



Collections  
Care & Conservation  
Alliance

## ***Looking For Help in All the Right Places?***

### ***Budget Friendly Tips for Collections Care***

NH Archives Group – Spring Workshop – Back to Basics

Portsmouth Public Library, Portsmouth, NH

May 16, 2024

## **SELECT COLLECTION STORAGE/CARE RESOURCES**

### **◆Re-org Storage Resources**

<https://www.iccrom.org/section/preventive-conservation/re-org>

A step by step method for planning and implementing a storage reorganization project

Found within the resources of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property. To help you find your way, it's a bit hidden (as of this compilation in October 2021):

Follow to Preventive-Conservation (located under Themes tab)

Click on Re-Org choice select Resources at the end of the toolbar

Links listed: Methods, the Re-org leaflet, case studies, the toolkit, articles etc.

Collections Storage Tips and Tricks found under Toolkit

You'll be directed to the amazing images held on tumblr. Enjoy!

### **◆Storage Techniques for Art, Science & History Collections (STASH)**

<https://stashc.com/>

This website provides information and tools so that institutions of all types, sizes and resource levels can learn how to create safe and appropriate storage solutions. These solutions were written by and for collection care professionals in all fields. In some cases there are multiple examples to demonstrate that there is no single best solution for storage, it is about meeting the needs for your collection, in your space with your resources.

## ◆American Institute for Conservation

<https://www.culturalheritage.org/>

The American Institute for Conservation and the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation, offers a resource- **Connecting to Collections Care (C2C Care)** - offering free webinars with on demand access (see below)

## ◆Conservation OnLine (CoOL)-

<https://cool.culturalheritage.org/>

Full text library of museum collections and conservation information; archived searchable listserv

## ◆Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC)

<https://www.nedcc.org/>

Preservation Leaflets & Storage and Handling

## ◆Conservation and Art Materials Encyclopedia Online (CAMEO)

[http://cameo.mfa.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://cameo.mfa.org/wiki/Main_Page)

A database that compiles, defines, and disseminates technical information on the distinct collection of terms, materials, and techniques used in the fields of art conservation and historic preservation. First developed as a materials database in 1997 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston it has expanded with the cooperation of multiple institutions to include several reference collections

## ◆Connecting to Collections Care

<https://connectingtocollections.org/>

Connecting to Collections Care provides resources, professional development opportunities, and support for caring for collections to all types of small to mid-sized cultural institutions. Here, you'll find:

- Free webinars – Explore [Upcoming Webinars](#) or search recordings from over 175 previous webinars in our [Webinar Archives](#).
- [Courses](#), and a [Course Archive](#), that provide a more in-depth look at collections care topics
- A moderated discussion [Community](#) where conservation professionals provide answers to your queries.
- Links to almost 1,000 [Resources](#) chosen for their application to institutions that have limited resources for the care of their collections

Connecting to Collections Care is a program of the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation.

## ◆Sustaining Places

<https://sustainingplaces.com/>

A collaborative resource project from the Museum Studies Program at the University of Delaware. Between 2011 and 2015, the site was supported by a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services 21st Century Museum Professionals Program; it is now maintained by the graduate students of the Museum Studies Program.

Sustaining Places gathers together in one website a wide variety of resources for people involved with small historical organizations: local history museums and archives, historic house museums, historic sites and living history museums. These resources are free.

## ◆Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/conservation-preservation-publications/canadian-conservation-institute-notes.html>

CCI Notes deal with topics of interest to those who care for cultural objects. Intended for a broad audience, the Notes offer practical advice about issues and questions related to the care, handling and storage of cultural objects. Many Notes are illustrated and provide bibliographies as well as suggestions for contacting suppliers. There are currently over 100 Notes in this ever-expanding series written by CCI staff members.

For example: [CCI Notes 13/3 Rolled Storage for Textiles](#)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/conservation-preservation-publications/canadian-conservation-institute-notes/rolled-storage-textiles.html>

## ◆National Park Service Conserve O Gram series

[https://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/consveogram/cons\\_toc.html](https://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/consveogram/cons_toc.html)

What are Conserve O Grams?

They are short, focused leaflets about caring for museum objects, published in loose-leaf format. New topics are added as needed and out-of-date issues are revised or deleted. Semiannual supplements will be issued for an indeterminate period.

