ACCESS AND ARTIFACT HANDLING
Workshop Part A

Marie Desrochers
Utah Division of Arts and Museums

January 5, 2023: Edge of the Cedars State Park
10 am - 5 pm

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

PROGRAM OVERVIEW: Year at a Glance

1. ACCESS AND ARTIFACT HANDLING

JANUARY
FEBRUARY
MARCH

- Workshop (pt A & B)
- 1. Webinar
- 2. Webinar
- 3. Webinar

2. PRESERVATION IN STORAGE AND DISPLAY

APRIL
MAY
JUNE

- Workshop (pt A & B)
- 1. Webinar
- 2. Webinar
- 3. Webinar

3. ENVIRONMENT AND BUILDING SYSTEMS

JULY
AUGUST
SEPTEMBER

- Workshop (pt A & B)
- 1. Webinar
- 2. Webinar
- 3. Webinar

4. RISK MANAGEMENT, EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESPONSE

OCTOBER
NOVEMBER
DECEMBER

- Workshop (pt A & B)
- 1. Webinar
- 2. Webinar
- 3. Webinar

GOALS

Gain a better understanding of Key Themes...

Key Themes

- Tension Between Collections Access and Preservation
- Mission, Collections Policy, and Preservation
- Ten Agents of Deterioration
- Nature of Objects and Preservation: Physical vs. Significance

AGENDA

Handout

Access and Artifact Handling

Workshop Part A Agenda

Edge of the Cedars State Park, Blanding

January 5, 2023

Learning Goals for Workshop pt A

1. Understand the meaning of collections access and its implications for preservation
2. Understand the importance of mission and collections policy for preservation
3. Understand the risks of the ten agents of deterioration
4. Understand the importance of assessing and defining significance of collections

Agenda

10:00-10:40	Begin promptly with housekeeping and introductions
10:40-11:30	The role of Museums, Intellectual Control, and Access
11:30-11:40	**BREAK**
11:40-11:50	Discussion: How/in what ways is access provided?
11:50-12:15	Access and the Ten Agents of Deterioration
	Physical Forces
	Fire
	Pests
	Water
	Light
12:15-1:15	**LUNCH**
1:15-1:55	Finish Agents of Deterioration
	Incorrect Relative Humidity
	Incorrect Temperature
	Thieves and Vandals
	Pollution
	Dissociation/Custodial Neglect
1:55-2:40	ACTIVITY in gallery spaces
2:40-2:55	Discussion/reflection on activity
2:55-3:05	**BREAK**
3:05-3:35	Introduce Significance Assessment and Statements of Significance
3:35-4:05	ACTIVITY: Statements of Significance
4:05-4:25	Discussion/reflection on activity
4:25-5:00	Wrap up: Assign homework; complete evaluation

HOUSEKEEPING

Thank you to our hosts:

Edge of the Cedars State Park
Chris Hanson, Museum Director-Park Manager

Jonathan Till, Curator of Collections

INTRODUCTIONS

Please share the following:

1. Your name
2. Where you work: institution, location, your role, and how long you have worked there
3. Tell us a little bit about the collection you steward/what brings you here today

MISSION OF MUSEUMS: big picture

Museums are expected to:

1. plan strategically and act ethically with respect to collections stewardship

2. legally, ethically, and responsibly acquire, manage and dispose of collection items as well as know what collections are in their custody, where they came from, why they have them, and their current condition and location

3. provide regular and reasonable access to, and use of, the collections in their custody

“SIMPLY PUT”...

1. Know what stuff you have
2. Know what stuff you need
3. Know where it is
4. Take good care of it
5. Make sure someone gets some good out of it
6. Especially people you care about
7. And your neighbors

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY

"A collections management policy addresses various aspects of the museum's collections stewardship **responsibilities.**

This policy defines the **scope** of a museum's collection and how the museum **cares for** its collections and makes them **available** to the public.

A collections management policy also explains the **roles** of the parties responsible for managing and caring for the museum's collections."

“SIMPLY PUT”…

A bunch of related policies that address issues and problems **specific** to the collection

Enacting and enforcing a *good* Collections Management Policy (CMP) helps your museum achieve its mission

PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION In 7 Points

Handout Available Online

Instead of thinking *object*
think ***collection***

Instead of thinking *room*
think ***building***

Instead of thinking *individual*
think ***team***

Instead of thinking *short term*
think ***long term***

Instead of thinking *professionals*
think ***public***

Instead of thinking *trade secrets*
think ***communications***

Instead of thinking h*ow*
think ***why***

PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION IN YOUR CMP

Table of Contents: Collections Care Section in an example CMP

INTELLECTUAL CONTROL

the establishment and maintenance of documentation that describes and accommodates access to the informational content of collections resources

Society of American Archivists

ACCESS

the ability to locate relevant information through the use of catalogs, indexes, finding aids, or other tools

Society of American Archivists

ACCESS

the permission to locate and retrieve information for use (consultation or reference) within legally established restrictions of privacy, confidentiality, and security clearance

Society of American Archivists

ACCESS

the physical processes of retrieving information from storage media [collections]

Society of American Archivists

Discussion:

According to your Mission or CMP, who has access to your collection and how?

Smithsonian Natural History

Discussion:

In what ways do you provide access?

Smithsonian Natural History

BREAK (10 Minutes)

TEN AGENTS OF DETERIORATION

TEN AGENTS OF DETERIORATION

1. Physical Forces
2. Fire
3. Pests
4. Water
5. Light
6. Incorrect Relative Humidity
7. Incorrect Temperature
8. Thieves and Vandals
9. Pollution
10. Dissociation/Custodial Neglect

PHYSICAL FORCES

Energetic forces that cause damage to objects due to impact, shock, vibration, pressure, and abrasion

1. PHYSICAL FORCES

Level of damage caused by physical forces is a spectrum from **abrasion** (surface distortion due to use or repeated visitor brushing against the object, for example) to **catastrophic breakage** (example: a ceramic object falls in an earthquake and shatters). The level of damage depends on a variety of factors from object sensitivity to how much force is applied.

1. PHYSICAL FORCES

ABRASION

SHEDDING

CRACKS

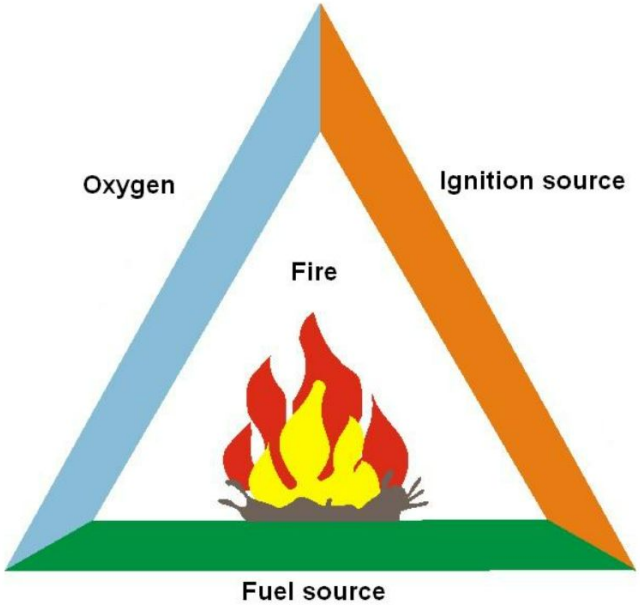
CATASTROPHIC BREAKAGE

Level of damage caused by physical forces is a spectrum from **abrasion** (surface distortion due to use or repeated visitor brushing against the object, for example) to **catastrophic breakage** (example: a ceramic object falls in an earthquake and shatters). The level of damage depends on a variety of factors from object sensitivity to how much force is applied.

