

Forget the Best: Good and Better Approaches to Preservation

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CENTER FOR ART & HISTORIC ARTIFACTS





Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts

In a typical year:

- Preservation Services specialists complete 50+ survey projects
- Approximately 60 CCAHA-sponsored workshops, conferences, webinars, and training sessions are presented
- The Digital Imaging Services staff digitizes thousands of pages of fragile archival documents, books, and photographs
- Conservators assess and treat more than 6,000 individual artifacts, from over 400 clients
- Housing & Framing Services house approx. 75% of the artifacts treated (folder, sleeve, box, mat and frame, or sealed package)

CONSERVATION
CENTER
for Art & Historic Artifacts

CCAHA Preservation Services



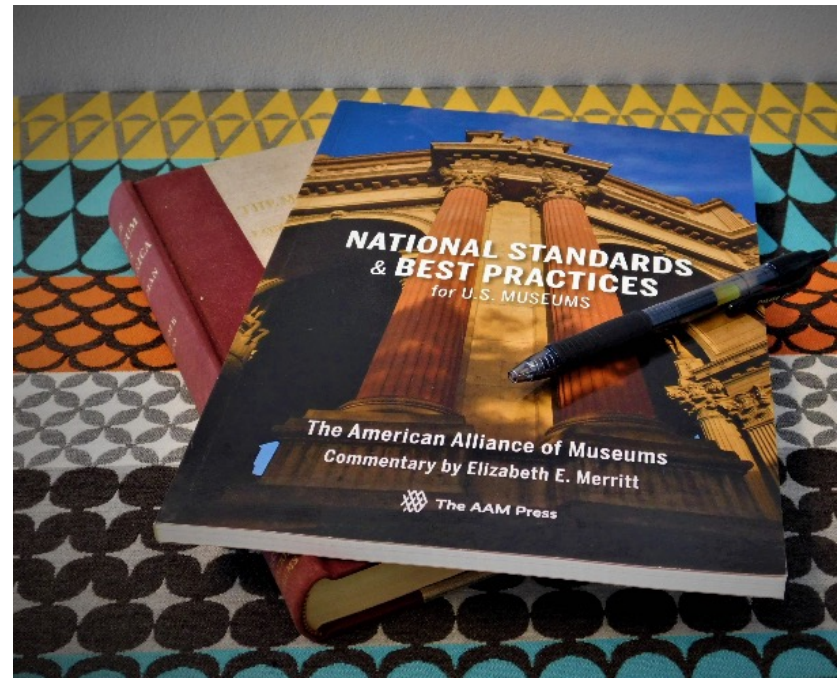
Writing and assistance with developing ...

- ❖ Preservation Needs Assessments
- ❖ Preservation Plans
- ❖ Risk Assessments
- ❖ Emergency Plans
- ❖ Collections Policies
- ❖ Digital Preservation Assessments

Educational programs

What are “Best Practices” Anyway?

- Best Practices apply to all areas of work
- A set of standards for the care of collections in the public trust
- Not “rules” or “laws” but suggestions of care based on knowledge of what can harm collections
- Field-wide best practices vs. best practices for YOUR institution



Best practices in collections care

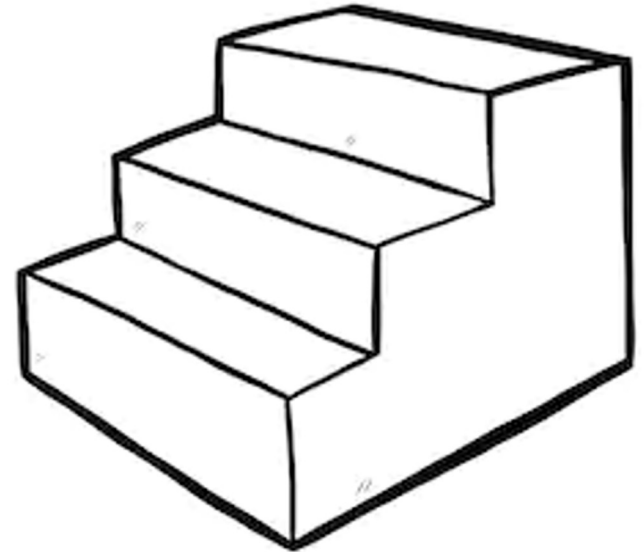
Not rules or laws, but suggestions of care based on knowledge of what can harm collections

Best practices apply to all areas of work

Field-wide best practices vs. best practices for YOUR institution

Establishing the benchmarks

- **Getting Started**
 - The minimum level of care necessary for responsible stewardship
- **Good**
 - Taking actions that are above the “getting started” phase, but there is still room for improvement
- **Better**
 - Optimal stewardship of cultural collections based on current research, methods, and available resources



