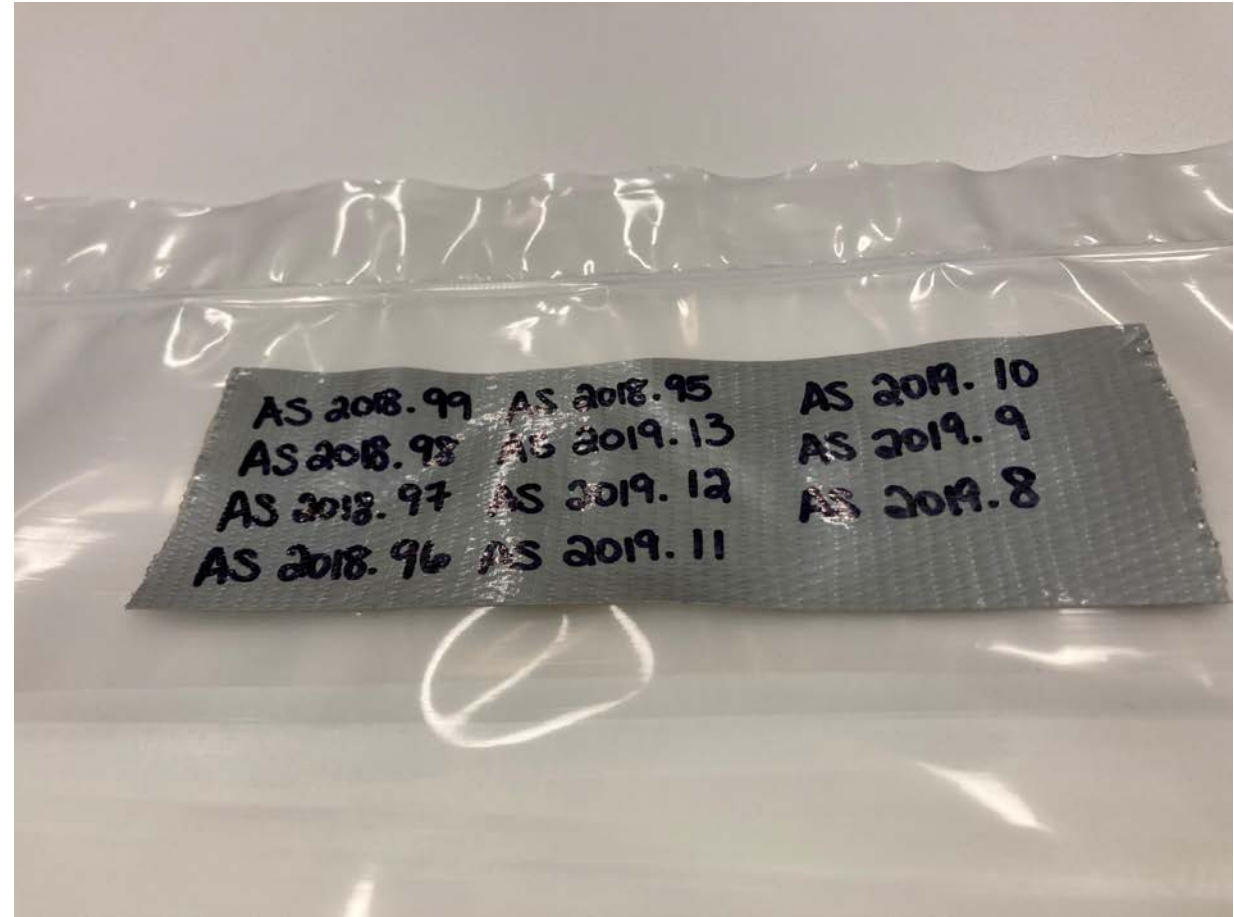
Storage Expansion - Closet

- 32" x 48" single wall blueboard – 90 sheets
- 40" x 60" coroplast – 5 sheets
- Boxcutter/blade
- Spatula
- Zip ties

