



**COLLECTION MANAGERS COMMITTEE**

## **FALL 1992 NEWSLETTER**

The Fall workshop is planned for October 24th at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The topic will be "To Have and to (Be)Hold: A Collections Care Seminar." This workshop is the second in a series of four workshops on collections management planned for 1992-93.

Speakers will be Steve Pine, Decorative Arts Conservator, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Mary Ellyn Voden, Director of Education at the Children's Museum of Houston and Bill Griggs, President, Southwest Museum Services. Look for the registration form at the back of the newsletter, and make plans to attend.

### **News and Business**

The TAM Disaster Assistance Network Committee received an IMS grant in the amount of \$16,330 and a \$5000 pledge from the Chubb Group of Insurance Companies to produce a Disaster Preparedness/Recovery Resource Manual. The money will also fund a two-day videoconference workshop in the Fall of 1993 that will link five regions of Texas enabling people to attend the workshop in their own region.

The TAM Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for officers and Councillors-at-Large. Prospective candidates will be expected to attend quarterly Council meetings during the two-year term of office as well as

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participate actively in committee work. To be eligible for election, candidates must be individual members of TAM. To recommend someone for nomination, please call Susan Harwell, Chair of the Nominating Committee, at 512-826-6701, or send the name and a brief resume to the TAM Nominating Committee, P.O. Box 13353, Austin, Tx 78711 by October 15.

Bob Childs, Head Conservator with the National Museum of Wales, will be touring Texas Museums from October 9 through October 21. for more information, contact Sally Shelton with the Texas Memorial Museum, 512-471-4515.

## Fall Calendar

- October 12** The Southeast Texas Museums Association Fall workshop in Huntsville, Tx will discuss disaster preparedness and developing regional resources. Contact: Carolyn Spears, Stone Fort Museum, 409-568-2408.
- October 9** Conservation Assessment Program grant applications will be mailed. This is a first-come, first-serve grant and your institution must be on the mailing list to receive an application packet. Contact: National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property, 3299 K Street, N.W., Suite 403, Washington, D.C. 20007, 202-625-1495.
- October 15** Applications due to Division of Research Programs. National Endowment for the Humanities, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506, 202-682-5442.
- October 16** Conservation Project Support grants due. Institute of Museum Services, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506, 202-786-0536.
- October 29-31** The Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference in Buffalo, New York. Contact: MARAC, c/o WNYLRC, 180 Oak St., Buffalo, NY 14203-1694.
- October 30** Deadline for Museum Assessment Program I grants. American Association of Museums, 1225 Eye Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, 202-289-1818.
- November 1** Application deadline for National Heritage Preservation grants. Contact: Office of Preservation, Room 802, NEH, 202-786-0570.
- November 9** Deadline for Special Exhibition grants from NEH. Address above.
- December 1** Deadline for applications to Texas Commission on the Arts, P.O. box 13406, Austin, Tx 78711, 512-463-5535.
- December 4** Deadline for Conservation Assessment Program grants. See information on October 9 entry.
- December 4** Deadline for application to the Humanities Projects in Museums and Historical Organizations. National Endowment for the Humanities address above.
- January 15, 1993** Application deadline to Texas Committee for the Humanities Mini-grant program for projects beginning after May 1, 1993. TCH, Banister Place A, 3809 South Second Street, Austin, Tx 78704, 512-440-1991.
- January 29** Applications due to MAP II. Contact: AAM at the above address.
- February 26** Applications due to MAP III. Contact: AAM at the above address.



## **Review of the Conservation Workshop February 22, 1992**

by Ali Turley  
Curatorial Assistant  
State Preservation Board

As a new member of both the Texas Association of Museums and the Collection Manager's Committee, I was excited to attend my first workshop. The Institute of Texan Cultures hosted this conservation workshop which offered a full day of informative discussions for novice and professional collection managers.

