

# Welcome!

- Slides and handouts:

<http://bit.ly/EssentialExhibits>

# Essential Exhibit Practices for Paper-base & Photographic Collections



NORTHEAST  
DOCUMENT  
CONSERVATION  
CENTER

**Sean Ferguson**  
Preservation Specialist

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# Session Agenda

- Understanding Risks
- Policies and Guidelines
- Selecting for Exhibition
- Preparing Spaces
  - Light
  - Environment
  - Security
- Displaying Collections
  - Considerations
  - Handling
  - Display Methods
  - Examples
- Exhibit Design Activity

# Understanding Risks in Exhibiting

# Display Risks: Light



# Display Risks: Mechanical Damage

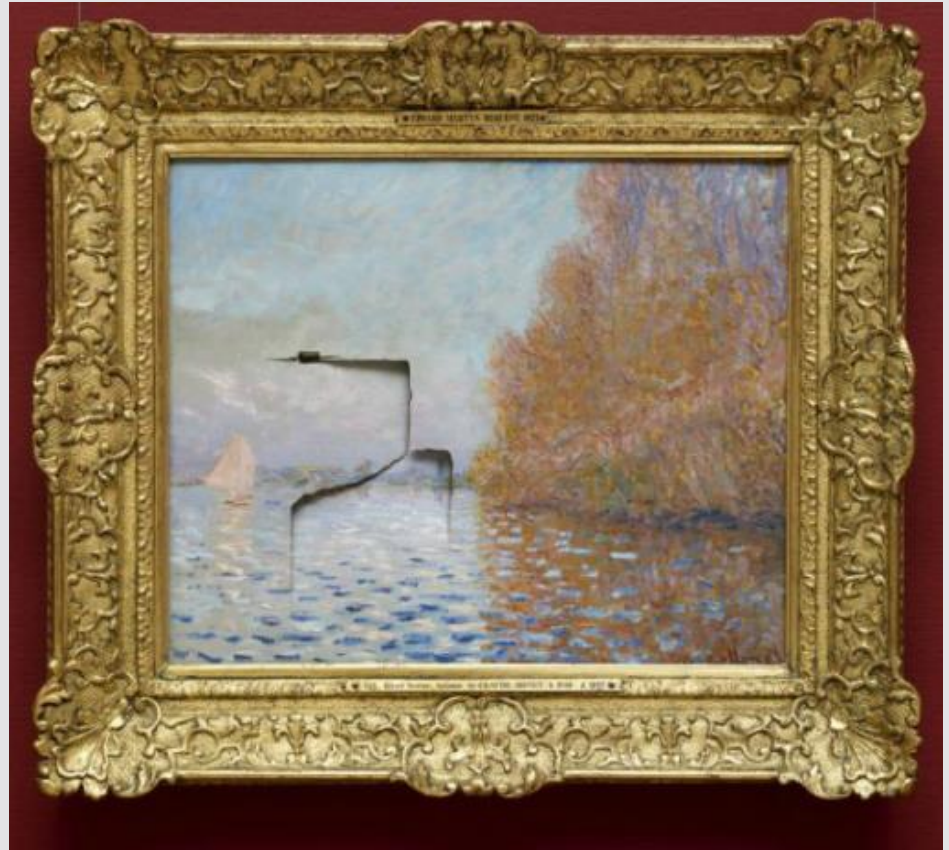


# Display Risks: Chemical Damage





# Display Risks: Theft and Vandalism





# Policies

# Exhibit Policy and Guidelines

- **Policy should include a purpose/mission statement and may include guidance for:**
  - Exhibit timeline
  - Selection criteria
  - Conservation
  - Environmental conditions
  - Security
  - Label design and content
  - Case layout
  - Loans to other institutions

**Example:** <http://www.lib.washington.edu/about/news/exhibits/guidelines>

# Borrowing and Lending



- Loan policy AND written loan agreements needed
- Loan agreements cover:
  - Condition of item
  - Preservation environment
  - Security measures
  - Costs and fees
  - Display specifications
  - Travel or shipping details

# Condition Reporting

- Inspect all parts of item before and after display
- Routinely examine during exhibit
- Write it all down!