General

- Carts
- Tape measure
- Gloves
- Patience

Rehousing Unframed Objects



Conservator Review

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Object Number	Dimensions	Current Location	Destination	Moved up to Seminar Room	Notes	Examined	Cleared	Conservation Record Made in MuseumPlus
5	AS 304	32.5" W x 25" T x 1.25" D	E.3	Frame Tills	Y		x		5/22/2025
7	AS 2015.8.1		E.3	Seminar Room Wall			x	x	5/22/2025
8	AS 2015.19.1		D.4	Seminar Room Wall		Deaccessioned	x	x	5/22/2025
9	AS 150	16.5" W x 21.5" T x 1" D	E.2	Frame Tills	Y		x		5/22/2025
0	AS 2016.14	18.5" W x 23" T x 1" D	E.2	Frame Tills	Y		x		5/22/2025
1	AS 2018.113	23.5" W x 19.25" T x 1" D	E.2	Frame Tills	Y		x		5/22/2025
2	AS 976 A	24.25" W x 18.25" T x 1.25" D	E.2	Frame Tills	Y		x		5/22/2025
3	AS 211	25" W x 19.5" T x 1" D	E.2	Frame Tills	Y		x		5/22/2025
4	AS 495	25.75" W x 20" T x 1" D	E.2	Frame Tills	Y		x		5/22/2025
5	AS 183	29.75" W x 24.5" T x 1.5" D	E.2	Frame Tills	Y		x		5/22/2025
6	AS 65	19.75" W x 23.75" T x 1.5" D	E.2	Frame Tills	Y		x		5/22/2025
7	AS 572	27.5" W x 21" T x 1" D	E.2	Frame Tills	Y		x		5/22/2025
8	AS 89	30.5" W x 23" T x 1" D	E.2	Frame Tills			x		5/22/2025
9	AS 245	26.75" W x 22.5" T x 1.25" D	E.2	Frame Tills	Y		x		5/22/2025

- Reviewed 226 objects
- Concentration on presence of insect infestation and mold

Photography – Offsite Storage



Photography at the Museum



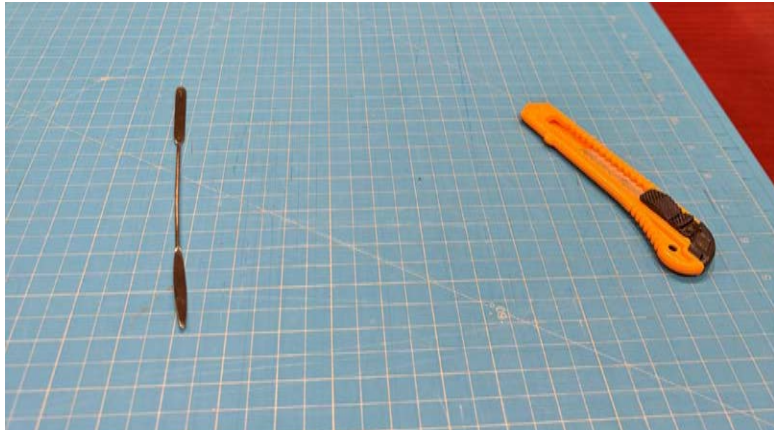
Storage - Seminar Room



Storage – Seminar Room



Storage – Closet





Challenges

- Phase I
 - Delays w/ furniture
 - Staff bandwidth
 - Communication with donors
- Phase 2
 - Staff bandwidth
 - Museum facilities (freezer)
 - Delays w/ photography equipment