For example: [Conserve-O-Gram 13/2 How to Flatten Folded or Rolled Paper Documents](#)

<https://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/consveogram/13-02.pdf>

## **HOW TO'S**

<https://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Weights>

<https://www.conservation-wiki.com/w/images/a/af/>

[Instructions\\_for\\_Making\\_Weight\\_Bags\\_for\\_Special\\_Collections\\_Reading\\_Room.pdf](#)

## **REFERENCES**

Kipp, Angela: *Managing Previously Unmanaged Collections: A Practical Guide for Museums*

Simmons, John E.: *Things Great and Small: Collections Management Policies.*

Williams, Don and Louisa Jaggar: *Saving Stuff: How to Care for and Preserve Your Collections, Heirlooms and Other Priced Possessions*

## **SUPPLIES** (Also consider group purchasing with colleagues for discounts)

Archivart <https://nielsenbainbridgegroup.com/nielsen-bainbridge/archivart/>

Gaylord <https://www.gaylord.com/>

Hollinger Metal Edge <https://www.hollingermetaledge.com/>

Talas <https://www.talasonline.com/>

University Products <https://www.universityproducts.com/>

## **SUGGESTED SOURCES FOR PURCHASING LOW COST/NO COST SUPPLIES**

(Ask for discounts, dented, damaged inventory where appropriate)

- Thrift stores- consignment shops-charity stores (Salvation Army, Good Will etc.)
- Building supply businesses- local lumber yards, big box stores – ask for dented
- Office supply stores
- Local hardware stores, lumber yards
- Discount craft/fabric stores
- Rug shops/home good stores
- Discount Stores Dollar stores/Dollar General /Ocean State Job Lot
- Local auctions, Tag sales, estate sales, charity auctions
- Retail shops/other businesses upgrading/closing
- Schools and businesses renovating
- Local transfer station (dump/landfill) – metal collections, household goods
- Local/Area Fire Departments – fund raising auctions
- Craigslist/Facebook Marketplace, other online social media platforms

- Community at large – colleagues, local builders/carpenters, contractors; auxiliary groups
- Hotels (sheets, bedding), Restaurants (food carts, food trays)
- Local camera shop – used equipment
- Local frame shop- remnant plexi, acid free mat board, foam core; frame assistance
- Used office furniture/household furniture stores
- Other colleagues

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING TIES TO YOUR COMMUNITY**

Develop a wish list of things you need/want – post on your website, social media, in your e-newsletter, in community paper. Be creative in how you advertise –

EX: Monadnock Humane Society, Swanzey, NH – ornamented holiday tree in lobby- each ornament identifies a need of supplies, equipment etc.

Develop relationships with your chambers of commerce, United Way and other nonprofit like organizations, small business organizations so that when a business is closing, upgrading equipment, moving etc and someone knows of your wish list, they can put you in touch.

### COLOFON

Handout originally offered courtesy of the Collections Care & Conservation Alliance board members: Darlene Bialowski, Erica Donnis and Michele Pagan for the Vermont League of Local Historical Societies and Museums conference, Montpelier, 2021 session, *Collections Care – MacGyver Style*. This is an updated version and was distributed March 28, 2024 to attendees of the Collections Care & Conservation Alliance virtual version of Collections Care –MacGyver Style, Vermont League of Local Historical Societies and Museums and now available for you!

Visit the CCCA at <https://collectionscarealliance.org/> and learn more about our work, events and membership. Subscribe to our mailing list for periodic mailings right to your Inbox!



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#### STORAGE SOLUTIONS FOR TEXTILES

##### Low-cost barrier layer for non-conservation grade storage shelves and boxes

In many cases, low cost storage racks and cupboards consist of non-conservation grade materials, such as medium or high density fibre board (MDF/HDF), laminated particle board, OSB, or wood with high resin or tannin levels. Artifacts that are made of organic materials, such as textiles, should not be in direct contact with any of these materials. A solution could be to line the shelves with an aluminum barrier layer as aluminum is inert and will not interact with anything that is placed on top.

A low cost method for the application of an aluminum barrier layer is described by the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI):

<https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/conservation-preservation-publications/canadian-conservation-institute-notes/low-cost-barrier-foil.html>

Please be aware that this method is not for the faint-hearted - however if done right it is an effective solution that does not require an enormous investment.