FIRE

State of combustion resulting from the reaction of a fuel source (anything that burns), oxygen, and an ignition source. Usually causes catastrophic loss, if not a complete loss; impact may include water and/or soot damage

2. FIRE



Fire is the state of **combustion** resulting from a chemical reaction that requires the presence of three elements in proper combination — a **fuel source** (anything that burns), **oxygen** (a component of air), and an **ignition source** such as heat or a spark — in order to begin and develop. Putting out a fire involves removing one of these elements. (Canadian Conservation Institute)

2. FIRE

Fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, 2019

2. FIRE

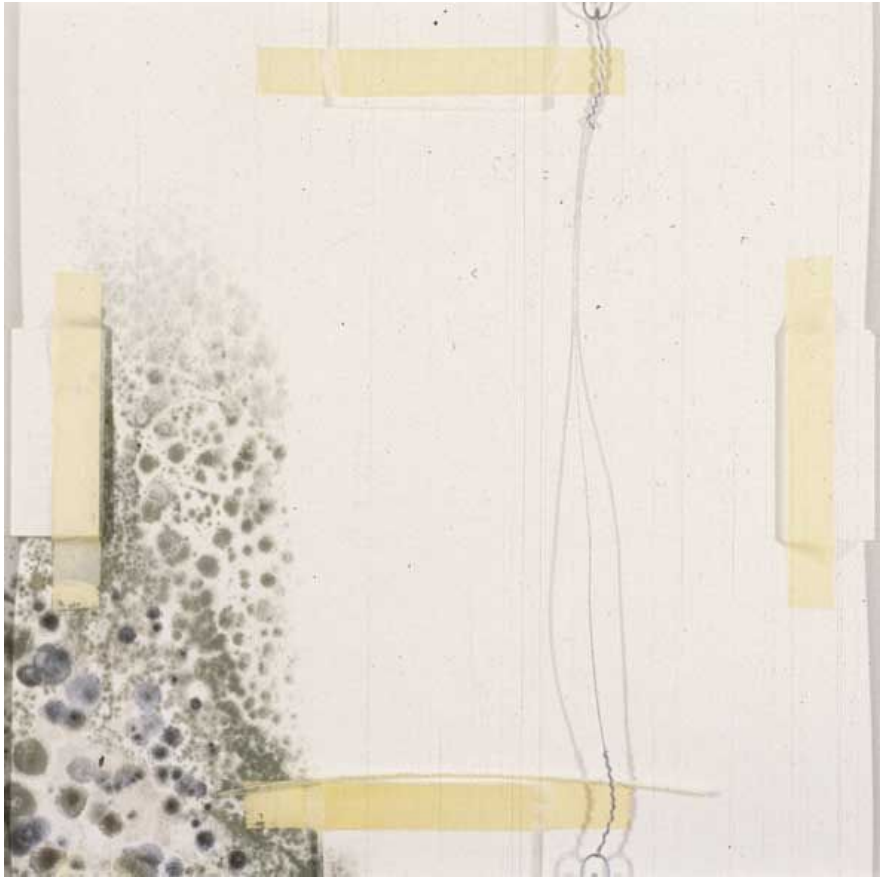
Examples of permanent damage due to fire (CCI)

PESTS

living organisms that are able to disfigure, damage, and destroy material culture. Pests include rodents, insects, mold, mildew, fungi and even plants in certain contexts. Most damage is caused by species that feed on either the object materials or dust that has collected on the object

3. PESTS

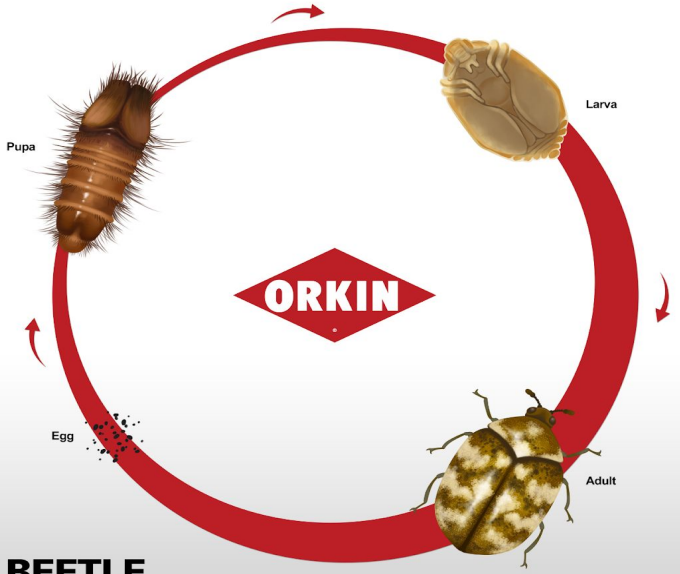
Wooden object internally damaged by insects



Mold growth on the back of a paper object

(Images courtesy of Canadian Conservation Institute)

3. PESTS



CARPET BEETLE LIFE CYCLE

Carpet beetle larvae found feeding on the underside of a wool rug

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WATER

Excessive moisture typically resulting from natural occurrences, technological hazards, or mechanical failures. The majority of water-related problems in cultural institutions are the result of accidents or neglect.

4. WATER

Natural

- Rainstorm
- Windstorm
- Hurricane
- Sleet, hail, ice storm
- Flash flood
- Slow rising flood
- Tsunami (if located in a coastal seismic zone)
- Spring melt or run off
- Ice jam
- High water table
- Located by or close to a body of water (river, lake, or dam)

Sources of water damage to collections (Canadian Conservation Institute), link to resource available online

4. WATER

Technological/Mechanical

- Sewer failure/back-up
- Sprinkler system malfunction
- Broken water line (may be caused by freezing or construction)
- Leaking roof
- Leak from heating system, ventilation system, or air conditioning system (HVAC)
- Overflowing sinks, toilets, drains (that may be blocked or unable to cope)
- Blocked eavestroughs
- Careless use of water during special events, social functions, etc.
- Use of water during construction and renovations
- Poorly/improperly insulated building
- Storm drains/sewers (that are unable to cope)

Sources of water damage to collections (Canadian Conservation Institute), link to resource available online

4. WATER

Accidents

- Water used in cleaning up chemical spills
- Water damage due to fire (sprinkler system discharge or/and fi

Sources of water damage to collections (Canadian Conservation Institute), link to resource available online

