

# PRESERVATION PLANNING

## Long Range Planning for Collection Security

*"If you think that changing tyres on a  
moving car is hard,  
wait until you try long-range planning!!"*  
Anonymous.

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## Why plan for preservation?

- ◆ Preservation planning is a process by which general and specific collections care needs are determined, priorities are established and resources for implementation are identified.
- ◆ The main purpose is to outline a path or define a course of action that will allow you to set present and future preservation agendas.
- ◆ It identifies the actions an institution will take and those it will never take so that resources can be allocated appropriately.
- ◆ A long-range preservation plan defines and charts a course of action to meet an organization's overall preservation needs for its collections.
- ◆ It provides a framework or context for carrying out established goals and priorities in a logical, efficient, and effective manner - it is a working tool for achieving agreed upon priorities over a set period of time.
- ◆ It helps maintain continuity and consistency in a preservation program over time.
- ◆ It records the past and current preservation activities, and plans for future efforts in an organization.
- ◆ A good plan is realistic and practical. While the plan must recognize all preservation needs, it should focus on those steps that can be accomplished with existing or obtainable resources.

## The Planning Exercise:

There are a series of key tasks involved in any planning exercise, the order is dependent on the size of the institution and what the desired outcome is. For a small, low resourced institution, trying to get some long range preservation planning can be a bit like changing tyres on a moving vehicle.

A brief note on Risk Management.

*"When the going gets rough there's a strong temptation to believe in magic."*

Risk management principles underlie most of the assessments listed below. The simple formula in such analyses is the likelihood of an event considered in the light of its consequences. The likelihood of being hit by lightning is very slight but the consequences are truly memorable. This is a risk worth managing during electrical storms!

Be wary of the risks that are taken daily without being aware of it. If you don't have fire alarms and nothing's happened yet, don't get complacent about the value of fire alarms.

**1. Ensure "stakeholders" are on board.** Planning takes time and sometimes money. Try to sell the need for such planning to key stakeholders. A case can usually be made on the basis of the "triple E + 1" principle; a good plan will make operations more **efficient**, **effective** and **economical** **plus** it's an **ethical** approach to the responsibility of managing a collection. The better the case that's put, the more likely that it will be accepted by the relevant committee. However, the world is less than perfect.....

*"A committee is a cul-de-sac where good ideas are lured and then quietly strangled."*

If not successful, then operate by stealth.....

*"Creativity always comes from beneath, it always finds an unexpected and indirect path forward and it always makes use of what it can scavenge by night." From Peter Wullen "Raiding the Ice-Box: Reflections on 20th Century Culture"*

Build a case using the tasks 2 and 3 (below) and then revisit the stakeholders with your undeniably compelling argument.

**2. Ensure that you've got a good grasp of the size and nature of the collection.** Some questions you could ask regarding the **scope** of your collections are....

- ◆ What subjects are collected?
- ◆ Why are they collected?
- ◆ What are the major components of the collections?
- ◆ What formats of material do they contain?
- ◆ How big are they?
- ◆ How have your collections developed over time - what is important and why?
- ◆ What is their importance to your organisation - how do they relate to the organisation's goals and objectives?
- ◆ How fast are your collections growing?
- ◆ What future directions do you see your collecting taking?
- ◆ What is the main value of the collections - genealogical, information resource, monetary value, historical or political, scientific, religious or symbolic?
- ◆ Are your collections accessioned and controlled?
- ◆ Are they catalogued and readily identifiable?
- ◆ If 'yes' what system do you use and is a copy of the catalogue kept safe in off site storage?
- ◆ Are your collection items identified with a unique identification number as belonging to your organisation?
- ◆ If 'yes' what method do you use?
- ◆ Do you own all of your collections outright or are they somehow encumbered?

The survey may identify some collections that are not properly catalogued or inventoried. Sometimes these are gifts, where a decision has yet to be made whether to incorporate the items into the collection. If they are lost in a disaster, there will be no way to know what is lost. Insurance companies generally require an inventory in order to process a claim.