##### Adapting various types of cloth hangers for hanging storage

Simple cloth hangers can be padded to use for hanging textile garments (preferably in dust covers), information provided by the CCI:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/conservation-preservation-publications/canadian-conservation-institute-notes/hanging-storage-costumes.html>

And notes on how to make dust covers for hanging garments:

<https://4h.okstate.edu/projects/design-and-construction/site-files/files/curriculum-and-patterns/textiles/textiles-dust-covers.pdf>

##### Solutions for storing textiles on rolls:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/conservation-preservation-publications/canadian-conservation-institute-notes/rolled-storage-textiles.html>



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#### BASIC DUST REMOVAL

Dust removal can be required as part of a collections care or house keeping procedure, or a general cleaning schedule. There is a difference with regular cleaning however. For historic surfaces and objects it is advisable to test the methods, materials, and tools, prior to starting with dust removal. This way one can ascertain themselves that the chosen method is still safe for the object and the collections carer.

A dust removal treatment can be considered an intervention and should be documented and recorded accordingly.

It is advisable to record cleaning tests and observations to clarify the chosen method and to help future colleagues. This will provide a better understanding of what the object has been exposed to in the past. Documentation of dust removal tests do not need to be overly extensive or difficult. We provide a template that can be used or modified for your own use, to be added to the object's records.



*Why should dust be removed?*

Hygroscopic (attracts and holds moisture)

Inhibits the readability of the surface (forms a gray-filter)

Accelerates bio-deterioration

Surface preservation problems are less visible

*Different types of dust: superficial vs ingrained vs patina*



Dirt, dust, and patina are words that are sometimes misunderstood or used interchangeably. Dirt and dust can lie on the surface or even hover over the surface by static force, but it can also be well attached when an object is made from a textured or porous material. In all cases, dust and dirt should be removed as long as the chosen method and techniques are safe for the object. 'Patina' can consist of dirt however it implies an acquired layer that is part of the history of the object and should not be removed.



Above left to right: superficial dirt, ingrained dirt, patina

### *Dust*

Fine-grain, dry particles of inorganic and organic matter that are suspended in the air and are carried great distances by air currents. Dust deposits on horizontal surfaces and may be attracted or repelled by electrical charges. Dust can contain soot, dirt, silica, pollutants, animal and vegetable fibers, skin and hair debris, pollen, bacteria, and mold. (Definition taken from:

### *Dirt*

An undesirable, foreign matter

### *Ingrained dirt*

Ingrained dirt has existed for a long time and is therefore more attached to the surface than superficial dirt.

### *Patina*

A thin, acquired change of a surface through age and exposure. It is sometimes difficult to understand where the dust and dirt ends and where the patina begins. It is therefore advisable to start conservatively with dust removal as more can always be removed but once it is gone, it is gone forever.





### Setting up your workspace

1 prepare the table with a soft layer,, such as bubble wrap (smooth side up).

2 a layer of a conservation grade material with a white color, such as Tyvek, smooth side up (pictured here), unbuffered paper tissue (smooth side up), rayon paper, conservation grade polyester non-woven (smooth side up), or Mylar if that is the only material on hand.

3 wear gloves (unless handling flat paper or books with a non-toxic cloth cover) and a dust mask

**NB** provide sufficient support for objects with an irregular underside, and those that are taller than wide.

### Handling the object

Move the object to the workspace either in a tray or box, or (better) on a trolley. Avoid carrying the object by hand to the workspace as that is unnecessary handling and potentially harmful as the handler can trip or not see obstacles. Make yourself familiar with handling guidelines for specific type of objects.

Wear nitrile gloves for all objects and surfaces, unless handling flat paper. This is for the safety of the handler as well as the object.

Gloves should be tight fitting and should not be too thick as that will make it more difficult to feel the surface. Cloth or jersey gloves ('white gloves') are not suitable in this context.

Gloves can be re-used, unless an object that might have, or certainly consists of a toxic material.

Gloves can also be simply cleaned by washing your hands while wearing gloves, after which they can be taken off to air dry.

### *Ultra-low cost alternatives*

If Tyvek or Melinex is not available, the second best would be to use paper tissue (smooth side up) on top of the bubble wrap. If no conservation grade materials are available, then regular parchment paper or aluminum foil from the baking section of the supermarket can be used - preferably only with objects that have a flat underside, no fragile or friable surface, and do not contain any organic materials (such as glass or ceramic objects).

The reasoning behind this is that historic artifacts should not be in contact with materials that can have an impact (physically or chemically) on the object. 'Conservation grade' materials such as Tyvek and Mylar are tested for specific use with historic surfaces, and their impact and behavior over time is known. Conservation grade materials are chemically stable or inert, which implies that contact with these materials should have a limited effect on historic surfaces.

