



# All Aboard: Engineering Collections Care Training for Small Museums

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Worked in the Collections Care profession since 1984.

Since 1990, he has also been active in the professional development aspects of the industry as a former chairman of PACCIN [Preparation Art Handling Collection Care Information Network] 1991–1999 and 2008–2013. Currently PACCIN Advisory Board Member.

He has co-organized three preparator conferences, numerous workshops, presented sessions at national and regional museum conferences and webinars on collections care subjects in United States and Australia.

Brent has co-authored three publications and contributed to numerous professional collection care publications and newsletters.

His recent book, *Collection Care / An Illustrated Handbook for the Care and Handling of Cultural Objects* was published in November 2015 by Rowman and Littlefield in New York.

He has co-authored two working staff manuals, designed and structured training programs for new and full-time staff in both museum and commercial settings.

Mr. Powell has conducted private collection care courses in the United States, Australia, Malaysia, and China.

Currently, he works for Crozier Fine Arts, New York as CFA Training Manager and is also the Principal of Museum Collection Care, Consultancy and Management.

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***“If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.”  
~Antoine De Saint Exupery***



# Who we are, Why and what we do, How we do it

## **Management Knowledge**

- Staff in charge of managing collection care staff must continue to mentor, promote best practices and professionalism of the staff employed.

## **Professional Purpose**

- Train and develop staff in the best practices of safely moving and handling works of art.
- Staff with a professional attitude promote the care and understanding of collections.

## **Institutional Mission: “Preventive Conservation”**

- Protects the collection for future generations through the understanding of the principles of collection care.

## **Changing Industry**

- Techniques, materials, equipment, training, are constantly changing.
- The training of labor needs to be kept abreast of these changes.



*“Aaaaalllllll..... Aboard “ !!!!!!!!!!!*

- Training collection care staff is paramount to creating an effective, efficient and successful operation.
- Professional development of staff should be part of yearly employment benefits and be supported and budgeted for .
- The benefits outweigh the time, expense and potential risk to the collection in comparison to not establishing a program.
- This Webinar will present several types of successful training opportunities for both internal offerings and external programs.

# Museum Structures: Collection Care Divisions

- *Training staff to understand the organizational policy and procedures is extremely essential.*
- *Collection care is a unique profession* is relatively new within the overall museum industry.
- The understanding of the levels of standards *not easily gained except in “on the job” experience.*

# Museum Structures: Collection Care Divisions

- Knowledge of an individual organization is similar to the uniqueness and diversity of its collection.
- Diversity cannot not be compared directly to another organization.
- Since collection care is relatively new, the development and implementation of training programs is essential.

# Training for Smaller Museums

- *What determines a small sized Museum ?*
- *What are the numbers of Collections Staff ?*
- *What is the collection focus?*
- *Where did the institution evolve from?*
- *What is the museum continual mission?*
- *How is the museum supported financially?*





# Training for Smaller Museums

## Key Responsibilities

- *Institutional needs*
- *“Many Hats”*
- *Commitment is essential*
- *Broader museum mission*
- *Director to the Volunteer handle collections*
- *Communication and training are key components*

# Training for Smaller Museums Staff Positions

- *Director*
- *Curator*
- *Registration*
- *Preparation*
- *Conservation*
- *Security*
- *Maintenance / Facilities*
- *Volunteers / Part Time*
- *Outside Labor / Temporary*
- *Consultants*

# Training Opportunities Keys

- Professional development should be an *ongoing part of the staff benefits*
- Education should be *approached as an investment in the staff* to promote a professional work environment
- Knowledge *shared with and promoted through other staff* within the organization.



# KEYS: Training Opportunities

- *Commitments of time and financial support in both the non-profit and commercial organizations*
- *Investment will outlast the initial financial outlay of support*
- Efficiency and quality of work will *reflect back on the quality of the overall mission of collection care for the objects and their preservation*

***Management must be an active participant throughout the process!***

# Internal or “In-House” Training

- Find various approaches to training programs.
- Some museums have extensive programs which are supported
- Other museums are still developing programs
- Support is essential in creating the best professional knowledge for staff.