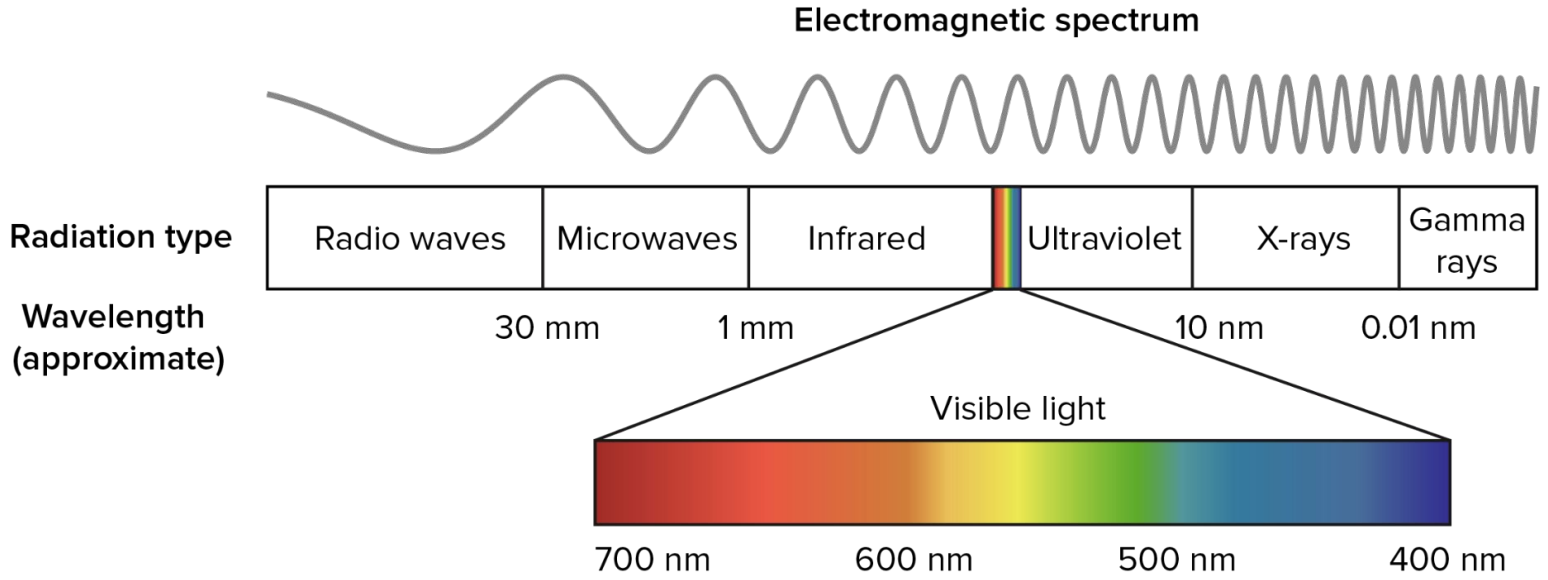
4. WATER

Water damage to furniture and wooden objects after a flood at the Cumberland Heritage Museum in Ottawa (Canadian Conservation Institute)

LIGHT

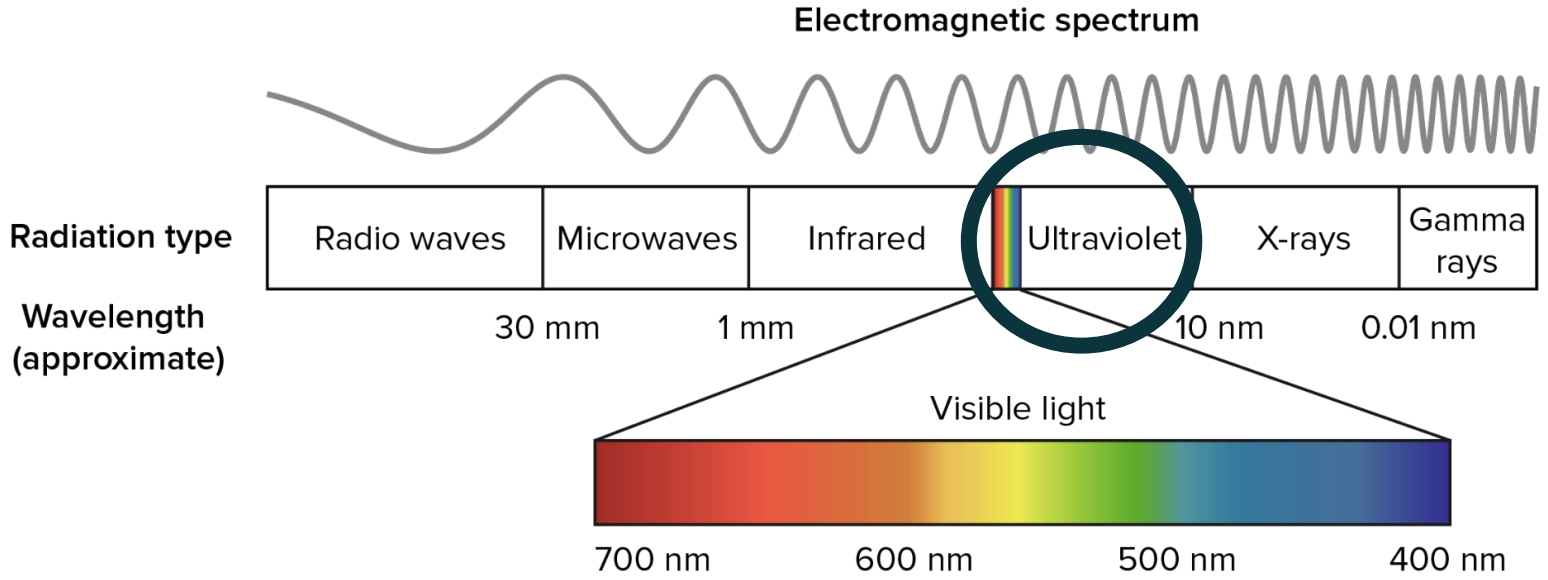
Visible and Ultraviolet (UV) light energy wavelengths that cause cumulative and irreversible damage to objects. Sources include both artificial lighting and sunlight

5. LIGHT



Light energy on the greater electromagnetic spectrum

5. LIGHT



Light energy on the greater electromagnetic spectrum

No sensitivity	Low sensitivity	Medium sensitivity	High sensitivity
Materials that do not change colour due to light. (These materials may change colour due to ageing or pollutants.) Most but not all mineral pigments. The "true fresco" palette, a coincidence with the need for stability in alkali. The colours of true glass enamels, ceramics (not to be confused with enamel paints). Many monochrome images on paper, such as carbon inks, but the tint of the paper and added tint to the carbon ink are often high sensitivity. Paper itself must be cautiously considered low sensitivity. Many high-quality modern pigments developed for exterior use, automobiles.	Materials rated ISO Blue Wool #7, #8 (and higher). Artists palettes classified as "permanent" (a mix of truly permanent AND low-light sensitivity paints, e.g. ASTM D4303 Category I; Winsor and Newton AA). Structural colours in insects (if UV blocked). A few historic plant extracts, especially indigo on wool. Silver/gelatine black-and-white prints (not resin coated paper) assuming all UV blocked. Many high-quality modern pigments developed for exterior use, automobiles. Vermilion (blackens due to light).	Materials rated ISO Blue Wool #4, #5, or #6. Alizarin dyes and lakes. A few historic plant extracts, particularly madder-type reds containing primarily alizarin, as a dye on wool or as a lake pigment in all media. It varies throughout the range of medium and can reach into the low category, depending on concentration, substrate, and mordant. The colour of most furs and feathers. Most colour photographs with "chrome" in the name, e.g. Cibachrome, Kodachrome.	Materials rated ISO Blue Wool #1, #2, or #3. Most plant extracts, hence most historic bright dyes and lake pigments in all media: yellows, oranges, greens, purples, many reds, blues. Insect extracts, such as lac dye and cochineal (e.g. carmine) in all media. Most early synthetic colours such as the anilines, all media. Many cheap synthetic colourants in all media. Most felt tip pens including blacks. Most red and blue ballpoint inks. Most dyes used for tinting paper in the 20thcentury. Most colour photographs with "colour" (or "color") in the name. e.g. Kodacolour, Fujicolour.

Light Sensitivity Table from Canadian Conservation Institute. (Full resource linked in Drive)

No sensitivity	Low sensitivity	Medium sensitivity	High sensitivity
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HOW DO WE MEASURE Light?

The exposure of an artifact to light is a product of illumination level and time:
Light level (lux) x Time (hours) = Exposure (lux hours)

Visible light is measured in **lux** or footcandles. One footcandle (fc) is equivalent to approximately 11 lux.

Ultraviolet is measured in **microwatts per lumen** (µW/lm), which describes the fraction of ultraviolet radiation in visible light. Because it is a ratio, the total UV will increase as the light levels increase, even as the ratio remains constant.