### *Tools to consider for basic dust removal*

**Soft brushes** of various sizes (to be found at artist's materials shops, or consider blusher brushes from the cosmetics section at the drugstore)

A regular **vacuum cleaner** preferably with several power settings can be used, but never directly on an artifact or historic surface. Prepare the nozzle with a piece of muslin or similar, attached with a rubber band. The dust can be moved up to the nozzle with a soft brush.

**Air blowers**, either manual or electric, can also be useful for removing dust from a surface, particularly in difficult locations in historic interiors. Be aware that this is not a controlled action, and anything that is blown away is lost - so not to be recommended for friable surfaces, damaged edges or flaking particles. Manual air blowers are generally used for cleaning camera lenses. Electronic air blowers are in general used for cleaning small electronic devices - try to find one with a stepless power setting.

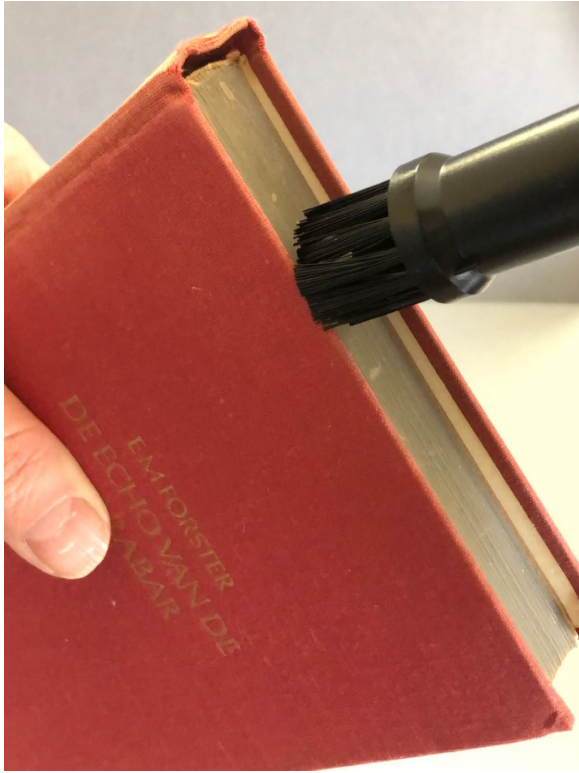
**Modified round brushes**: cutting the hairs or fibers shorter makes the brush stiffer and suitable for removing clots of dirt. Make certain that this is appropriate for the surface underneath.

**Microfiber cloth**: fuzzy for removing superficial dust, smooth microfiber cloth for glass or ceramic surfaces.

**Bamboo skewers**: can be used to remove larger clumps of dirt that can be in the hollows of stone or ceramic objects. The end of a skewer can be frayed out with a Exacto knife or scalpel.

**Dry Cleaning Sponges**, or **Soot Sponges** are made of vulcanized rubber and contain numerous tiny air pockets that can 'grip' small particles from a surface. They are tested for use on historic objects if bought from a conservation supplier, however they can also be found at general online stores. They come in brick size and can be cut down (is recommended).

**Cosmetic sponges**, or make-up sponges function similarly to dry cleaning sponges and are more readily available as they can be found at supermarkets and drug stores. These are not tested for use in conservation and can sometimes contain a cream or lotion, so finding the right ones for your intended use can be a matter of trying out.



*Dust removal from books*

Clean hands (no gloves) unless there is a suspicion of a toxic book cover

Use vacuum cleaner brush, only for books in pristine condition

Work in one direction, from spine to edge



*Dust removal from multimedia book covers*

Clean hands (no gloves) unless there is a suspicion of toxic materials

Be aware of friable or flaking areas

Use a soft brush and/or a dry cleaning sponge



### *Dust removal flat paper*

Clean hands (no gloves) unless there is a suspicion of toxic materials - for example wallpaper

Be aware of friable areas, flaking paint, loose pigments (pastel drawings) and iron gall ink

Use a soft brush and/or a dry cleaning sponge



### *Dust removal framed prints & drawings*

Wear gloves!

Check the glass and frame on breakages and detached areas

**Glass:**  
smooth microfiber cloth, dry. If you need to use a wet microfiber cloth, wet the cloth and do not spray the glass

**Frame:**  
fuzzy microfiber cloth, or soft brush + vacuum cleaner with muslin over the nozzle





*Dust removal from paintings*

Wear gloves!

Leave the painting on the wall, particularly if oversized

Check the frame on detached areas

Only remove dust from the frame: fuzzy microfiber cloth, or soft brush + vacuum cleaner with muslin over the nozzle