



Handling Procedures Manual: Creating Training for Staff and Object Handling Culture Webinar 2

Marie Desrochers

Utah Division of Arts and Museums

February 17, 2022

11 am- 1 pm



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES



GOALS

Gain a better
understanding of Key
Themes...



Key Themes

1. Understand basics of object handling
2. Understand the tension of object handling and collections access
3. Understand creating training and policies for “How to handle” vulnerable objects in your collection

AGENDA

- Program Overview/Housekeeping
- Introductions
- Basics of Object Handling and Access
- What is a Handling Procedures Manual?
- Activity
- Discussion



INTRODUCTIONS

Please share the following:

Your name, where you work, and your role



Artifact Handling Training 101

Zoom Poll

What kind of collections does your institution steward?

Does your institution have object handling training?

Do you have a written handling policy?

Who takes collections handling training?



“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



Policies & Procedures

- Standards
- Framework for decision-making
- Delegate decision-making
- Define responsibility
- Not time-limited
- Approved by governing authority
- Instructions
- Operational guides, manuals, handbooks
- Developed at staff level



Western Australia Museum

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 - Delegate decision-making
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 - Not time-limited
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 - Operational guides, manuals, handbooks
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Western Australia Museum

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.”

ACCESS & HANDLING

If handling introduces risk, then how do we decide who gets to handle collection objects and how?



Western Australia Museum

BASICS OBJECT HANDLING

Any time we handle a collection object, we are introducing **RISK**



Ten Agents of Deterioration

Graphic by Centroid PM

HANDLING IS INTRODUCING RISK

- Minimize object handling whenever possible
- Access and Policies: consider who has handling access
- Handling creates opportunities for the impact of physical forces and dissociation
- Create storage that facilitates safe handling



Risk management is a system to forecast risks in advance and take proactive steps to deal with identified risks.



Ten Agents of Deterioration

Graphic by Centroid PM

Preventive Conservation is a system to forecast risks in advance and take proactive steps to deal with identified risks.



Ten Agents of Deterioration

Graphic by Centroid PM

OBJECT “TYPES”- Knowing what you have

CERAMIC

PAINTINGS

TEXTILES

STONE

PAPER

BONE

WOOD

LEATHER

PLASTIC

GLASS

PAPER

METAL





METAL



PLANT FIBER



CERAMIC



WOOD



TEXTILE



STONE



PHOTOGRAPH



CERAMIC

ONE ARTIFACT AT A TIME

- Use common sense and great care!
- Handle artifacts as infrequently as possible.
- Use carts, folders, and boxes to carry objects.
- Avoid stairs and take elevators when possible
- Use two hands and/or two people.



HAND PLACEMENT



HAND PLACEMENT

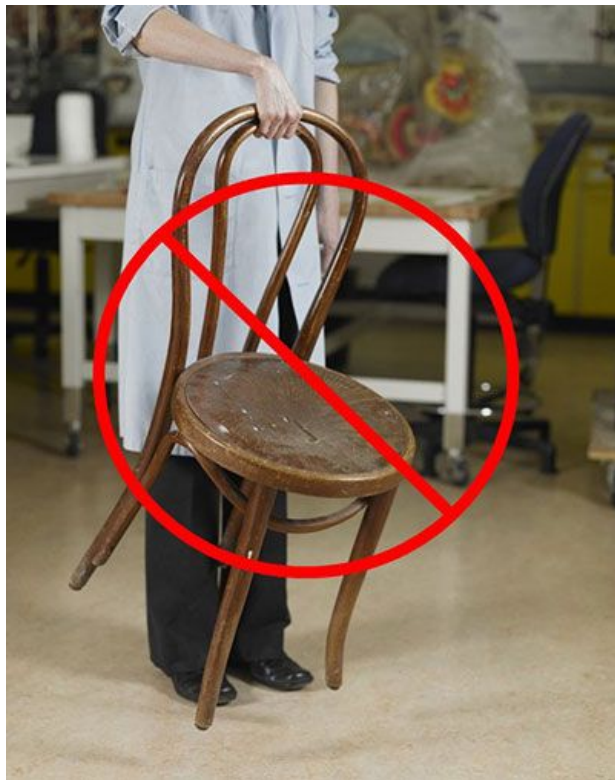


© Government of Canada, Canadian Conservation Institute.