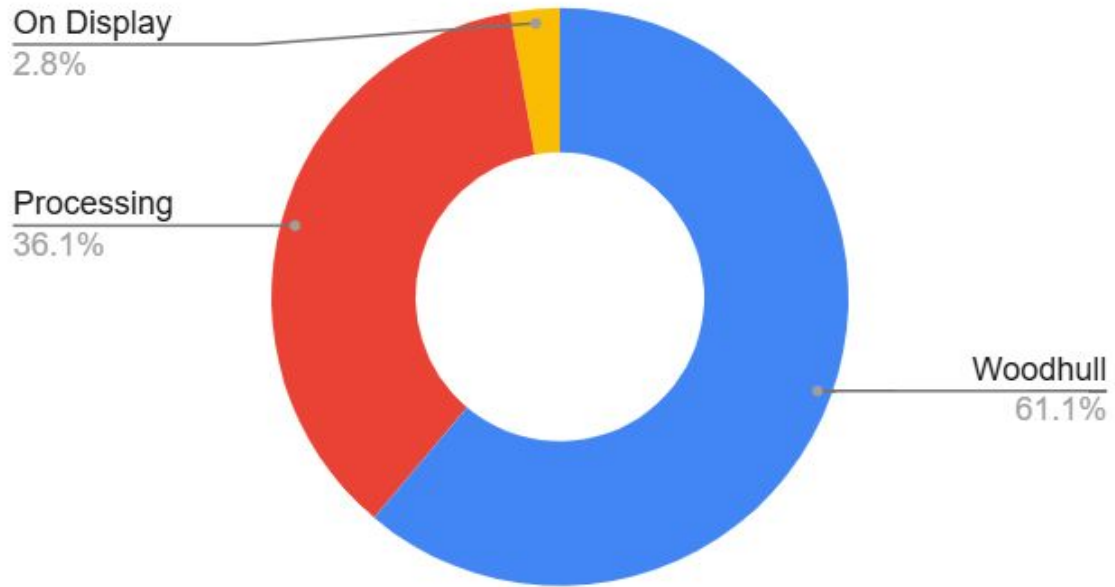
Outcomes

- 2 new storage spaces and 1 upgraded conferencing system
- 1 transportable photography setup
- 3 students trained
- 474 collection objects rehoused and relocated
- 1,021 collection objects photographed

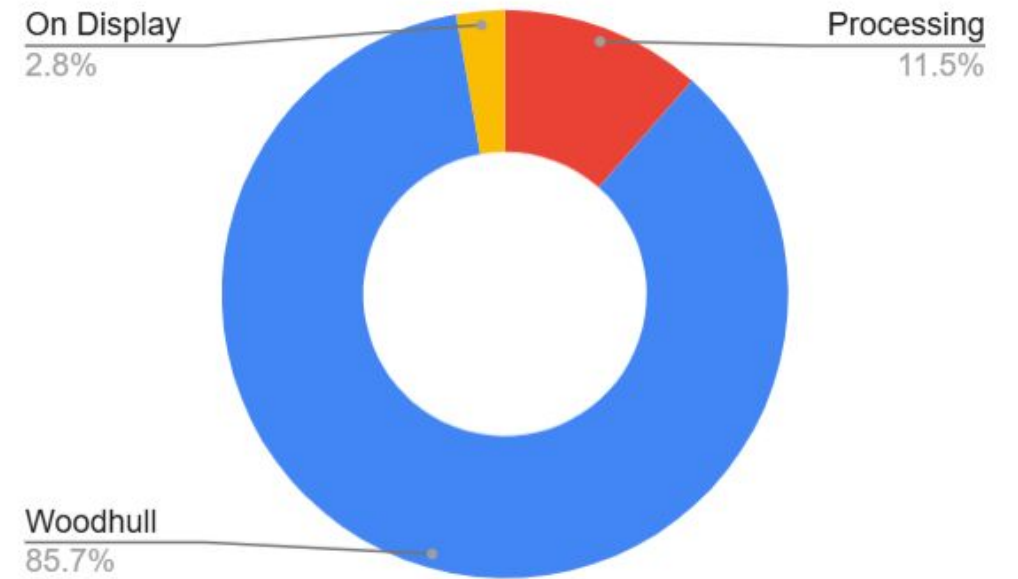


Object Accessibility

Before



After



Questions?

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