Often these materials are in boxes in basements or other areas, where they are exposed to humid conditions conducive to mould. Frequently they add to clutter. Decide whether the unaccessioned materials are pertinent to your mission. If not,

discard, trade or sell them. If the materials are valuable to your collection, incorporate them into your catalogue so they will be accessible to researchers.

Finally, safeguard your catalogue or inventory. A very small institution with only one copy of the catalogue is at risk of losing that information in a disaster. Make sure that there is regular and adequate back-up and keep copies at another location.

The document, "*Caring for Our Culture*" has a useful questionnaire appended to it; it's accessible online at

[http://sector.amol.org.au/publications\\_archive/national\\_policies/caring\\_for\\_our\\_culture\\_part\\_1\\_2\\_3](http://sector.amol.org.au/publications_archive/national_policies/caring_for_our_culture_part_1_2_3), or as a hardcopy publication from Museums Australia.

### **3. Conduct an assessment of the collections' environment, storage and security.**

This would include,

- ◆ environmental factors such as relative humidity, temperature and light,
- ◆ overall cleanliness, maintenance and organization,
- ◆ storage and exhibit furniture and techniques,
- ◆ pest monitoring, prevention and treatment procedures,
- ◆ access and retrieval practices,
- ◆ written policies, staff procedures (including handling), funding allocations and
- ◆ emergency preparedness.

A good exercise is to make a map and mark on it:

- ◆ all exits, as well as other doors and windows,
- ◆ restrooms and other locations with water pipes.
- ◆ switches for heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems,
- ◆ master switches for electrical services,
- ◆ water and gas shut-off controls,
- ◆ controls for alarm systems,
- ◆ location of keys needed to open locked cases or rooms,
- ◆ fire extinguishers and/or water hoses,
- ◆ first aid kits,
- ◆ disaster response supplies or kit (see *Disaster Preparedness and Recovery* notes at the DISACT site, <http://www.anbg.gov.au/disact/intro-prep-recover-2004.html>),

- ◆ hazardous materials storage,
- ◆ important collections, to be removed or protected first (see *Disaster Preparedness and Recovery* notes).

Appendices 1 & 2 provide sample survey documents to help you focus on the key issues.

**4. Assess the condition of the collection,** conduct a risk assessment on the collection. The laboratory workshops you'll be participating in over the week will give you the tools and skills to carry out such assessments.

**5. Survey your users.** The preservation strategies you employ with regards to your collection will relate to the usages your collection is exposed to.

Some questions you could ask regarding the **use** of your collections are....

- ◆ Are your collections available for use?
- ◆ If 'yes', who can use your collections?
- ◆ How is the collection accessed by staff and researchers?
- ◆ Are users allowed open access to the collection?
- ◆ What responsibilities do they have to properly care for the collections?
- ◆ What personal materials may be taken into the reading/research room?
- ◆ Are users monitored at all times?
- ◆ Are there rules to be followed by users?
- ◆ If 'yes' are these known and understood?

**6. Analyse your resources and costs.** Do you have any to spare on this exercise? If not then seriously examine the long term priorities of your organisation. This is again a risk management exercise.

**7. Define preservation options and costs.** This is likely to involve consultation with a conservator or similar specialist with preservation experience but, like every such exercise, is best achieved if you can communicate a full understanding of your organisation's purpose and current status.

**8. Prioritise.** How are you going to select what you're going to do and to which items? Don't get sidetracked on pieces that lack value to your collection or don't relate to your institution's goals.

## Now you're ready to build your plan!

Keep your plan short. A good preservation plan is clear, concise, comprehensive and realistic. Your plan should have a mission/purpose statement and it should clearly explain,

- why it's justified (based on risk assessments, surveys etc),
- what difference it's going to make,
- the responsible business-like steps in its implementation and
- how its momentum will be maintained.