# On the Job Training

- “On the Job Training” is common training on a daily basis
- Managers *promote and set the tone for the atmosphere* in daily activities
- Communication of activities must be *clearly stated and monitored as they are undertaken*
- *Coordination of all players, whether within one department or among several departments*
- *Communication and choreography will create an ongoing and dedicated effectiveness* of the policies and procedures

# On the Job Training: Schedules

- Focused by *establishing daily meetings when the schedule is discussed*
- Scheduling calendar, *often depicted on a white board or on an updated computer-based calendar*
- *Scheduling calendars used as a reference during the work day as the schedule develops* or, more often, changes
- Scheduling *calendar is essential and should correlate succinctly with all activity or tracking documents*

Between the Dream and Reality there is  
**“Documentation”**

# Procedural and Handling Manuals

- Manual, usually titled procedural or sometimes called a handling manual, should be an ongoing training component
- Manuals developed by a collaborative effort of various individuals
- Manuals include collection care policy documents as reference
- Manuals used by a variety of levels of collection's staff and written in that manner
- Manuals provide procedures and technical information for specific institution attributes



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# Art Handling and Storage Manual

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art



Prepared by  
 Bruce Powell, Forrest Bailey, Ann Erbacher, and Greg Olson  
 with assistance from Elizabeth Batchelor and Paul Churchill

April 1999

# Manuals: Additional sections / Examples

- **Emergency Response and Recovery Plan:** Encompasses the entire museum staff and facility.
- **Special Exhibition Procedures:** Documents tailored to procedures involved within special exhibitions.
- **Other Site Locations:** Examples such as outdoor sculpture or display gardens, government houses, related historical houses or facilities, and storage facilities.
- **Appendices:** Institutional documents, such as object movement forms, job descriptions, training agendas, and environmental requirements.

# Staff Trainers: Departmental Training Team

- Best to have someone who can be a dedicated staff trainer
- Coordinate with departmental supervisors and representatives of training programs activities
- Meetings established for review of and updating content
- Human resources department to be involved in the development and structure of all training programs for compliance requirements
- Security department and facilities department need to be made aware of collection care policy

# Working as a Team



# Training for New Employees

- Hiring process at any level, seeking individuals with previous experience is a key factor
- Training conducted as part of the induction of the individual
- A new employee a department manager should designate a member of his staff to be a mentor
- Mid-level or experienced individual is hired, senior staff members within the department should work with the new person

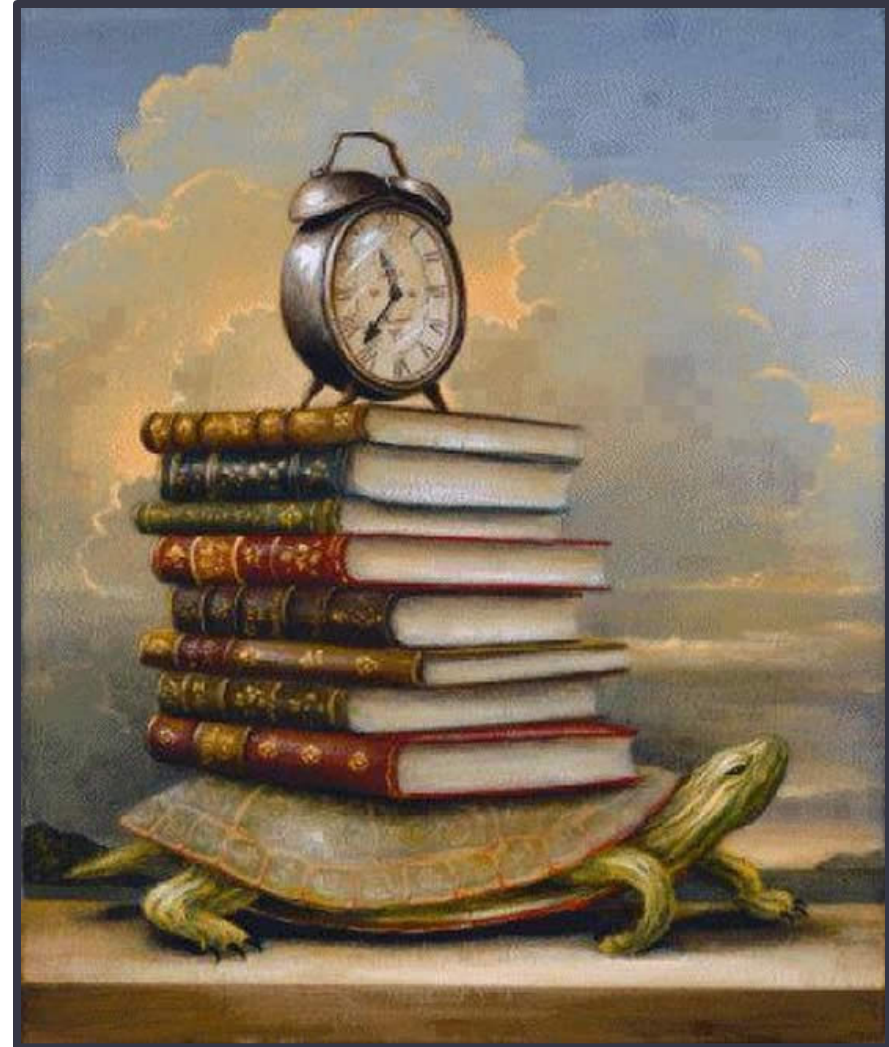


# Part-Time, Temporary or Casual Staff

- Many institutions rely on employing part-time, temporary, or casual staff members
- Hired to fill staffing needs for a specific or termed project  
Seeking individuals with previous experience is not common but can be a key factor
- Human resources department involved in all hiring and training programs due to the distinctly different employment regulations
- Training conducted as part of the induction
- Dedicated meeting prior to work commencing needs to be planned to give the individuals an overview of the project

# Refresher Training for Existing Staff

- Changes within the advancement of research within the profession.
- As information is attained time should be allocated for its dissemination to the staff.
- Posting the information in a staff email or on the bulletin board, is not an approach that guarantees any continuity .
- No one is too old to learn, again and again!





