



## Reducing Risk Through Good Collections Management

### Part 2

In order to reduce risks to your Museum's collection the following elements must be part of your daily operations.

- ✓ Access Policies and Procedures
- ✓ Good Collections Management
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Security
- ✓ Practice Preventive Conservation
- ✓ Create and Practice a Disaster/Emergency Preparedness Plan

In our Winter 2015 issue, Part 1 discussed the first of these elements. In this issue, Part 2 will discuss the remaining five elements.

#### **Collections Management**

Perform periodic inventories and spot checks within the collection. Inventories and spot checks help keep track of the collections, assist with monitoring the condition and stability of the collection, can bring to light any potential environmental issues such as temperature and humidity fluctuations, and active or inactive evidence of pests--insects and mammals. Inventories can also bring to light any unauthorized or unrecorded movement of collections, and frequent inventories allow thefts to be spotted quickly for faster action toward recovery.

#### **Training of Staff**

Training in, and adherence to, strict handling guidelines for collections can prevent damage from improper handling. Train staff, volunteers, security personnel (if you have them) and board members who may be called upon to assist with the collection. Having everyone trained in proper handling can be of great help during an incident where collections must be moved in a hurry to avoid major damage. Collections staff always has the lead when collections must be moved.

#### **Security**

Include a review of collections on exhibition in your opening and closing procedures. This allows museum staff to verify no tampering or damage occurred during open hours or overnight. Photos of exhibit cases can be of help for such a review. Place them in a binder for easy use and update them when exhibits change.

#### **Assessing Risks to Your Collection**

#### **Practice Preventive Conservation**

Get everyone involved--staff, volunteers, and administration. All staff can assist the collections and conservation personnel in making sure that the museum's collections are properly cared for. Preventive conservation is part of everyone's job from handling artifacts, to maintaining the facility, to securing the collection; we all play a part in this.

Be familiar with and use the Ten Agents of Deterioration to evaluate your collection. These ten agents directly affect museum collections and mitigating them is the job of the entire staff of the Museum, particularly in a smaller institution.

The Ten Agents of Deterioration are:

- ✓ Physical Forces
- ✓ Thieves and Vandals
- ✓ Dissociation
- ✓ Fire
- ✓ Water
- ✓ Pests
- ✓ Contaminants
- ✓ Radiation: Light--Visible, Ultraviolet and Infrared
- ✓ Incorrect Temperature
- ✓ Incorrect Relative Humidity

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Monitor the environment within the museum for optimal conditions using temperature and humidity controls and logs; monitoring light levels in storage and exhibition areas; and establishing an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program to monitor for and prevent pest problems.

**Create and Practice a Disaster/Emergency Preparedness Plan**

Every museum should have and frequently practice a Disaster/Emergency Preparedness Plan. Practicing your plan and involving your First Responders in your training is critical to making sure you can manage any incident well and prevent that incident from turning into a disaster. Practice and training will also allow you to modify your plan when things do not go as expected, so the next time you train or when an incident occurs, your response(s) will be better. [See Summer/Fall 2013 *Collections Research News* for information on Disaster Planning.]

**Risk Assessment Tools**

“Framework for Preservation” Charlie Costain, Sept. 1, 1994, <http://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/discovercci-decouvriricc/preventive/15-eng.aspx>.

Robert Waller, “Risk Management Applied in Preventive Conservation” in *Storage of Natural History Collections: A Preventive Approach*, Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, December 1995, ( ISBN-10: 0963547615 and ISBN-13: 978-0963547613), pp. 22-27; also at <http://www.museum-sos.org/docs/WallerSPNHC1995.pdf>

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January 4 to 29, 2016

MS207: Collections Management: Cataloging  
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July 1 to 29, 2016

MS267: Museum Ethics  
July 1 to 29, 2016

MS218: Collection Inventories  
November 2 to 30, 2015  
November 7 to December 5, 2016

MS007: The Mission Statement: Is It Really That  
Important?  
November 9 to 13, 2015  
November 7 to 11, 2016

**!NEW!**

**SECURITY WORKSHOPS FOR TINY  
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Collections Research for Museums now offering a half-day workshop titled "*Security for the Small Museum: Practical Low and No Cost Solutions*".

This workshop is designed for small museums with 10 or fewer staff (paid or unpaid) who are looking to improve or learn about museum security. It will present practical tips that anyone can implement with little or no cost focusing on non-technical solutions.

**We are currently looking for institutions who would like to host one of these workshops**

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**SERVICES  
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Collections Research for Museums can assist small museums with computerizing their collection documentation using off-the-shelf database software.

Training is available for our database and in general FileMaker Pro techniques.

**ON-SITE TRAINING**

Collections Research for Museums offers **classes for small museums in Cataloging and Collections Management**. The course is designed for those museums which have small, non-professionally trained or volunteer staffs. It covers the basics of marking, handling, measuring, and cataloging, plus general care and storage for all types of objects and materials.

**PROJECT SERVICES**

We also offer a variety of **other services** to museums, large and small. These **range from simple inventories to complete and thorough cataloging of collections**. Feel free to contact us for more information. We provide a **free initial consultation**.

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Email: [information@museumcollectionmgmt.com](mailto:information@museumcollectionmgmt.com)

Website: <http://museumcollectionmgmt.com>

Questions, comments or story suggestions are always welcome.)