Private conservator Esther Siegfried of San Antonio began the day with a session on art collections. She asserted that the best advice she can give is to examine a paintings collection thoroughly on a regular basis. Using normal light and a magnifying glass, the front and back of the canvas should be checked for cracks, abrasions, mildew and pests. The canvas should be securely pulled over the stretcher frame. The hanging mechanism should have no sharp or protruding wires. If any damage is found or if the piece is not structurally sound, it should be placed inside a large plastic bag and taken to a professional conservator. The bag will protect the piece and catch and flecks of paint as necessary.

Since many of the workshop participants rarely can afford the services of a professional conservator, Esther urged preventive maintenance. By carefully monitoring the surrounding environment, it can be protected with a little common sense. She said that the safest and most stable environment is 65 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit and 30% to 50% relative humidity depending upon the object. Display and storage of objects must also be controlled. for example, heating and air conditioning ducts, direct sunlight, and fumigation can cause drastic damage to nearby artwork.

Not all environmental conditions can be controlled. Disasters such as fire, flood and vandalism are a reality for many collection managers. The priority is to stabilize the piece until a professional conservator is available. Waterlogged pieces should be blotted dry, not rubbed. Do no force the drying process with fans.

Esther concluded by furnishing a top ten list of "do's" and "don'ts" for collection managers:

1. Don't ever use linseed oil on art.
2. Don't use patches on canvas (conservators can interweave).
3. Do store healthy paintings upright.
4. Do store damaged paintings flat.
5. Don't use craze glue for anything.
6. Don't glue broken ceramics together yourself; you'll grind the pieces down and leave holes.
7. Do transport heavily damaged pieces face up.
8. Don't fold or roll art work.
9. Do leave art in frames when damaged.
10. Do consult a professional conservator whenever possible.

Conservator Jessica Johnson from the Texas Memorial Museum spoke next about specialized storage mounts using archival material that won't contribute to the deterioration of an object over time. A dynamic and knowledgeable speaker, Jessica supplemented her lecture by using both an informative slide presentation and examples of the archival materials she uses to make these mounts. Jessica advocated passive storage mounts that kept the touching of museum pieces to an absolute minimum. Specialized mounts can be very simple or be quite elaborate but the mount must be designed specifically for the object. For example, carved ethafoam can be placed inside a delicate hat to add extra support. For extremely fragile items, individual boxes that contain a mount can be designed. Please consult the helpful bibliography Jessica supplied for ideas.

A question and answer period about paper collections followed. The lively session helped to educate private collectors and remind professional collection managers of the unique needs of collections on paper.

After lunch Margaret Blagg, Executive Director of the Texas Association of Museums, updated the group on the status of the collection sharing project. She encouraged everyone to verify new collections sources and foster productive relationships.

Architect Carolyn Peterson of San Antonio's Ford, Powell and Carson, Inc., then spoke about the Texas Capitol Preservation Project. With the help of a very descriptive and enjoyable slide show, Carolyn gave histories of both the Capitol and the restoration effort. She explained that legislation was passed to create the State Preservation Board after a fire in the Lt. Governor's area during the early 1980's. The Board was mandated to restore, preserve and maintain the Capitol, its contents and its grounds. Carolyn explained how the Texas Capitol Preservation Project is unique; most restorations are done on a piecemeal basis. These tend to be very costly over time and do not address all of the problems. The Texas Capitol Preservation Project is something of which all Texans can be proud!

Conservator Karen Pavelka from the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center spoke at the end of the day. Karen discussed the benefit of networking in her case within the University of Texas library and maintenance system. Using interesting case studies, Karen showed how positive relationships with library staff, support staff and maintenance personnel can save the day. For example, during a holiday the relative humidity fell to 18% causing scores of library volumes to warp horribly and literally fly off the shelves. The university HVAC employees worked with library staff both to create a humidity chamber for the damaged books and stabilize the entire stack area. Karen proves that one can more flies with honey than with vinegar!