Topics for Today

- Housing and Enclosures
 - Storage Space
 - Environmental Management
 - Policy Development and Institutional Planning
 - Grants & Cold, Hard, Cash
- 



Collection storage at the New York Public Library, via Instagram @nyplcollectionmanagement

Housing and enclosures

Best practice:

- All items are housed in archival materials
- Housing is customized to the specific needs of the item

Topics to cover:

- Materials
- Packing
- Suppliers

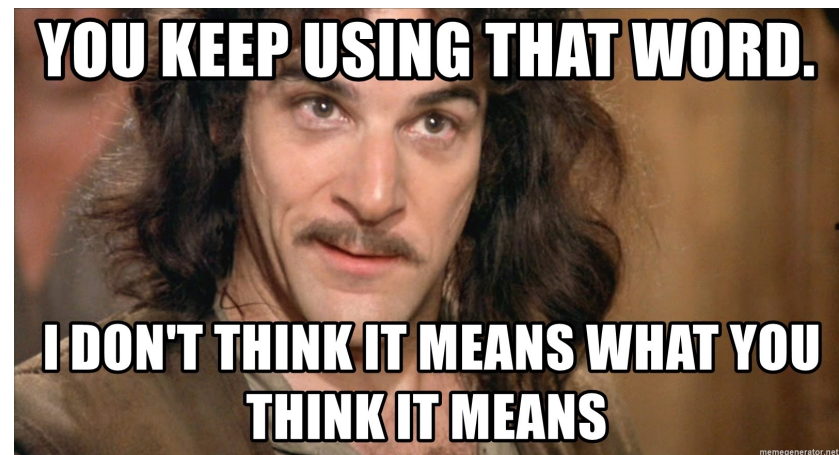
Getting started: put things in boxes



- **Short-term (0-1 year)**
 - Cardboard boxes
 - Wrapped in bubble wrap
 - Wrapped in packing blankets
- **Mid-term (1-10 years)**
 - Sterilite Tubs, unsealed
 - Wrapped in muslin
- **Long-term (10+ years)**
 - Acid-free and lignin-free archival boxes

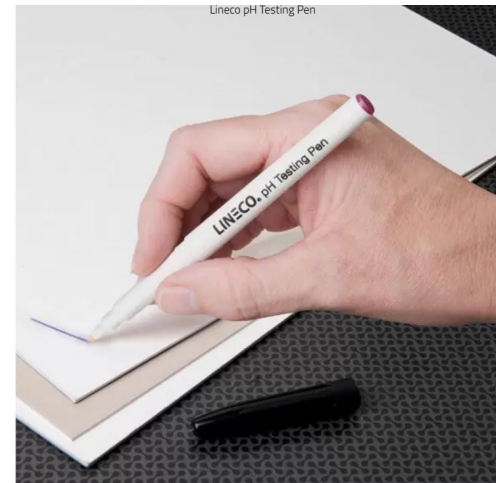
Good: understanding “archival”

- **Archival quality:** materials that are inert and therefore, help extend the life of collection objects and records by protecting them from agents of deterioration
 - Museum Registration Methods 6*, eds. Simmons and Kiser
- The term archival is *not* regulated!



Other manufacturing terms to know

- Lignin-Free
- Acid-Free
- Buffered or Unbuffered
- P.A.T. (Photographic Activity Test)
- Polyester
- Polyethylene
- Polypropylene



Better: Be smart about supplies

- Hardware stores
- Fabric/craft stores
- Art supply stores
- General suppliers
- Specialty vendors for archives, libraries, and museums
 - Archival Methods
 - Hollinger Metal Edge
 - Gaylord
 - Masterpak
 - Talas
 - University Products
- CCAHA's Inclusive Vendor List:
<https://ccaha.org/resources/conscientious-consumption-inclusive-vendor-list>

Better: customized for object needs



STASH 
Storage Techniques for Art, Science and History

<http://stashc.com/>

More resources

- **American Institute for Conservation (AIC) Wiki:** <https://www.conservation-wiki.com/>
- **CAMEO:** http://cameo.mfa.org/wiki/Main_Page
- **Connecting to Collections Care:** <https://connectingtocollections.org/>
- **Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts (CCAHA):** <https://ccaha.org/resources>
- **Documentary Heritage & Preservation Services for New York (DHPSNY):** <https://dhpsny.org/resources>
- **National Park Service Conserve O Grams:**
https://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/conservedocument/cons_toc.html
- **Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC):** <https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/overview>
- **Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) Wiki:**
<https://spnhc.biowikifarm.net/wiki>
- **Storage Techniques for Art, Science, and History Collections (STASHc):** <https://stashc.com/>

Storage Space

Best Practices:

- All materials are housed on furniture 6" off the floor.
- Storage spaces can accommodate 10 years worth of growth.
- All storage furniture is made of powder coated metal specifically designed for the space.



Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum

Topics to Cover:

- Furniture
- Arrangement and Organization

Getting started: know what you have

COLLECTIONS

- Materials
- Size
- Importance (historic or monetary value, significant to mission, etc.)
- Frequency of use
- Housing needs
- Condition

FURNITURE

- Archival quality
- Sturdiness
- Durability
- Available surfaces
- How they can be modified

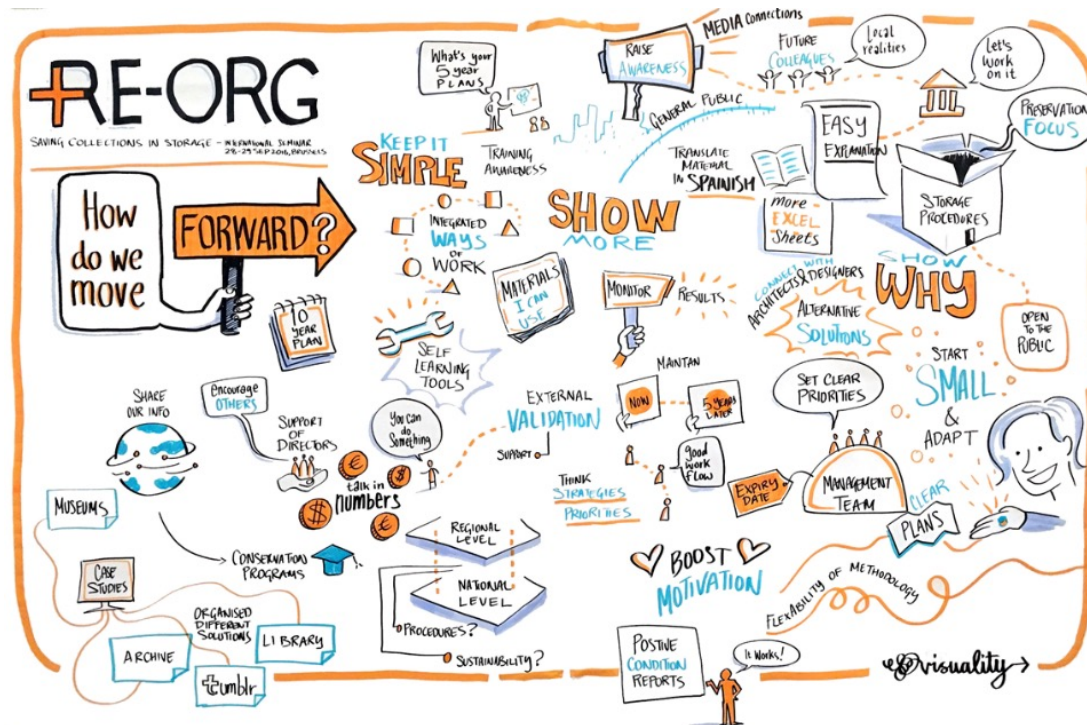
SPACE

- Size
 - Availability
 - Access and location
 - Environmental conditions
 - Load bearing capabilities
- 

Getting started: one room (or closet) at a time



Before and after
organization at
the Wharton
Esherick Museum



RE-ORG: <https://www.iccrom.org/publication/re-org-method-reorganize-museum-storage>

Good: adapt what you have

NOT SO GOOD
ADAPTATION



GREAT ADAPTATION!



Good: adapting historic furniture



- Use primary enclosures to provide a barrier between an object and wood surface
- Alternatively, line wood with archival blue board, Mylar, or Volara to provide a barrier layer

Storage in the Wharton Esherick Museum

Better: create or purchase what you need

Left to right: National Baseball Hall of Fame; National Museum of African Art; Philadelphia Athenaeum





What's the difference between an ant and a termite?, c. 1950. Historic Pittsburgh, 000.362.pic.

Environmental management

Best practices:

- Temperature and RH are within recommended ranges (59°- 77°F and 45% - 55% RH)
- There is no UV exposure, visible light is kept at recommended levels
- The institution practices Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

Topics to cover:

- Temperature and relative humidity
- Light
- Pests

Getting started: know your situation



<https://ccaha.org/resources/environmental-datalogger-quick-comparison-chart-0>



Getting started: know your situation



"Control" card that is stored in total darkness.



An example of a card that has been exposed to UV light and has faded.



