Welcome!

Essential Exhibit Practices for Paper-base & Photographic Collections
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?
Preparing Spaces
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/](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
Reusable Vivak Book Cradle

News article with photo sequence

Designed by Ayako Letizia,
MIT Libraries’ Wunsch Conservation Lab
Inexpensive Book Cradle

Two-minute how-to video (no sound)
https://youtu.be/6D_IQ2mU2gE

Designed by Jana Dambrogio, MIT Libraries’ Wunsch Conservation Lab
Matting and Paper Supports

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

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