Lunch (1 hour)

INCORRECT RELATIVE HUMIDITY

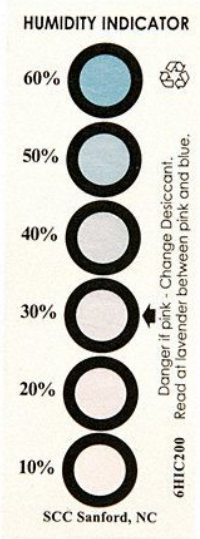
Relative humidity is the percentage of water vapor in the air out of complete saturation (saturation= 100% Relative Humidity). Four key types of potentially incorrect RH: damp (>75%), RH outside a critical value for an object, and RH fluctuations.

6. INCORRECT RELATIVE HUMIDITY RISKS

Carriage experiencing mold growth and corrosion due to damp storage conditions (left). Glass beads crizzling due to RH above critical RH (right) -Canadian Conservation Institute

HOW DO WE MEASURE Relative Humidity?

Hygrothermograph (old school)



Humidity Indicator Card

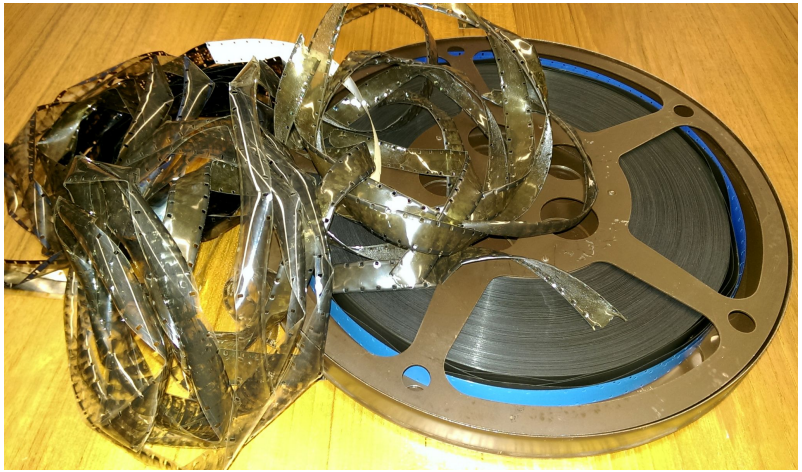
Analog hygrometer

Digital hygrometer/data logger

INCORRECT TEMPERATURE

Temperature that is too high, too low, or fluctuates too frequently and causes chemical, physical and biological damage to collections.

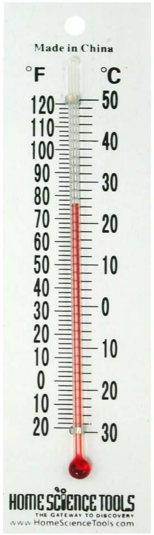
7. INCORRECT TEMPERATURE RISKS



Both of these objects require colder temperatures than “human comfort” for optimal preservation. Their deterioration is the result of storage in incorrect temperature.

Images from the Canadian Conservation Institute

HOW DO WE MEASURE Temperature?



Basic glass thermometer

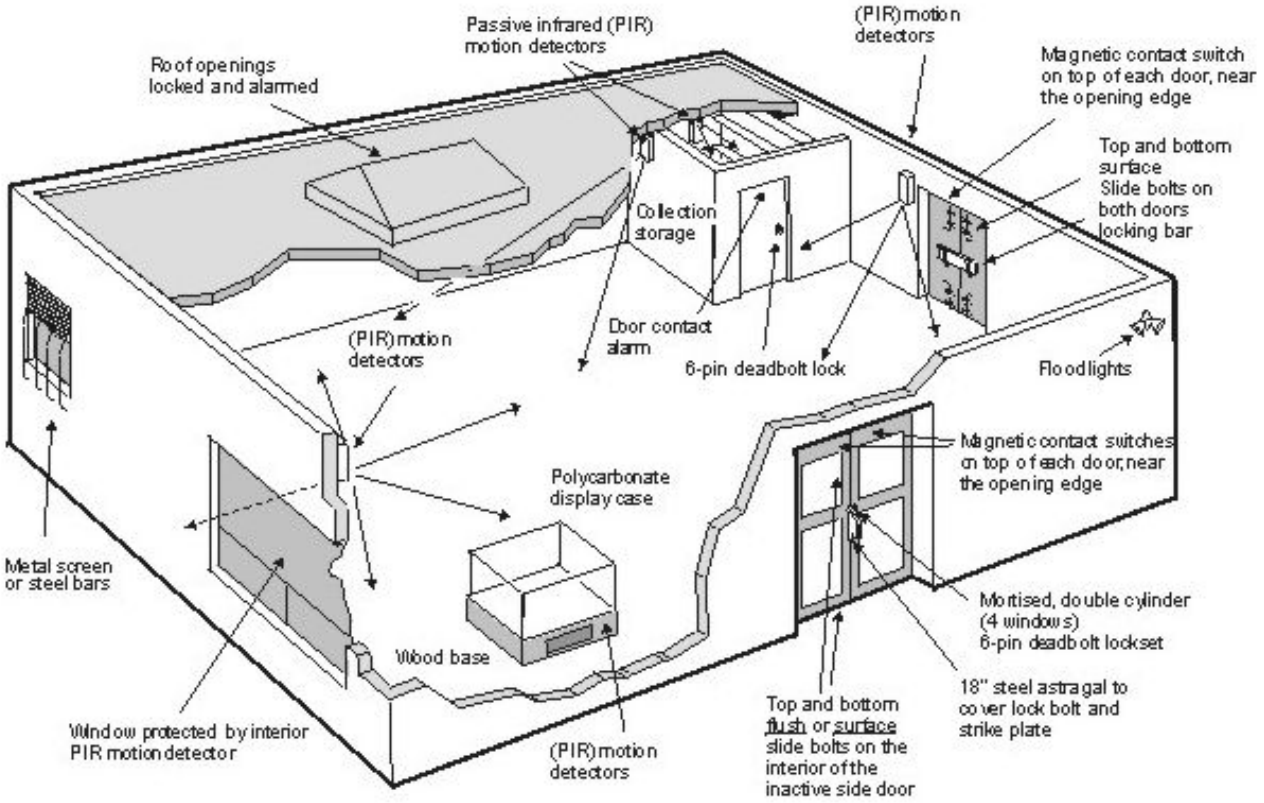
Digital thermometer/data logger

THIEVES AND VANDALS

Willful damage to collections by vandalism and removal of collections due to theft.

8. THIEVES AND VANDALS AND SECURITY

Security parameters within a small museum, Canadian Conservation Institute

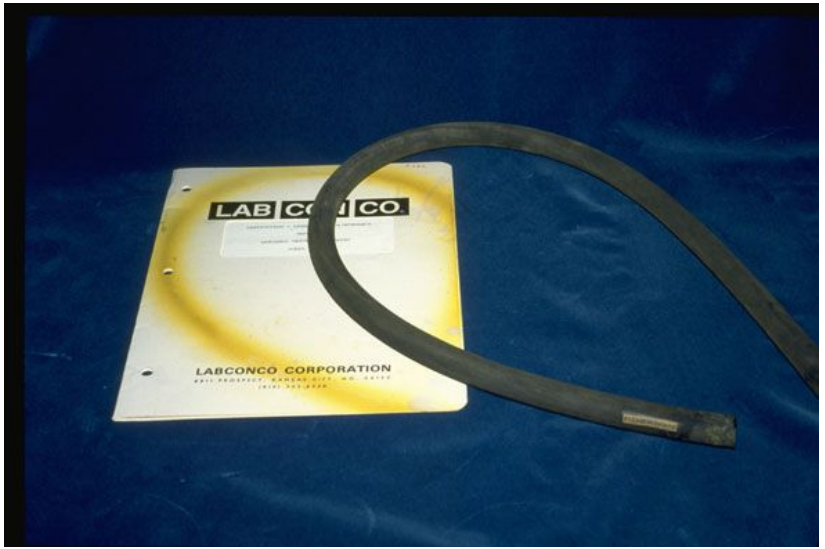


POLLUTANTS

Gaseous, aerosol, liquid or solid substances that are known to have adverse effects when in contact with objects.