The conservation workshop succeeded at two separate levels. Many participants were private collectors or collection managers who must also act as conservators whenever necessary. For these participants, many basic questions were answered and specific problems were addressed. For those participants with professional training, the workshop was a place to share expertise and discuss unique problems with others. I urge everyone to attend future workshops sponsored by the CMC.



### Materials for Making Specialized Storage Mounts

Unbleached muslin	Local fabric store (wash to remove sizing first, or buy unsized if possible)
Unsize muslin	Testafabrics, Inc., P.O. Drawer ), 200 Blackford Ave., Middlesex, J.J. 08846
Cotton twill tape	Local fabric store and TALAS, Division of Technical Library Service, 213 W. 35th Street, New York, NY 10001, 212-736-7744
cotton batting	Local fabric store
polyester fiberfill	Local fabric store
3M double-sided tape	Light Impressions, 439 Monroe Ave, Rochester, N.Y.14607-3717
acid-free mat board	Archivart, 301 Veterans Blvd, Rutherford, N.J. 07070, 800-631-0193
acid-free corrugated cardboard (blue board)	Hollinger, 3810 Four Mile Run Drive, Arlington, VA 22206
PVA glue(Elvace 40704)	Light Impressions
Linen tape	Light Impressions
polyethylene foam	Austin Foam Products, 3203 Longhorn, Austin, Tx, 512-836-9708
Tyvek	Dupont Customer Service, John Watson, 800-441-2761

### Bibliography: Specialized Storage Mounts

- Clark, Thurid  
1988 Storage supports for a basket collection: a preventive conservation approach, Journal of the American Institute for Conservation 27(2):87-88.
- Drummond, Gina  
1987 Case Studies: Support Systems for Fragile Ethnographic Objects. ICOM Ethnographic Conservation Newsletter, No. 4:19-23.
- Greene, Candace S.  
1978 Storage techniques for ethnology collections, Curator 21(2):111-128.
- Kronkright, Dale Paul  
1980 Custom fitted supports for storage of Native American basketry, Western Regional Conference Newsletter, Summer, pp. 1-2.

Niinimaa, Gail Sundstrom

- 1987 Mounting systems for ethnographic textiles and objects, Journal of the American Institute for Conservation 26(2):75-84.

Piechota, Dennis

- 1978 Storage containerization: archaeological textile collections, Journal of the American Institute for Conservation 18(1):10-18.

Ward, Philip R.

- 1978 In Support of Difficult Shapes. Museum Methods Manual, Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum.

Textile Conservation Center

- n.d. Storage Suggestions
- n.d. Choosing Paper Products for Textile Storage
- n.d. "Acid Free" Paper
- n.d. Preparing a Cardboard Tube for Rolling Textiles

Above available from the Textile Conservation Center, Museum of American Textile History, 800 Massachusetts Avenue, North Andover, Massachusetts 01845, 617-686-0191.

Canadian Conservation Institute

- n.d. Flat Storage for Textiles, CCI Notes 13/2
- n.d. Rolled Storage for Textiles, CCI Notes 13/3
- n.d. Hanging Storage for Textiles, CCI Notes 13/5
- n.d. Protective Enclosures for Books and Paper Artifacts, CCI Notes 11/1
- n.d. Storage for Costume Accessories CCI Notes 13/12

Above available free from the Canadian Conservation Institute, 1030 Innes Rd., Ottawa, Canada K1A 0M8, 613-998-3721.

Texas Memorial Museum, Conservation Notes

Jensen, Craig and Patricia Tweedy

- 1983 The Phase Box: A Construction Procedure, TMM Conservation Note No. 4.

Rempel, Siegfried

- 1984 Efficient Storage of Loose Photographic Prints, TMM Conservation Note No. 10.

Wolf, Sara J.

- 1985 Housing for Archeological Textile Fragments, TMM Conservation Note No.12.