HAND PLACEMENT



HAND PLACEMENT



UNDERSTAND YOUR OBJECT

Even brief visual condition assessments inform decisions about handling and moving objects. Understanding your object's sensitivities and composition is necessary. Take your time, and plan.

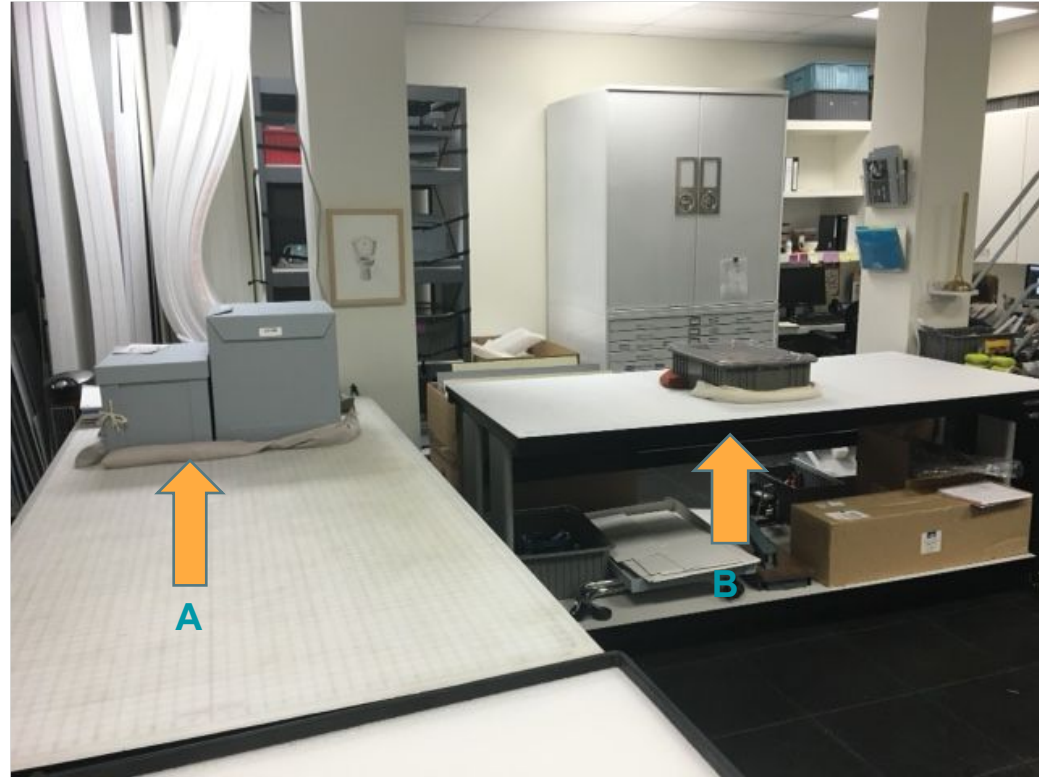


CCI 125773-0015
Figure 35. This treadle sewing machine table was lifted appropriately at the cast iron base with gloved hands.