It should have goals, that is, what direction the implemented program will take. Five goals are a good, manageable number. Keep them broad and remember, **they are never achieved, but are always ongoing**. Each goal should have clear objectives with a list of actions to achieve that objective.

For example,

<b><i>Goal 1</i></b>	Improve storage for the long-term preservation and access of the collection	
<b><i>Objective 1</i></b>	Reorganize storage to improve security while still providing access to bona fide researchers [assumption; the only place for researcher access is in the storage area].	
<b><i>Action 1</i></b>	Measure the storage area and draw the dimensions on a plan.	Target date:
<b><i>Action 2</i></b>	Measure storage furniture and draw into plan, allowing space for disabled access.	Target date:
<b><i>Action 3</i></b>	Provide a work table for researcher access.	Target date:
<b><i>Action 4</i></b>	Negotiate specific access times and arrange for staff/volunteer activities at that time to avoid researcher access to a vacant store room and to provide an item by item retrieval service.	Target date:
<b><i>Action 5</i></b>	Improve storage containers and boxing so collection can be moved without risk of damage	Target date:

Make your plan a 3 year plan with ongoing reviews and refinements but focus on the first 12 months. Keep the plan on the agenda and **ensure its part of succession planning programs**. Remember a plan is useless unless it can be sustained over the long term.

*"Organisations have no memory: only people have memories and they move on."* Trevor Kletz, "Lessons From Disaster: How Organizations Have No Memory And Accidents Recur."

Build regular reporting into the framework; it keeps you disciplined (and the auditors impressed!). Constantly review and realign your plan.

*A change of direction doesn't mean you've lost the plot.*

Implement those items that are easiest to get going; runs on the board encourage confidence and support. Finally, remember that your preservation plan does not stand alone. A good plan is a subset of the overall long-range plan for your institution. It helps set collections care priorities and can be an important document for fund-raising.



**Appendix 1:** A sample buildings and collections survey form.

**SAMPLE BUILDING SURVEY FORM**

**Institutional Details:**

Name of Institution:		Address:	
Phone:	Fax:	e-mail:	
Organisational contact:	Name:	Title:	

**Staffing details:**

	Full time staff:	Part time staff:	Volunteers
Number			
Skills/qualifications			

**Description of Collection:**

Type of material	Size of holding	Location	Record status
Tools and artefacts			
Furniture			
Costumes			
Books			
Files			
Maps			
Photographs			
Etc.			

**Preventive Measures**

**Fire Protection:**

<i>Apparatus</i>	<i>Location of item or area protected</i>	<i>Condition</i>	<i>Maintenance Schedule?</i>
Smoke detectors			
Heat detectors			
Fire suppression sprinkler system			
Fire Extinguishers (note type)			
Alarm system			
Emergency exit signage			
Emergency exits			
Emergency lighting			

**Electrical Systems:**

Check that wiring is code compliant and maintained.  
 Is there an auxiliary power system?

**Water Damage Protection:**

Is there plumbing above collections areas?  
 Are there skylights over collection areas?  
 Is the roof pitched or flat?  
 Are roof drains and gutters in good repair?  
 Maintenance schedule?  
 Do doors and windows close well?  
 Are vulnerable areas covered by water alarms?  
 Do basements have sump pumps available and are they in working order?

**Security:**

Electronic surveillance?  
 Security guards?  
 Alarmed doors?  
 Alarmed windows?  
 Do the systems have a maintenance program?  
 Do systems alert police or other authorities?

**Housekeeping:**

Is waste removed from the building every day?  
 What's the cleaning schedule?  
 Any evidence of mold, rodents or insects?  
 Is eating and drinking forbidden in storage, display and collection access areas?

**Environmental Controls:**

**Air-conditioning**

<i>Apparatus</i>	<i>Type of system</i>	<i>Area serviced</i>	<i>Trigger for use*</i>	<i>Condition? Monitored?</i>	<i>Maintenance Schedule?</i>
Full HVAC					
Heating					
Cooling					
Dehumidification					
Humidification system					

\*permanently on or on demand? What is the condition that specifies start-up?