# Selecting Materials for Exhibition

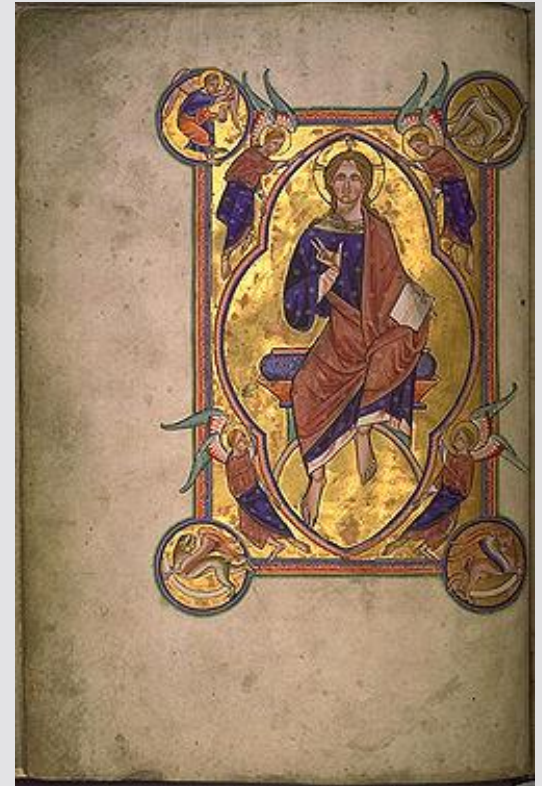


# Selection Criteria

- Donor considerations
- Relevance to topic and collection
- Sizes compatible to cases and relationally to each other
- Material and structural characteristics
  - Condition issues
  - Light sensitivity
  - Special considerations for reactive items
  - Consideration of the limits and abilities of each object

# Selection Considerations

- Can the item withstand exhibition?
- What is the item's exhibit history?
- Is the item damaged?
  - Is conservation treatment needed?
- Is the media stable?
- Are special environmental or security protections needed?
- Is the item difficult to mount?



Christ in Majesty from the Aberdeen Bestiary

# Preparing Spaces

# Light

Light damage is cumulative and irreversible! All light is a catalyst for deterioration.

- Keep light levels low
  - (50-100 lux)
- Remember: lighting can also be a source of heat
  - keep heat producing fixtures at a distance from objects



# Monitor and Mitigate

- **Avoid:**
  - natural sunlight (direct or indirect)
  - incandescent lights (inside cases)
  - halogen lights (inside cases)
- **Consider:**
  - low-UV fluorescent tubes
  - using UV-filtering sleeves or film
  - using UV-filtering Plexiglas in cases
  - using timers/motion sensors
  - blocking light with fabric
- **Check levels and monitor with light meters or Blue Wool cards**





# Temperature and RH

- Understand exhibit conditions inside *and* outside cases
- Monitor cases and exhibit space
- Interpreting your data: <http://dpcalc.org/>



# Exhibit Cases

- **Open**
  - Problem keeping visitors from touching objects
  - Protection of items from dust and disaster?
  - Usually more light exposure
- **Sealed**
  - Provides better security
  - Microclimates can be an issue
  - Air exchange or air tight?



1720s China display cabinet

# Security

- Closed/open display
- Methods of frame attachment
- Windows, transoms, ducts, etc.
- Location: high-traffic, public, or specialized
- Guards, attendants, video



# Exhibit Supplies & Examples

# Conservation Concerns

- **Mounts**
  - Stable and appropriate materials
  - Method sympathetic to the nature of the item
  - Opening set by book not by view
- In cases, no items should be in contact with each other (overlapping) to prevent acid migration and differential fading
- No tacks, staples, nails, tape, blue tack, glue, etc. should be used to fix items to walls or supports



# Display Methods: Bound Volumes

- **Closed**
  - Safest means of display
  - Can be at an angle with support at bottom edge of both cover boards
- **Open**
  - Angle of opening is paramount
  - All components need to be supported, including spine