WORKSPACE

- PLAN your move from point A to point B
- Landing space for objects
- Secure
- Clean and organized
- Padding/containers for objects
- Spacious
- Object snakes/weights/supports



BREAK (5 Minutes)



WHY MAKE AND USE A HANDLING MANUAL

1. Policies set standards for your institution, and help you enforce them
2. Training creates a positive path to minimize improper handling of objects, promoting preservation
3. It creates a culture of transparency and shared responsibility for direct collections care
4. Encourages thoughtful consideration of object use to promote preservation



A HANDLING MANUAL SHOULD ADDRESS

1. Who is allowed to handle collections in your museum?
 - a. Is supervision required?
 - b. Is training required?
2. How should your collections be handled?
 - a. Glove vs. clean hands policies
 - b. Workspace requirements
3. Object and Human Safety
4. Re-training



EXAMPLES OF EXISTING GUIDES



Winterthur Museum, Care in Handling, Chapter 1, Objects

8,504 views • Oct 30, 2013

👍 30 👎 DISLIKE ➦ SHARE ≡+ SAVE ...

[Winterthur Museum,
Garden & Library](#)



Winterthur Museum, Care in
Handling, Chapter 2, Textiles
Kathan L
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Winterthur Museum, Care in
Handling General Session,...
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Winterthur Museum, Care in
Handling, Chapter 5, Paintings
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Relaxing Jazz Music -
Background Chill Out Music -...

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EXAMPLES OF EXISTING GUIDES



YouTube video player interface showing a video titled "Handling Objects" by Western Australia Museum. The video content shows a man in a blue shirt standing in a museum storage room, gesturing towards a table with various objects. A subtitle reads: "consider the safest orientation to prevent the item from toppling or". The video player includes standard controls (play, pause, volume, progress bar) and engagement metrics (118 likes, 7,866 views, Jun 30, 2017). The video player interface also shows the search bar with "museum object handling" and the YouTube logo.


[Western Australia Museum](https://www.wa.gov.au/government/department-of-cultural-heritage)

EXAMPLES OF EXISTING GUIDES

[Museum of London](#)

e-learning / Handling Museum Objects /

SECTION 1



Introduction (5 of 8)

What equipment will I need?


When handling museum objects, you will need a range of equipment to protect yourself and the object.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)


You should always wear the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). For almost all objects, this will include:

- ▶ Gloves (as discussed previously)
- ▶ A lab coat or protective apron

For objects that are particularly dusty or dirty – or stored in a dusty or dirty environment – you may also want to wear a dust mask, which will protect you from inhaling dust and mould. Dust masks come in a range of styles, from basic mouth covers to those with filters. For most museum objects, a basic dust mask will be all the protection you will need.



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Handling heritage objects

Janet Mason

Handling heritage objects is part of CCI's [Preventive conservation guidelines for collections](#) online resource. This section presents key preventive conservation considerations for safe handling practices with regards to heritage collections.

Table of contents

- [Handling: key considerations](#)
 - [Handling: risks to heritage objects](#)
 - [Physical forces](#)
 - [Contaminants](#)
 - [Handling: risks to handler](#)
- [Strategies for safe handling of objects](#)
 - [Prior to handling](#)
 - [Understand the object](#)
 - [Clear the way](#)

[Canadian Conservation Institute](#)

EXAMPLES OF EXISTING GUIDES



Exhibits and Design

Object Handling Procedure

Proper object handling and careful movement of objects is an integral part of preventive conservation. When you move objects you increase the risk of damage and loss because you are both handling them and changing their location. **Moving puts an object at its greatest risk.**

Before you move objects within the museum for dusting, cleaning, or any other purpose, know and follow the procedures in order to help reduce the risk of damage to you and the object. Plan before handling or moving any museum objects. Think through your plan so that you lift and move objects properly. With advanced planning, you can keep movement of objects to a minimum. **The less museum objects are handled, the longer they will survive.**

A. Basic Handling Practices

When you handle objects, act safely, conservatively and carefully for you and the object. Follow these basic standards to prevent damage to objects:

1. Handle objects only when necessary.
 - Treat every museum object as if it was irreplaceable and the most valuable piece in the collection.
 - Never hurry.
 - Take no risks.
2. Prepare to move objects safely.
 - Keep hands clean, even when wearing gloves.
 - Wear appropriate gloves to protect objects from contaminants such as dirt, salts, acids, and oils on your hands. Beware of fabric gloves catching on ruff surfaces.
 - Avoid wearing anything that might damage objects by scratching or snagging the surface (for example, rings and other jewelry, watches, belt buckles, nametags, service badges).
3. Create a good environment and use appropriate tools.
 - Allow yourself plenty of space in which to work.