**Lighting:**

<i>Location</i>	<i>Lighting type*</i>	<i>Light level</i>	<i>Constant or on demand?</i>	<i>Maintenance?</i>
Display area				
Storage area				
Work room				

\*Fluorescent, incandescent, daylight (windows, skylights) other?

**Miscellaneous:**

Any other issues or history that can help you characterise your space, for example,

- outside environment,
- flood history,
- signs of damp or leakages,
- evidence of forced entry,
- anecdotes (often not formally recorded).

## Appendix 2:

Another sample buildings and collections survey form.

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### **PRESERVATION PLANNING-The Audit/Survey**

[Adapted from "*What An Institution Can Do To Survey Its Conservation Needs*" George M. Cunha New England Document Conservation Center, New York Library Association, New York, 1979 Resources and Technical Service Section.]

#### **I. The Building**

Characteristics of the building (Remember, new construction is not always better)

- 1) Construction materials
- 2) Condition of roof and walls. Do they leak? Does water accumulate on the roof?  
Are walls and roof insulated?
- 3) Condition of storerooms
  - a) are they clean or cluttered and dirty?
  - b) evidence of rodents, insects, mould?

#### **II. The Environment in the Building**

- 1) Are there provisions to maintain stable temperature and humidity throughout?
- 2) What is the temperature and the relative humidity?
- 3) What machinery/equipment/material is available for control of temperature and humidity?
- 4) If the building is air conditioned, does machinery include humidifiers and dehumidifiers? Are they working properly?
- 5) How is the entry of sunlight into the building controlled to minimize intensity and remove ultra-violet radiation?
- 6) What type of artificial lighting is in use?
- 7) If fluorescent lights are in use, are they screened to filter out the ultra-violet energy radiated by fluorescent tubes?
- 8) Is there a program and procedure for monitoring the environment on a regular basis?

#### **III. Building Security**

- 1) Is an intruder alarm installed? Is it connected to the local police station
- 2) What type of fire alarm is installed, and is it connected to local fire headquarters?
- 3) Are there smoke detectors? What type? When were the batteries replaced?
- 4) Is there a fire quenching system?
- 5) Sprinkler characteristics, eg wet or dry type? Or another system?
- 6) Number and type of portable fire extinguishers-when were they checked? Are they appropriate for the type of fire that may be encountered?

#### **IV. Additional Storage and Display areas**

- 1) Do these spaces feel comfortable?
- 2) What is average temperature and humidity in each?

- 3) How are they maintained?
- 4) Housekeeping situation -clean? dirty? cluttered?
- 5) Evidence of insects. mold or rodents?
- 6) Location of steam and hot water pipes relative to shelves and cases?
- 7) Type of artificial illumination -If fluorescent, is it UV screened?
- 8) Condition of electric wiring?
- 9) Evidence of building leaks on the walls and ceiling?
- 10) Number, type and size of windows; what direction do they face? Do they have provisions for UV control and to reduce intensity of daylight?
- 11) Evidence of light damage on objects especially spines of books?
- 12) Evidence of previous water damage?
- 13) Is there good air circulation around shelves?
- 14) Is there a well planned and supervised housekeeping program? Who does the work?
- 15) Who supervises it and checks the results?

#### **V. The Collections**

The general appearance of each collection or category of materials.

- a) evidence of wear and tear, soil and surface dirt, water stains.
- b) evidence of other damage -if so, to what degree?
- c) evidence of fungus growth, insect damage or damage by rodents.
- d) evidence of light damage (faded spines, discolored paper, etc.)

#### **VI. Disaster Vulnerability**

- 1) Do you have a disaster plan? A disaster preparedness committee?
- 2) Is there an isolation area for new acquisitions or potentially infested materials.