# Departmental Staff Meetings

- Example Topics: New internet posting, website link, creative solutions of recent activity, new procedural forms, materials, equipment or tools
- Information deemed to be of greater interest to all departments
- Meetings conducted on a regular basis is a good forum to openly report and discuss new information
- Examples current departmental project, attendance at a conference or courier travel, or research into new material or techniques
- Promoted as an opportunity for all individuals in collections care
- Persistence will pay off eventually to the point where staff will appreciate the opportunities

# Division or Multi-department Meetings

- Collection care division: monthly or a bimonthly meeting
- The meeting pertains to the current or upcoming workflow schedule
- The second part managers' reports of current activities within the department
- Excellent opportunity to share with the entire group information from weekly staff meetings



# Presentations for Museum Staff and Public

- On occasion a interesting *topic for presentation to other museum staff and members of the public*
- *Spotlight the collection care profession* to a greater audience.
- Promoting professionalism of collection care *acknowledges the mission and responsibilities* within the museum
- Examples of *collection care presentations*: conservation treatments, recent exhibition highlights, unique handling, installation or rigging projects, or travel reports of courier, research or conference highlights
- *Public Outreaching is a win-win* for collection care on many fronts

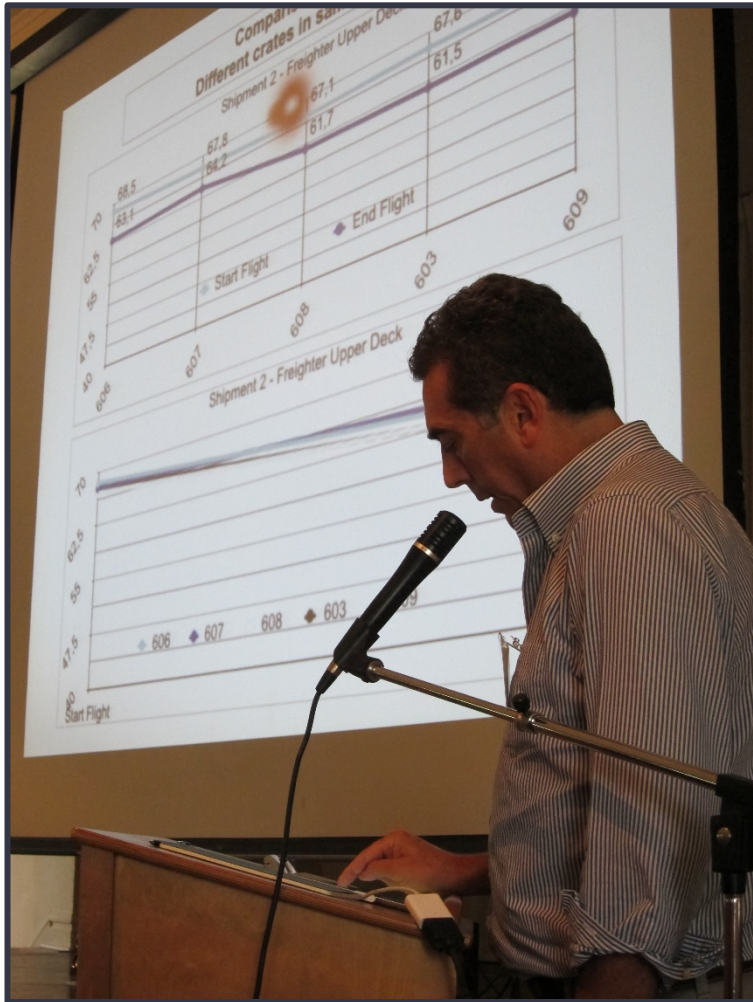




# Non Collection Staff Training

- A number of individuals paid or unpaid who are the public
- “of the institution” and are crucial to the public viewing of the collection
- These individuals need to understand the principles of why collection care and preventive conservation are important
- The level of training is based on principles and policies of the museum rather than the actual procedures and technical knowledge
- These individuals are primarily docents, educational instructors and security guard staff
- It is a symbiotic relationship that is creates public awareness and interest in the mission of a museum