[University of Alaska:
Museum of the North](#)



EXAMPLES OF EXISTING GUIDES

[National Museums
Scotland](#)

National Museums Scotland Object Handling Guidelines

Collections Management; April 2007



EXAMPLES OF EXISTING GUIDES



Handling Museum Objects

[Museums and Galleries of New South Wales](#)

Preventive conservation starts with careful handling.

Proper handling is a matter of common sense and relies on understanding the weak areas on an object and thinking through all the risks associated with lifting and moving an object. With careful thought and preparation and a respectful attitude objects, accidents and damage can be avoided.

Objects handling guidelines should be included in procedures manuals and used to train all paid staff and volunteers when they start working at the museum.

General Rules

- Ensure that people who will handle objects are properly trained
- Only handle a museum object when necessary
- Stop and think before handling an object. Where are the structural weak points?
- Plan the route and clear the passage before moving an object
- Prepare the space the object is being moved to before handling the object
- Do not hurry
- Use both hands to support the object
- Do not wear dangling jewellery or loose sleeves

- Top or crest rail of a chair
- Soft/powdery surfaces
- Loose components such as drawers, lids, doors, etc.
- Unwieldy shapes
- Large, floppy items
- Heavy items
- Brittle paper
- Ornate or gilded frames
- Paintings which do not have backing boards
- Unframed paintings
- Metal surfaces which are sensitive to tarnishing
- Sensitive surfaces such as photographs
- Gooeey/sticky areas
- Lifting/buckling veneers
- Heavy items attached to lightweight items (such as heavy beads on a fine silk piece)



- A. General Practices
- B. Guidelines for Areas of Vulnerability
- C. Glove Policy
- D. Equipment/Materials
- E. Planning a Move or Handling
- F. Damage
- G. Personal Safety Guidelines
- H. Waiver



Handout



Object Handling Guide Template

Utah Collections Preservation Program
2/17/2022

Institution:

Who:

Required training:

Re-training required every:

A. General Practices:

B. Guidelines for Areas of Vulnerability:

A. General Practices

- Ensure that people who will handle objects are properly trained
- Only handle a museum object when necessary
- Stop and think before handling an object. Where are the structural weak points?
- Plan the route and clear the passage before moving an object
- Prepare the space the object is being moved to before handling the object
- Do not hurry
- Use both hands to support the object
- Do not wear dangling jewellery or loose sleeves
- Make sure hands are clean and wear fitted gloves



B. Guidelines for Areas of Vulnerability



Know your object and its existing condition issues before handling. Understand its sensitivities and areas where breakage is likely to occur



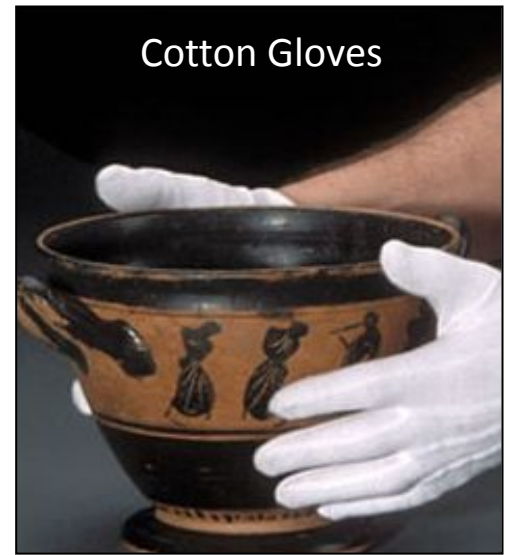
C. Glove Policy

GLOVES (NITRILE GLOVES)

- Photographs
- Gilded Frames
- Textiles (can be cotton)
- When in doubt, wear nitrile gloves!!