9. POLLUTANT RISKS

Cellulose nitrate comb deterioration



Staining of paper from deteriorating rubber

Images from the Canadian Conservation Institute

HOW DO WE MEASURE Pollutants?

...not that easily

Pollutants	Nature	Effects
Airborne pollutants	Atmospheric sources: ozone, hydrogen sulfide, carbonyl sulfide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, and particles (e.g. soot, salts). From emissive products, objects and people: sulfur-based gases, organic acids (e.g. carboxylic acids), particles (e.g. lints, danders).	Acidification of papers, corrosion of metals, discoloration of colorants, efflorescence of calcium-based objects with RH (e.g. seashells), loss of strength for textiles. Dust: disfiguration of objects; attractant for pests, scratching of soft surfaces by friction.
Pollutants transferred by contact	Plasticizer from flexible PVC (polyvinyl chloride), sulfur compounds from natural rubber, staining materials from wood (especially knots), viscous compounds from old polyurethane foams, paper clips on papers, adhesives on objects from previous presentation, oily materials from leather, acids from some mineral specimens, fatty acids from people or from greasy objects such as skin/leather. Impregnation of salts during burial or immersion in seawater. Impregnation of residue of cleaning agents. Impregnation of salt from brick or stone floors or foundation.	Discoloration or corrosion of surface of the object in contact with harmful material from products or objects.
Intrinsic pollutants	Composite objects having compounds harmful for the other parts of the object, such as alum or iron gall ink in papers, 'original' adhesive tape on papers, corrosion of copper in contact with leather (e.g. tanned leather object having copper parts), composite objects made of sulfur- based compounds and metals. Secondary pollutants such as acetic acid and nitrogen oxide compounds from the hydrolysis of cellulose acetate and cellulose nitrate respectively.	Deterioration of the objects: acidification, discoloration or stain on objects. Secondary pollutant may speed up the degradation processes caused by oxygen, water vapour or other pollutants.

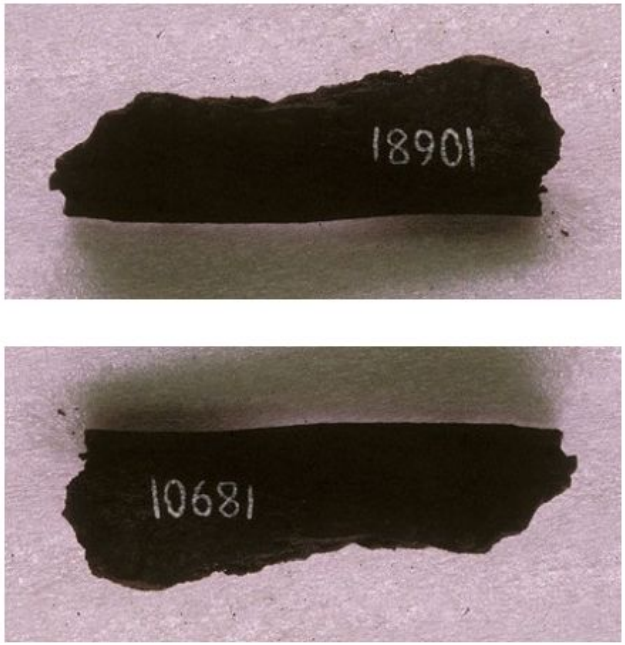
Table 1. Effects of pollutants on objects, Canadian Conservation Institute. (Full resource linked in Drive)

DISSOCIATION/CUSTODIAL NEGLECT

Natural tendency for ordered systems to fall apart over time, causing loss of objects, or object-related data, or the ability to retrieve or associate objects and data.

10. DISSOCIATION/CUSTODIAL NEGLECT

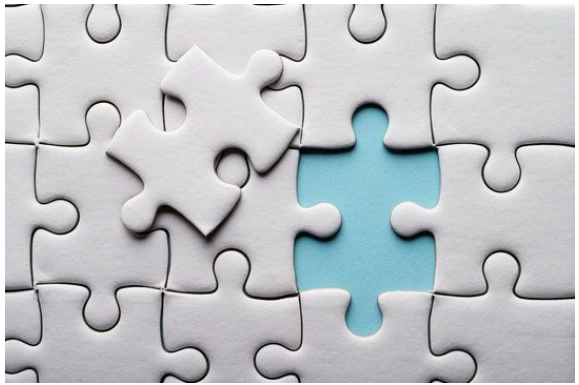
Example of a set of objects in a natural history collection- storage can prevent dissociation but it should not be the only defense
Image from Spacesaver Corporation



Two photographs showing the same object. First picture appears to be object number 18901, second picture appears to be object 10681. Photo by G. Fitzgerald. © Canadian Museum of Nature

Examples and images from the Canadian Conservation Institute

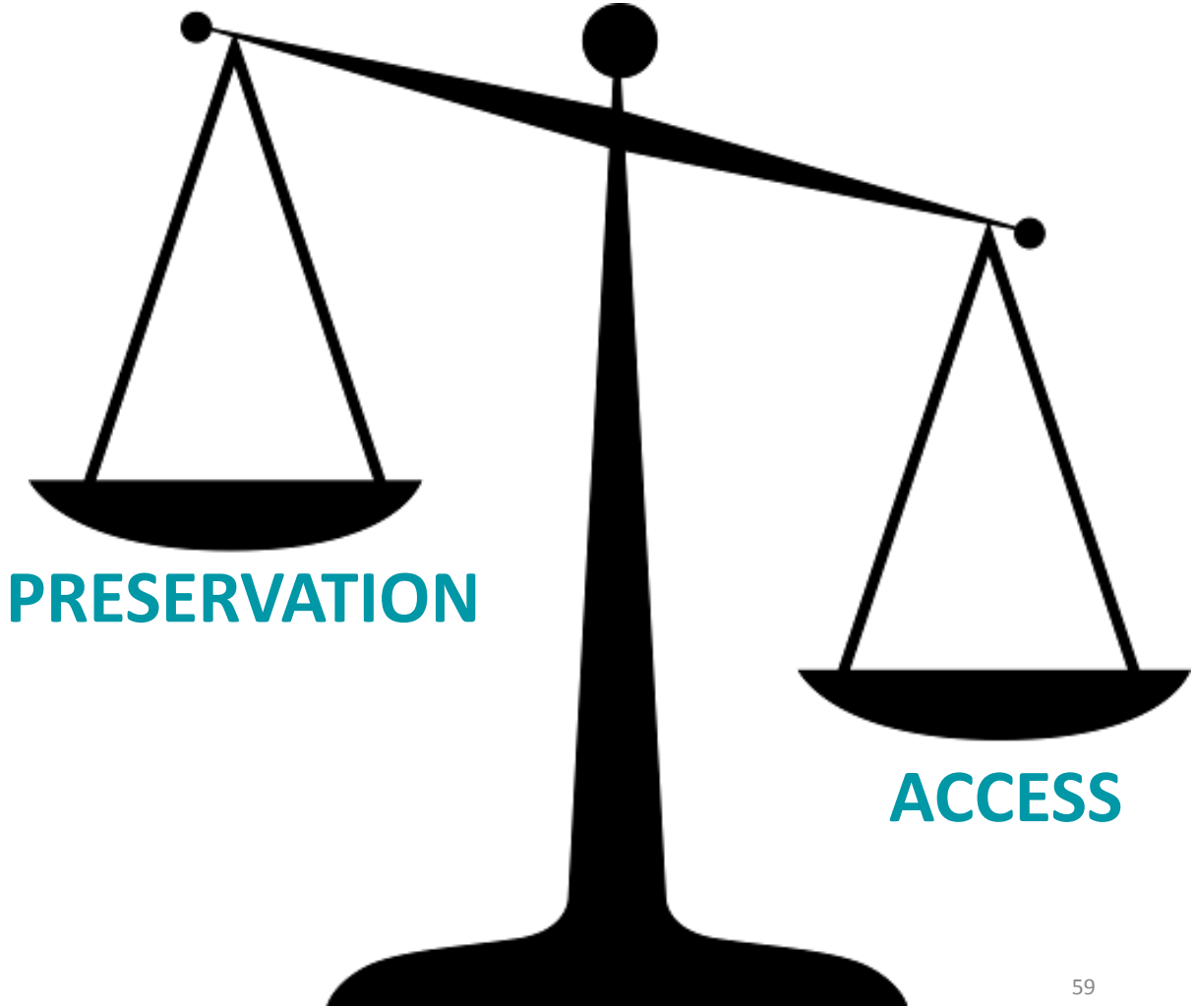
10. DISSOCIATION/CUSTODIAL NEGLECT



Three legged horse specimen reunited with its fourth, white leg. Photograph by Laura Smyk.
© Canadian Museum of Nature