# External Training Opportunities



# External Training Opportunities

- During the past 30 years there has been significant increase in external training opportunities for collection care staff
- Programs available are limited by number of attendees, budgetary costs for attendance, and limit of topics being presented on any specific subject
- As the need for professional development grows, the support for these programs will continue to develop and be made available
- This webinar is the perfect example
- My handout lists multiple references



# Networking by Visiting Other Institutions

- Cost-effective and least time-consuming training opportunities for staff visit colleagues in another institution in the same city or region
- Staff contact their colleagues at another institution to arrange a visit to view and discuss their facilities or particular areas of interest
- Exchange can be reciprocal to both museums and costs of this program are minimal as travel and housing costs can be eliminated or minimum
- Time allocated to conduct these visits is mutually determined for each person's schedule

# Networking by Visiting other Institutions

- Benefits are that the employees are able to see other institutional programs, learn from this exchange and gain valuable contacts for the future
- Staff compare their achievements or discover possibilities for change within their area of responsibility at their own institution
- Long-term benefit builds good relations of the local museum community

# Professional Conferences

## SESSIONS

- Multi-layered training opportunities is to have collection care staff attend museum-based conferences or annual meetings
- Conferences are usually developed, and sessions are selected to correspond to the significance of a particular theme
- The diversity of topics creates an excellent opportunity for the attendee to better understand the work of the museum community
- No one attendee can attend all of the sessions but should be encouraged to look at a variety of topics while creating his attendance list

# Professional Conferences

## WORKSHOPS

- Best training opportunities is to have staff attend workshops
- Many workshops are developed and designed by specific museum organizations to a current topic of interest

- Web-based presentations transmitted using video conferencing software
- Excellent way to conduct training for multiple attendees at various locations at a designated time
- BENEFIT: Several staff members can be gathered to view the same presentation in one location
- BENEFIT: Cost-saving program no travel costs and small disruption of work schedules
- BENEFIT: Program conducted by a designated group of individuals including speakers, moderator and technical assistance

# Webinars



# Private consultants' training within institution

## Format One

- Offering workshop or course on a specific subject at the trainer's working studio or facility.
- Workshops are conducted location within the designated facility.
- Consistency of space, equipment and other necessities required of the trainer.
- This format assists in reducing preparation time and expense.

# Private consultants' training within institution

## Format Two

- Training provided at a designated facility.
- Allows the trainer to travel to a site at a particular museum or facility.
- Reduces the costs of travel-related expense for the attendees.

# Private consultants' training within institution

## Format Three

- Specifically developed through consultant's work with institution, facility, and staff.
- Programs are the result of meetings with managers, research of current policies and procedures, interview with staff, and observing physical operations results in a training program tailored to the organization's specific structure and collection base
- Depending on the amount of institutional support for the program, selected outcomes can be quickly established.
- Valuable aid for creating a training program as it allows a program developed in a shorter focused time without disrupting staff schedules.



# Occupational Health and Safety Training

*How does this subject pertain to the care of collection objects in the workplace?*

- *The health and well-being of all staff members* working with the collection is the highest priority for maintaining a safe work environment
- *Challenge to develop a program* specifically targeted to benefit collection care staff is as specialized as how to care for the objects they care for



# *Get help if load is too heavy*



**Vol.1 No.1 Summer 1997 Long Range Preservation Planning**  
***“It takes a staff to care for a collection” by Helen Alten***



***Every museum, from the small county historical society run by volunteers to the major metropolitan fine arts museum with a multimillion dollar endowment has one thing in common: a collection that needs constant care.***

*Anyone who works in a museum knows that, despite everyone's best intentions, collections often receive less than ideal treatment. Everyone cares about their collections, but not everyone has the specialized knowledge, skills and training to provide the absolute best treatment. Some know just a little, such as the importance of acid-free storage material. Some know more, such as how to construct storage mounts. All too many know too little and have not updated their skills in recent years.*

*Responsibility for updating those skills, for properly caring for a collection, falls to everyone associated with a museum. If collections care is left solely to the curator, the registrar or even the conservator, the collection is in danger. Collections care must begin at the top, with the director. If the director is committed to caring for the collection, that commitment permeates every aspect of the institution and every staff member, volunteer and patron.*

*How can you tell a museum with the necessary commitment?*

**Northern States Conservation Center / E-mail: [info@collectioncare.org](mailto:info@collectioncare.org)**

***“If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.  
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# Closing Remarks

*It may seem daunting at times working in a small museum but there are ways to outreach and ask the question you need answered.*

*Remember there are others thinking to ask the same question just down the road or seating next to you at a conference.*

*All Collection Care resources are a network of knowledge which need to be willing shared.*

If you have any questions about this Webinar please contact me  
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*Artwork Images: Created by Kevin Sloan [www.kevinsloan.com](http://www.kevinsloan.com)*