NO GLOVES (CLEAN HANDS)

- Paper



Nitrile gloves (left) are preferable to cotton gloves (above). Cotton gloves absorb oils from hands, decrease dexterity and can snag or tear paper.

Nitrile gloves are essential to collections care!!!

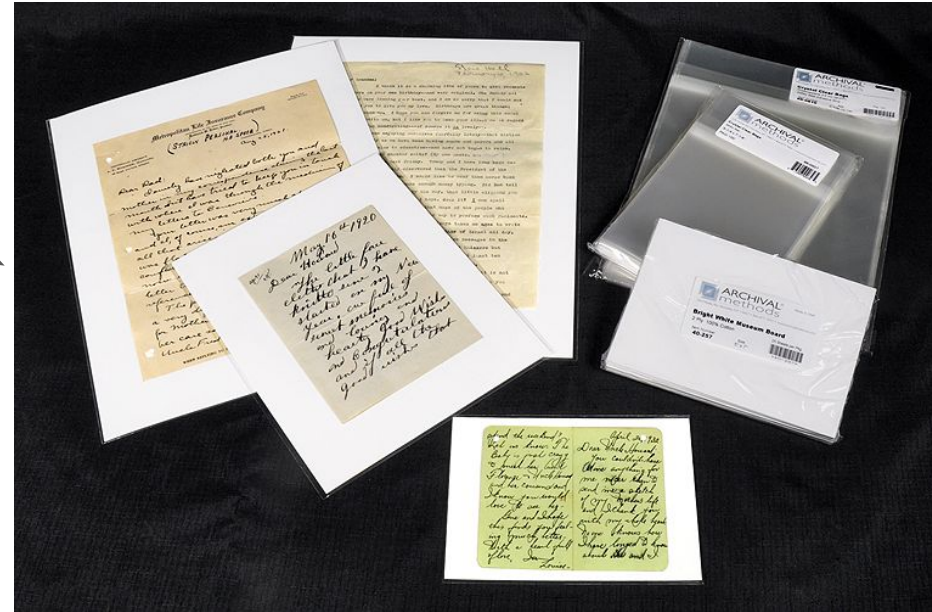
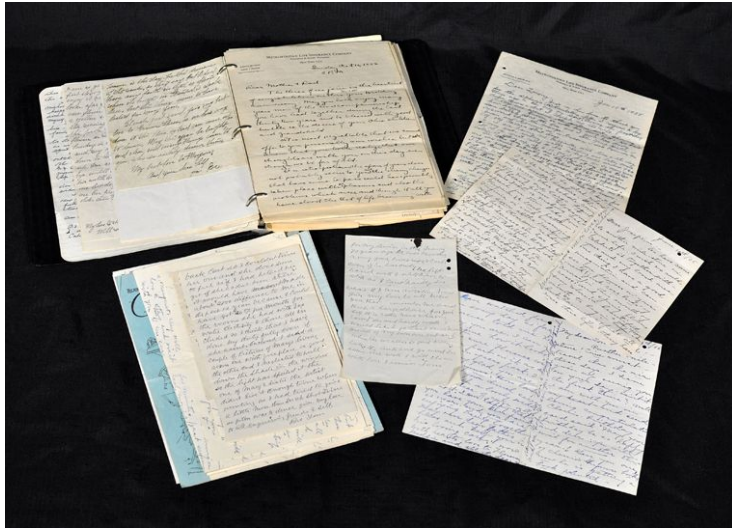
C. Glove Policy- Keep it simple

GLOVES (NITRILE GLOVES) ~~NO GLOVES (CLEAN HANDS)~~

- When in doubt, wear nitrile gloves!!



D. Equipment/Materials



Handling boards and mats such as these make handling fragile manuscripts much safer

[Archival Methods Blog](#)

E. Planning a Move or Handling



Who do you need to help you? What tools do you need?
Where are you going each step of the way?