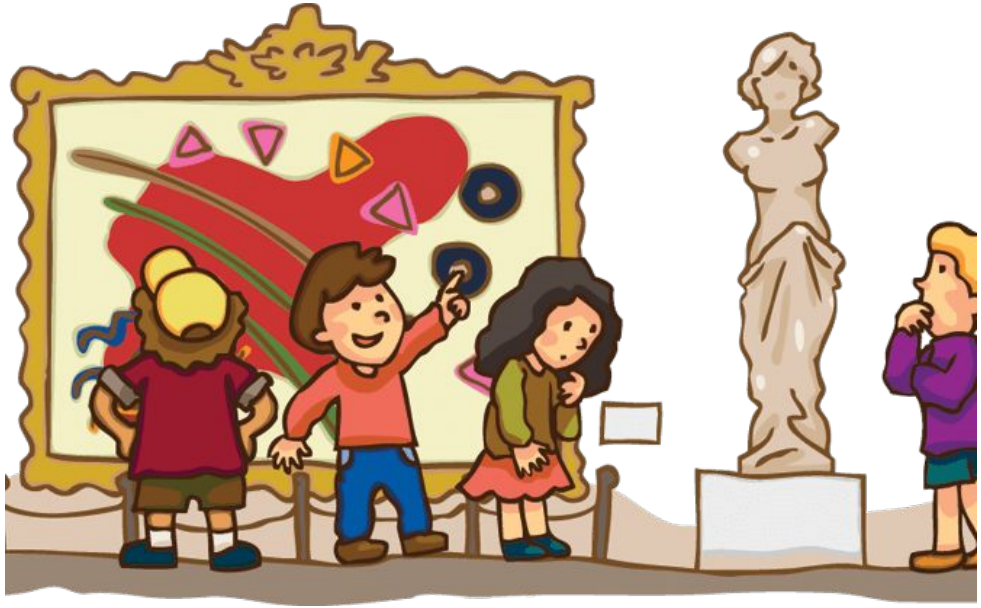
Examples and images from the Canadian Conservation Institute

As collections stewards, we are in a constant balancing act…



Discussion:

What tension exists between providing access and preventing agents of deterioration? Can you share an example?



ACTIVITY 1:

Identifying agents of deterioration within the galleries

Walking through the Summit County Historical Museum galleries, identify objects and potential sources of damage that correspond to each of the ten agents of deterioration **(45 min)**

Handout

Workshop Part A: January 5, 2023
Edge of the Cedars State Park, Blanding
Access and Artifact Handling

Activity 1: Walking through the Summit County Historical Museum galleries, identify objects and potential sources of damage that correspond to each of the agents of deterioration **(45 min)**

Object	Agent of Deterioration	Source/Damage
	Physical Forces	
	Fire	
	Pests	
	Water	
	Light	
	Incorrect Relative Humidity	
	Incorrect Temperature	
	Thieves and Vandals	
	Pollution	
	Dissociation/Custodial Neglect	

ACTIVITY 1: Identifying Agents Discussion

- What was easy or hard about this exercise?
- Were there any surprises?
- What tension did you identify between collections access and preservation?

(15 min)

BREAK (10 Minutes)

SIGNIFICANCE
ASSESSMENT & STATEMENTS

SIGNIFICANCE

- Includes all facets of an object that contribute to the story that the object tells. It is when the history, uses, social and spiritual values of an object are known that the object gains meaning.
- Means the importance of an object to a particular museum or collection may vary depending on the mission statement and policies of the museum.
- Is not fixed in time but may alter with changes in communities, culture, politics, science and the environment.

Western Australian Museum based on *Significance 2.0 Guide to Assessing Significance*

SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

- **Collaborative process** that draws on the knowledge, skills and experience of a range of people, including donors and people in the community knowledgeable about the subject or object.

- **Consult widely** to fully understand the context, history, and significance of the object, and **research** more info where relevant.

- **STEPPED PROCESS** and **SET CRITERIA** help draw out precise qualities of object's significance and is a framework to both consider and describe how and why an object is important.

STEPPED PROCESS

1) Analyze an object or collection
2) Research its history, provenance, and context
3) Compare to similar items (in your collection or in other collections)
4) Understand its value by reference to **set criteria**
5) Summarize its meanings and values in a statement of significance

SET CRITERIA | PRIMARY

HISTORIC
Objects with proven association with a known individual, event, or period in history that is considered by the museum as significant

ARTISTIC or AESTHETIC
Objects considered significant for their beauty; patina of age; craftsmanship; style; design; technical accomplishment

SCIENTIFIC or RESEARCH
Items of current scientific value or research potential such as archives, natural history or archaeological collections

SOCIAL or SPIRITUAL
Objects held in community esteem for their cultural or social associations

SET CRITERIA | COMPARATIVE

PROVENANCE
Well documented chain of ownership and context of use from the objects' origin until it is acquired by the museum.

REPRESENTATIVE or RARE
Represent category, activity, way of life or theme relevant to museum - OR - Unique, singular, or uncommon in some way relevant to museum mission

CONDITION or COMPLETENESS
Objects that may be complete or intact, still working, or in original, unrestored condition

INTERPRETIVE CAPACITY
Ability to interpret and demonstrate particular themes, people or ideas relative to the museum's mission

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

A clearly written summary of the key components of importance and meaning of an object or collection.

- Results from the stepped assessment process using framework.
- More than a catalog record or physical description.
- Reasoned argument about how and why an object is of value.
- Not set in stone and may change over time with changing values.

EXAMPLE

Cabbage tree hat made by Mrs Lionel Hurry for her nephew Albert Denniss, about 1900
Reproduced courtesy of the Illawarra Historical Society, Wollongong

George French Angas
Britain/Australia, 1822 - 1886
Cabbage Palms, Dapto, Illawarra
1844–05, Dapto, New South Wales
watercolour on paper
32.8 x 23.5 cm
Gift of Miss EM Johnson
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Single item: illustrated step-by-step process

Cabbage tree hat, c. 1900
Illawarra Historical Society, Wollongong, NSW

1. Collate a file with all the information about the item and its history

The exact acquisition date is not known, however the Society has detailed notes about the history and provenance of the hat. It was a gift on behalf of the late Miss AR Hurry, daughter of the maker of the hat, around 1969.

2. Research the history and provenance of the item

Notes associated with the hat record that it was made by Mrs Lionel Hurry, née Sarah Denniss, for her nephew Albert Denniss, son of her brother George, when he was a small boy holidaying with her at Vine Cottage, Flinders Street, Albion Park. It was probably made in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

3. Consult donors, owners, and knowledgeable people

The Society's notes associated with the hat were presumably written at the time it was donated from information supplied by the donor. These notes include information about the family's arrival in Australia, their home and work. They record Mr WA Denniss making a small tool to strip the cabbage palm leaves into narrow widths before plaiting.