Green, Sara Wolf

- 1985 Maintenance and Storage of Quilt Collections, TMM Conservation Note No. 14.

compiled by Jessica Johnson, Texas Memorial Museum, February 1992



## Managing Storage: A Practical Approach to Storage Concerns August 1, 1992

by Theresa R. Alanis and Andi Gwyn  
Collection Interns  
Texas Memorial Museum

The workshop began at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History with an introduction by Kim Peel from the San Antonio Museum Association. Ms. Peel opened the session with a discussion of the storage of history collections. The Witte Museum, of SAMA, has more objects than space and has thus applied the theory of "adaptive reuse". Ms. Peel presented a slide show on some of their problems and responses to these problems. For example, the Witte is changing from their use of plastic to muslin curtains as muslin, which does not off-gas, may be removed, washed, and rehung. Ms. Peel is in the process of verifying the rumor that, in the process of making Ethafoam, animal fat (acid) is used. Therefore, this may not be an adequate product. She will keep us informed. Polyfelt may be an alternative but its cost is rather high. Ms. Peel offered a temporary solution to a problem faced by many this year - flooding. As water seeps us through the concrete slabs, cabinets and objects placed directly on the floor can be damaged. Ms. Peel suggested placing styrene blocks under the objects to prevent saturation of water. Styrene can be purchased very inexpensively at a local plastics dealer by purchasing leftovers and scraps.

Carolyn Duggan, also from the Witte, discussed the education collection and how it relates to the main collection. According to Ms. Duggan, the education collection should be kept separate from the main collection. Although the objects in this collection are classified as "expendable", they should be organized and stored properly. Storage can be organized by subject collection and should have climate, access, and light control, if possible. At the Witte, the education collection has a separate and distinct numbering system. The objects are non-accessioned and inventoried according to date received. A distinction is also made between the main collection and those objects used for educational purposes when handling objects. Objects from the main collection are handled only with white gloves as it is explained to the audience the importance of protecting the objects. Objects used for strictly educational purposes may be touched by the audience to provide a more accessible learning experience. Ms. Duggan also stressed the importance of a tracking system--it is important to know what objects you have and where they are!

Bill Voss from the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History spoke to the group about the importance of preventing deterioration in a Natural History collection. He discussed ways to keep a room insect and rodent free. The FWMSH has taken measures to do so by using simple measures--such as plugging varmint holes with steel wool, covering with insulation; and rechecking the area periodically. A museum should treat objects when they are received to prevent the infestation of other objects by exposure. Some ways to kill insects and other pests are to place the object into a freezer or in a CO2 environment. The FWMSH also uses sticky insect traps in collections areas. These can either be purchased or made rather inexpensively by the museum. Mr Voss suggested that animal specimens used in education programs be put in a clear plastic tube so that they may be easily observed but protected from excessive handling.

After the morning lectures, we were taken on a tour of the wet storage area (animals in bottles); the group then split with some touring the education collection and the rest visiting the live animal collection.

After lunch, we regrouped at the Kimbell Museum with Claire Berry, the conservator. Ms. Berry gave advice for storing art objects in non-art museums. She explained how to recognize if a painting has been infested--for example, a dust-like substance is a sure sign of infestation. She advised that paintings should be stored hanging, unless they are in poor condition. In this case, paintings should be stored flat. Safety and access to the objects should be the main considerations of all museums. Objects should be loosely covered to protect them from dust. Incandescent lighting is the best type of lighting to use but if unavailable, UV filtered lights or UV shields can be used. A good environment is provided at 55% relative humidity and 68-72 degrees Fahrenheit. It is important that the environment be maintained as stable as possible, fluctuations can cause major damage. Ms. Berry provided the group with a reference list and particularly suggested Conservation and Exhibitions: Packing, Transport, Storage and Environmental Considerations (Nathan Stolow, Conservation Consultant, Williamsburg, Virginia, Butterworths, 1987) as a good source.