F. Damage



Some objects, such as this deteriorated plastic, will become damaged with even the most careful handling

[New York Times](#)

G. Personal Safety Guidelines



[The Field Museum](#)



Objects themselves commonly have toxic residues such as arsenic or other chemical pesticides



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Conservation Institute. CCI 125773-0005

G. Personal Safety Guidelines

Potential Collections Hazards

- Pesticides
- Firearms and explosives
- Biological disease
- Mold
- Asbestos
- Radioactive materials
- Toxic chemicals or elements



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H. Waiver



H. Waiver:

I, _____, have completed all necessary handling training and agree to adhere to the guidelines listed above. I understand that object handling is a privilege, and my inability to adhere to the guidelines above may cause my handling privileges to be revoked. I will participate in annual object handling retraining on _____.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Collections Supervisor: _____

Date: _____

H. Waiver

Training completed

Handling Privilege

Retraining schedule

Signature

Supervisor



H. Waiver:

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Signature: _____

Date: _____

Collections Supervisor: _____

Date: _____

Who is allowed to handle collections in your museum?

The public

**School
groups**

**Family and
friends**

Tribal representatives

**Education
staff**

Donors

Researchers

**Facilities
staff**

Volunteers

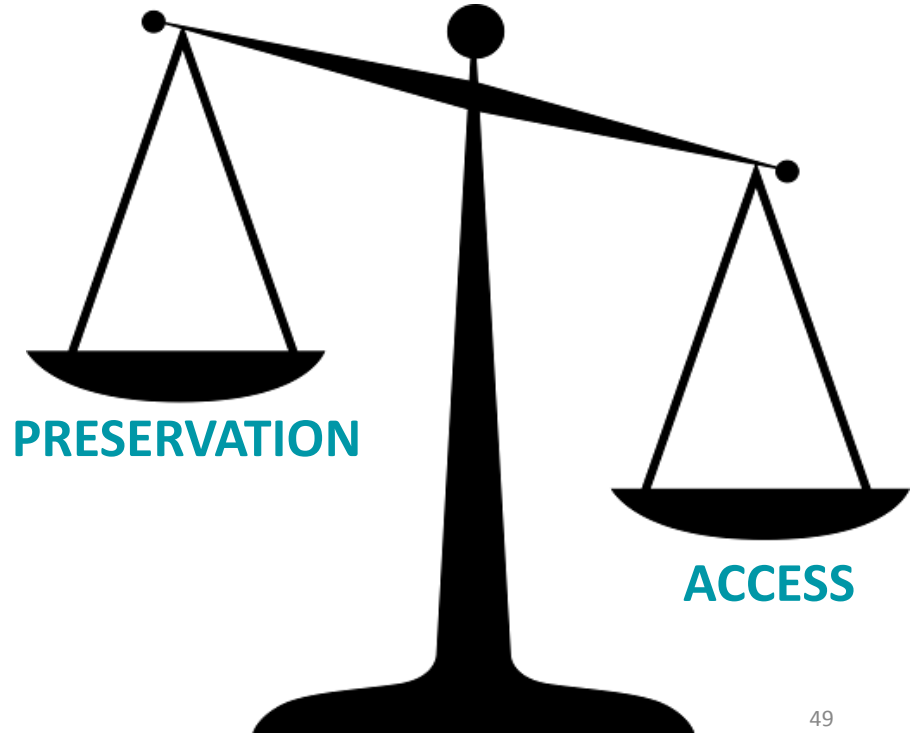
**Government
representatives**

**Janitorial
staff**

Curators



Who is allowed to handle collections in your museum?



ACTIVITY

In a breakout room: Beyond the template what else do you feel needs to be included in a collections handling manual? What is missing?



Summary & Discussion

- Object Handling Training and written policies can be powerful tools for preservation
- A written Handling Manual establishes and helps enforce standards for handling
- Decisions about who gets handling privileges is risk management and requires careful consideration of mission and access at your institution



Thank you!

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

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