Additional information collected by the Society from local sources builds up a picture of the patterns of manufacture of cabbage tree hats by people in the Illawarra. Of particular note is the reference that other members of the Denniss family used Aboriginal people to climb the cabbage trees to collect the palm 'hands' for plaiting in exchange for a 'halfmoon' damper. Other information records the Tibbles family making quantities of hats to sell twice a year at their stand at the Sydney markets, and Mrs Brooks of Kangaroo Valley putting the palm hands on the laundry roof to be bleached by the sun and frost.

4. Explore the context of the item

Cabbage tree hats were a characteristic feature of the dress of men in the Australian bush in the nineteenth century. First recorded in 1799, the hats were worn by convicts, shepherds, poets, explorers, larrikins and the well to do. They are described in the works of writers such as Henry Lawson and Mary Gilmore, and in numerous paintings and photographs of daily life on the goldfields and in the bush. Later in the nineteenth century, the larrikins of Sydney's Rocks area were also marked by their cabbage tree hats and known as the 'cabbage tree mob'.

Straw plaiting was a rural craft in Britain. It was taught to convicts awaiting transportation on the hulks, and it remained a prison craft in Australia throughout the nineteenth century. Straw plaiting was done by shepherds in the bush, who were often emancipated convicts. The craft was suited to occupations and circumstances where there was plenty of time and limited resources. By the second half of the nineteenth century the hats were made by men and women in many circumstances, from factories in Sydney and regional towns, to housewives and rural workers supplementing farm incomes. They were sold to drovers and other travellers along the main roads of NSW. Sometimes the plaits were sold separately to be later made into hats. Very fine cabbage tree hats were exhibited in numerous international exhibitions.

The cabbage palm, *Livistona australis*, is a distinctive feature of the Illawarra landscape. The palm figures in many nineteenth-century illustrations and travellers' descriptions of the region. Every part of the cabbage tree palm was exploited by early settlers for housing, food, furniture and hats. The reference to Aboriginal people gathering the palm 'hands' for

5. Analyse and describe the fabric and condition of the item

Like other cabbage tree hats, this example is made by first boiling and bleaching the palm leaves. They were then stripped into narrow widths using a variety of tools and blades; the width of the strip affects the fineness of the plait and the quality of the hat. The strips were then plaited together, this one with five strands. To make the hat, the plait was wound from the crown out, overlapping the plait beneath, and then sewn down to make the high crown and wide brim of this example. Additional blocking and steaming refines the shape. This example has a worked band of plait around the crown. It is lined and has the owner's name inside the crown with a leather thong for fastening under the chin.

6. Compare the item with similar items

There are about ten cabbage tree hats in museum and library collections in Australia. About half are provenanced to particular owners (for example, Marcus Clarke's hat in the State Library of Victoria), but this example is the best provenanced known at present, with specific and contextual history from the region. Comparison also highlights the quality of the straw plaiting. Other examples show the same type of band around the crown and a variety of shapes, from this style to boater types.

7. Identify related places and items

The cabbage palm, *Livistona australis*, is a much loved feature of the Illawarra escarpment and rainforest gullies. Stands of cabbage palms are still prominent landmarks in the Illawarra.

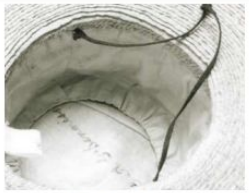
The Society has many items in its collection related to the Denniss and Hurry family homes. Also associated with the hat are three rolls of cabbage tree plait, possibly left over from making the hat.

8. Assess significance against the criteria

Primarily historically significant. The hat is both rare and representative of vernacular bush dress, in excellent condition and well provenanced. Its provenance means this example is a reference point for studying unprovenanced cabbage tree hats. It may also have some artistic value for the quality of its craftsmanship as a fine example of straw plaiting. The hat interprets a distinctive feature of the Illawarra environment.

9. Write a statement of significance

This cabbage tree hat is a fine well-provenanced example of a hat that was characteristic of bush dress in nineteenth-century Australia. Such hats are historically significant as the only distinctive item of Australian dress entirely made from Australian materials. The hats have a special place in the developing mythology of bush life, described by authors such as Henry Lawson. It is typical of such descriptions that one could not determine the wealth and status of the wearers under their battered and sun-darkened cabbage tree hats. The wearing of cabbage tree hats by convicts, shepherds, settlers, miners on the goldfields, explorers in the outback and larrikins in the inner city, highlights the egalitarian character of nineteenth-century men's vernacular dress in Australia. This cabbage tree hat and its history help tease out the relationship between Aboriginal people, settlers and the environment in the Illawarra. The hat exemplifies exploitation of local materials, and informal ways of supplementing incomes. Cabbage tree hats demonstrate the adaptation of traditional British skills to the raw materials available in the environment, driven by climatic needs. This example is significant for being provenanced to a particular locality, with the capacity to interpret the distinctive history and character of the region.



Detail showing the interior lining of the cabbage tree hat with the owner's name in ink
Reproduced courtesy of the Illawarra Historical Society, Wollongong

Kerry and Co., Sydney, Australia c. 1884–1917
Cabbage palms, Illawarra
Glass negative
Photo: Charles Kerry Studio
Reproduced courtesy of the Tyrrell Collection
Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

Boater style cabbage tree hat, c. 1860–1880
Photo: Andrew Frolows
Collection: Powerhouse Museum, Sydney
This style of cabbage tree hat is shown in sketches by the artists ST Gill and William Strutt

WHY ASSESS SIGNIFICANCE?

Assessing significance determines decisions regarding interpretation, conservation, and can provide well-reasoned arguments for declining a donation or deaccessioning an object.

- Allows better understanding and communication of an object's meaning
- Enhances access to and use of collections
- Ensures provenance and associations are fully recorded
- Provides a reference point for making conservation and collection management decisions

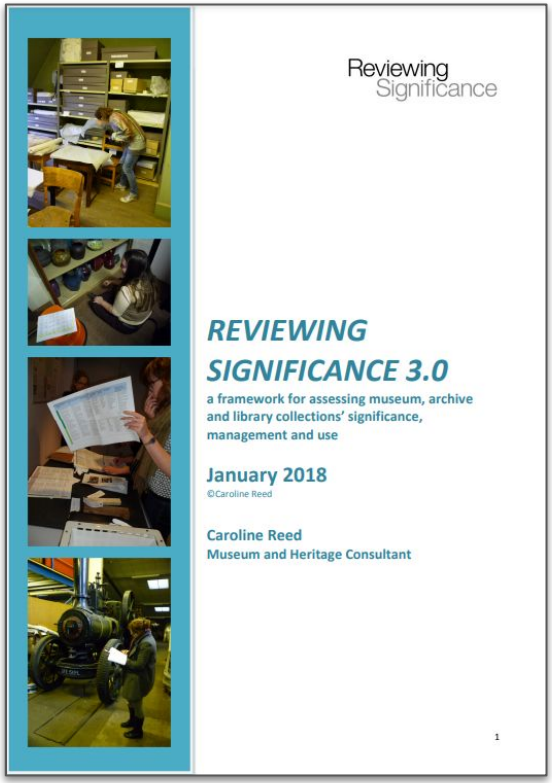
ACCESS, HANDLING, AND SIGNIFICANCE

We preserve and manage collections with a finite number of resources… SIGNIFICANCE helps us allocate resources and make difficult decisions when it comes to preservation goals.