Ann Adams, the registrar, took us on a tour of storage. Because the majority of the Kimbell's collection is on display, the storage area is rather sparse. This is where the museum stores the crates for objects on loan, providing the appropriate atmosphere to avoid deterioration of the crates. The Kimbell, and also the Amon Carter, use huge dollies to move entire exhibits into and out of exhibit space. This helps to minimize handling and possible damage. Most of the objects were stored vertically with some objects placed in smaller storage units that provided more specialized climate control.

Next, we met with Paula Stewart, the archivist at the Amon Carter Museum. She dispersed a brief list of suppliers and their services and a list of sources for publications. Ms. Stewart spoke about safe housing and the importance of using adequate products. She advised, as a consumer, to ask questions of the manufacturers and test the product yourself before using. Ms. Stewart applies two evaluations before accessioning artifacts into the museum: 1. Why do you have it?--How does it relate to the institution; and 2. How does it relate to other objects in the collection? After a collection of papers is indeed accessioned and is being rehoused, the collections manager should balance time and money--do the basics first! Putting materials in acid-free files and boxes provides protection and gives people a psychological acceptance that the collection is important. According to Ms. Stewart, the two goals of the collections manager are to preserve the collection and provide access. She warned not to destroy the original order of a collection, if one does exist. If not, be clear in your organization. All processes that are done to the objects must be reversible. Rubber bands and scotch tape should be removed from the objects if it can be done safely. Ms. Berry suggested Conservation Concerns, published by the Smithsonian Institution Press, as a good source.

Melissa Thompson showed the storage area of the Amon Carter. This area has been adapted to allow for more space by adding a second level to house photographs and other objects. The first level of storage houses paintings and other art objects.

The workshop presented advice and ideas to museums on how to store history and art objects in non-history and non-art museums. Understanding the needs of the objects will allow museums to work towards providing adequate storage for them. The important thing is to remember is that the objects must be kept in the best possible storage facility.



## **To Have and to (Be)Hold: A Collections Care Seminar**

A workshop resented by the Collections Managers Committee of the TAM  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1992, THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON

Although all museums share a common mission of collection, preservation, exhibition, and interpretation of objects, the proper care and use of museum collections may mean different things to different people within the museum community. This one-day workshop will explore three different points of view towards developing a better understanding of how to care for and use collection objects. Discussions and presentations will be from the viewpoints of Education, Exhibits/Design, and Collection Care personnel.

Location of Seminar: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1001 Bissonet

### **Schedule:**

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 9:30-9:45   | Registration and coffee   |
| 9:45-10:00  | Introduction by Rick Casagrande, Consultant for SAMA and Appraiser  |
| 10:00-10:45 | "Consideration of the impact of various collection uses in the services of interpretation, or when does use become abuse?" by Steve Pine, Decorative Arts Conservator, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston |
| 10:45-11:00 | Break   |
| 11:00-11:45 | "The use of collections objects in teaching and the Children's Museum and their use of objects" by Mary Ellyn Voden, Director of Education at the Children's Museum of Houston                          |
| 11:45-1:00  | Lunch on your own   |
| 1:00-1:45   | "Exhibit Design: For the Artifact, for the Curator, for the Public" by Bill Griggs, President, Southwest Museum Services  |
| 1:45-2:15   | Discussion: How do we cooperate and compromise so that our needs are met while maintaining the safety of the object?  |
| 2:15-2:30   | Tentative tour: New Children's Museum of Houston  |

Registration fee: CMC Members: \$15, Non-members: \$20. (CMC membership is \$10)

Make checks payable to: Collections Managers Committee

Mail to: Lisa Rebori, Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Drive, Houston, Texas, 77030, NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 16. (Late registration will be accepted at the door.)

For additional information, please contact Sherry Humphreys, Star of the Republic Museum, 409-878-2461, or Lisa Rebori, Houston Museum of Natural Science, 713-639-4670.

### **Registration Form**

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Name

Title

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Address

Phone

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Institution