Aim for full support





# Supports and Mounts

- **Materials for cradles/mounts**

- Mat board or paper
- Acrylic
- Polyethylene
- Polyester
- Polycarbonate

- **Flexibility**

- Single use?
- Adjustable?
- Various furniture parts used in collaboration



**Adjustable cradle**

# Reusable Vivak Book Cradle



News article with photo  
sequence

[https://libraries.mit.edu/news/  
cradles-dont-grave/24974/](https://libraries.mit.edu/news/cradles-dont-grave/24974/)

Designed by Ayako Letizia,  
MIT Libraries' Wunsch  
Conservation Lab



# Inexpensive Book Cradle

Two-minute  
how-to video  
(no sound)

[https://youtu.be/6D\\_IQ2mU2gE](https://youtu.be/6D_IQ2mU2gE)

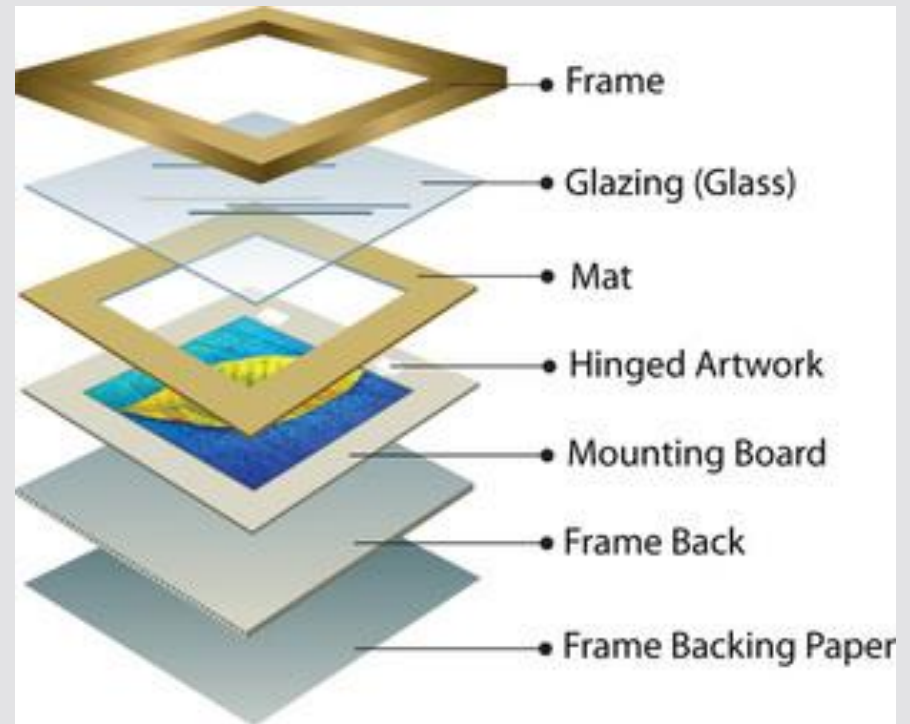
Designed by  
Jana Dambrogio,  
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# Matting and Paper Supports

- Framed for vertical display
- Properly matted or encapsulated
- Can use photo corners to keep objects in place













Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum, New York, NY





# Exhibit Design Exercise

# Exhibit Exercise

- Break up into small groups
- Use your scenario to plan an exhibit using a portion of the materials and furniture described.
- Report out on what materials, furniture, and supplies you used and why.

# Wrap-up

# Nuts and Bolts Exhibition Practices

- Avoid permanent exhibits, if possible
- Use facsimiles where appropriate
- Track exhibit times for materials to log light exposure
- Keep lighting low, off when possible



# Policy Review

**A basic exhibition policy should include a commitment to:**

- 1. Review the condition of the item**
- 2. Monitor and maintain acceptable light levels**
- 3. Monitor and maintain acceptable RH and temperature**
- 4. Limit length of exhibit**
- 5. Use of adequate support for records on display**
- 6. Use of safe display materials and cases**
- 7. Display of copies where possible**
- 8. Preparing and following loan and borrowing agreements**
- 9. Make special arrangements for light sensitive materials or choose not to exhibit the original.**

# Thank You!

## Questions?

Sean Ferguson

[sferguson@nedcc.org](mailto:sferguson@nedcc.org)

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