> "Significance is a process that helps collecting organisations make **good decisions** about the sustainable development, care and management of their collections."
>
> *Significance 2.0 Guide to Assessing Significance* | Significance and Sustainable Collections, p 3

RESOURCES

Collections Council of Australia, *Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections* (2009)



UK Collections Trust, *Reviewing Significance 3.0* (2018)

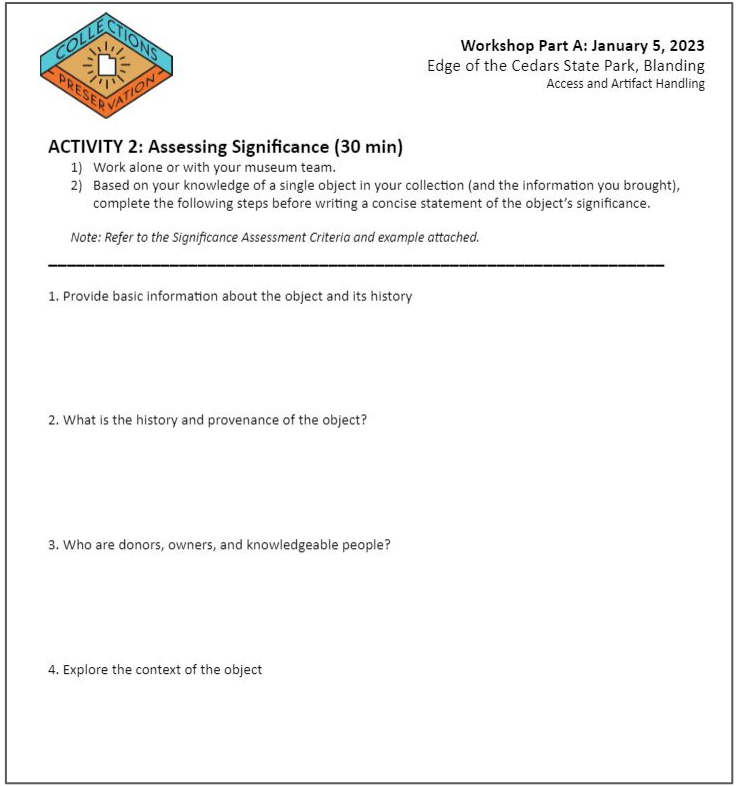
ACTIVITY 2:
Assessing Significance

1) Work alone or with your museum team.

2) Based on your knowledge of a single object in your collection (and the information you brought), complete the following steps before writing a concise statement of the object's significance.

(30 min)

Handout



Workshop Part A: January 5, 2023
Edge of the Cedars State Park, Blanding
Access and Artifact Handling

ACTIVITY 2: Assessing Significance (30 min)

1) Work alone or with your museum team.
2) Based on your knowledge of a single object in your collection (and the information you brought), complete the following steps before writing a concise statement of the object's significance.

Note: Refer to the Significance Assessment Criteria and example attached.

1. Provide basic information about the object and its history

2. What is the history and provenance of the object?

3. Who are donors, owners, and knowledgeable people?

4. Explore the context of the object

ACTIVITY 2: Assessing Significance Discussion

- What was easy or hard about this exercise?
- Were there any surprises?
- How does this work connect with the themes we've been discussing today >>> collections access and preservation?
- What strategies could you use to actually DO this type of work at your museum?

(20 min)

SUMMARY

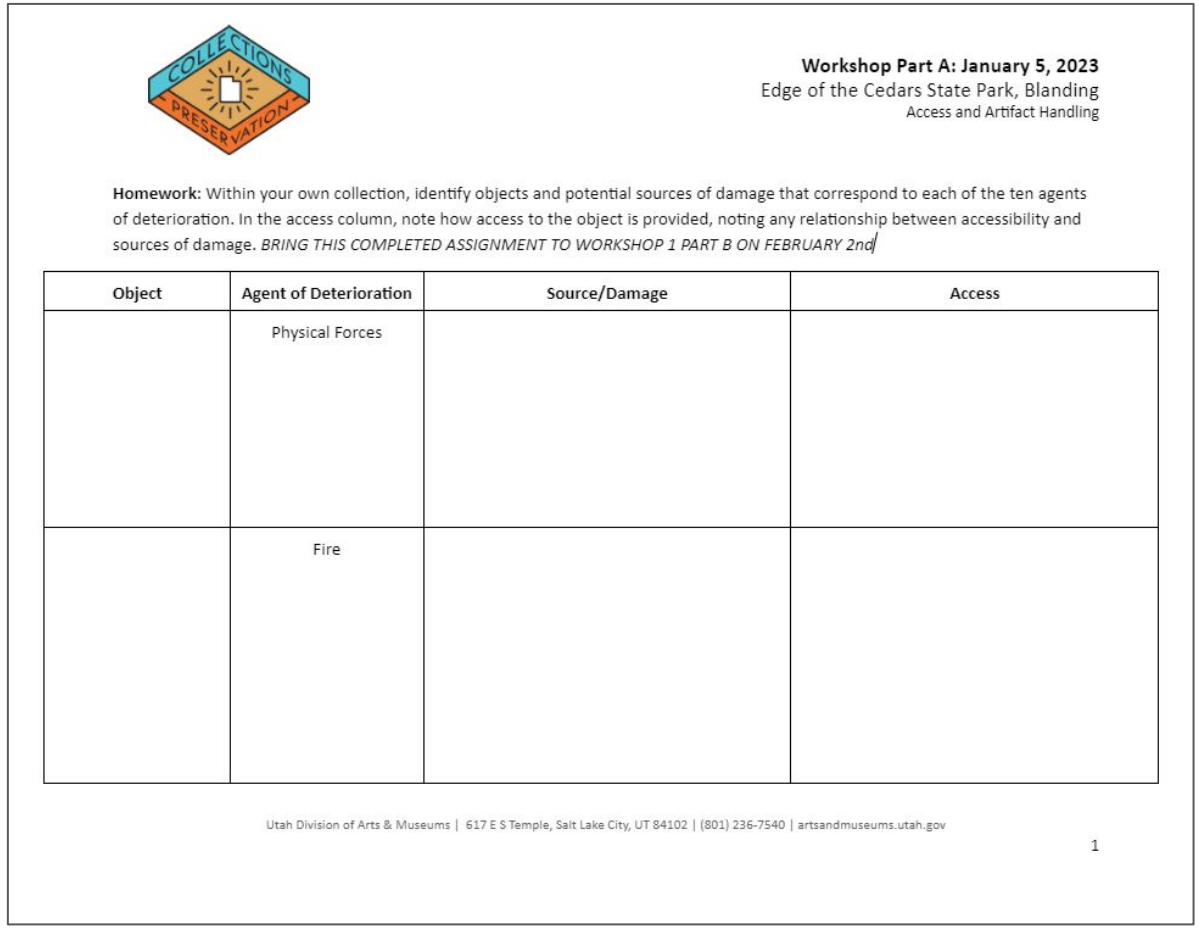
- Mission and Collections Policy guide preservation
- The ten agents of deterioration summarize environmental impacts on the collections we steward and seek to use and preserve
- Tension exists between collections access and preservation, and it is important for us to be intentional about our institution's balance
- Identifying and fully understanding the significance of our collections is a key step to planning and achieving preservation

Wrap-Up

- Reflections from the day
- Evaluation
- Homework

Homework

Handout



Workshop Part A: January 5, 2023
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Access and Artifact Handling

Homework: Within your own collection, identify objects and potential sources of damage that correspond to each of the ten agents of deterioration. In the access column, note how access to the object is provided, noting any relationship between accessibility and sources of damage. *BRING THIS COMPLETED ASSIGNMENT TO WORKSHOP 1 PART B ON FEBRUARY 2nd*

Object	Agent of Deterioration	Source/Damage	Access
	Physical Forces		
	Fire		

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Thank you!

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https://artsandmuseums.utah.gov/utah-collections-preservation/

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