Getting started: know your situation



Good: regulate



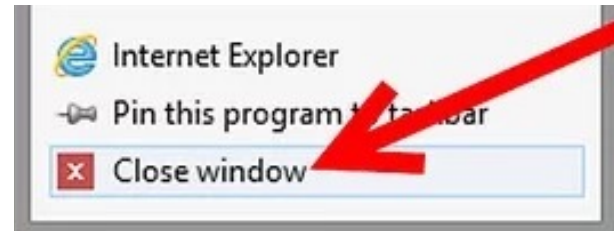
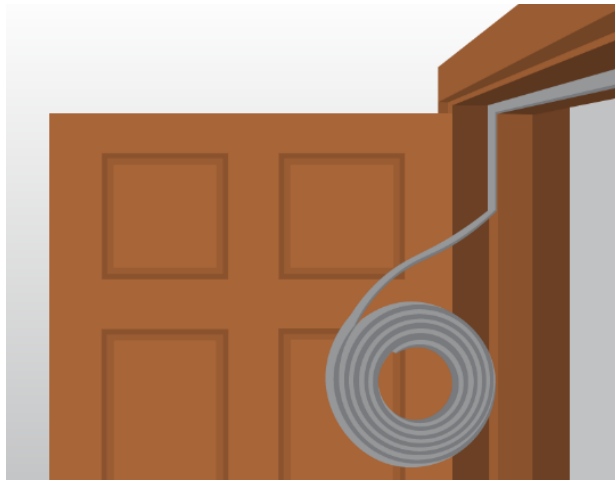
Good: block what you can



Curtain installation at the Wharton Esherick Museum



Good: block what you can





Better: HVAC system

- Plan and budget for repairs and upgrades with a cyclical maintenance plan
- Have a sinking fund
- Perform scheduled maintenance on any system (old or new)
 - Change filters regularly and use the right filters for your system
 - Have a service contract in place
 - Keep track of the warranty and use it!

HVAC system installed in 2021 at the McAllister Museum ([www. mcallistermuseum.org](http://www.mcallistermuseum.org))

Better: switch to LEDs



9W ENERGY STAR certified LED bulb

Brightness	Estimated Energy Cost
800 lumens	\$1.26 per year



43W Halogen

Brightness	Estimated Energy Cost
800 lumens	\$6.02 per year

Benefits:

- Emit much less UV and heat
- More energy efficient
- Bulbs last longer

Better: service contracts



Clockwise from top left: Carpenter Ants;
Furniture Carpet Beetle; Brown Rat;
American Cockroach (www.si.edu)



Breaking Ground for the Administration Building, H. J. Heinz Company, Pittsburgh, PA, c. 1905. Historic Pittsburgh/HHC, MSP57.B005.I12.

Institutional Management

Best practice:

- Routinely conduct preservation needs and risk assessments of collections care issues
- Have all collections-related policies, plans, and guidelines in writing, formally approved, and subject to regular review

Topics to cover:

- Evaluation
- Policies

Getting started: assessments



A CCAHA assessment in action.

- Preservation Self-Assessment Program (PSAP)
- CAP Assessment (FAIC)
- MAP Assessment (AAM)
- DHPSNY Assessments
- CCAHA Assessments
- Risk Evaluation & Planning Program (FAIC)



Good: start small

The logo for dPlan, featuring the word "dPlan" in a bold, sans-serif font. The "d" is red, and "Plan" is black. A small "TM" trademark symbol is to the right.

CMPToolkit

Build Your Own Collections Management Policy

<https://ccaha.org/collections-management-policy-toolkit>

Better: AAM Core Documents

- Mission Statement
 - Code of Ethics
 - Strategic Plan
 - Emergency Response Plan
 - Collections Management Policy
- <https://www.aam-us.org/>



**American
Alliance of
Museums**

Grants & funding

Best Practices:

- Have a line item for preservation in the institutional or departmental budget
- Regularly apply for grant funding to support collections care initiatives

Topics to cover:

- Managing budgets
- Available grants



McGill Cash Register Patent Model, c. 1886. National Museum of American History, 89797 (www.si.edu).

Getting started: manage the budget you have



- Advocate for a dedicated line item or fund for preservation
- Have your wish list ready!

Accounting Department at H. J. Heinz Company, c. 1955. Historic Pittsburgh/HHC, MSP57.B005.F08.I05.

Good: look locally



Porch repair at Historic Sugartown, Inc. in Malvern, PA, using a PHMC grant

Better: NEH, NEA, IMLS

- NEH Preservation Assistance Grants
- NEH Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections
- IMLS Inspire! Grants
- IMLS National Leadership Grants for Libraries
- IMLS Museums for America
- IMLS Collections Assessment Program



**NATIONAL
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HUMANITIES**



**INSTITUTE of
Museum and Library
SERVICES**

Questions and Discussion

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