

PLANNING AND PRIORITIZING

The following text is adapted from selected leaflet webpages on the Northeast Document Conservation Center website: <http://www.nedcc.org/resources/leaflets.list.php>.

Considerations for Prioritizing

Collections have many preservation needs requiring a variety of actions to meet. Since resources are always limited, every action cannot be accomplished. Thus, it is crucial to prioritize actions that are most important. Prioritizing is the process of deciding which actions have the most significant impact, are the most important, and are the most feasible. The most straightforward way to prioritize preservation actions is by carefully considering specific prioritization criteria, weighing appropriate collections-related factors, and making informed value judgments before reaching a decision.

Criteria for Prioritizing

It is useful to consider three criteria when prioritizing preservation actions.

- **IMPACT.** Impact is an evaluation of the extent to which an action improves the preservation of a collection. Consider the following questions: To what extent will a specific action improve preservation of the collections? How great is the immediate versus the potential impact of implementing this action? The greater the overall impact of an action, the higher its priority.
- **FEASIBILITY.** The feasibility of implementing an action is the consideration of the amount of time and resources required to undertake and complete the action. Some actions are easy and inexpensive to implement, while others are difficult and expensive. Keep in mind the availability of expertise capability and financial resources. If it is unlikely that you can implement an action, it should be given lower priority even if its impact is high.
- **URGENCY.** An action can be regarded as urgent if waiting to implement it would cause further problems or would mean bypassing an opportunity. Actions requiring immediate implementation should be given highest priority.

Factors Influential in Prioritizing

The use, storage, condition and value of materials in the collections also influence prioritizing actions and should be considered.

- The amount and type of use items receive is significant. Items on permanent exhibition have different needs from those in storage. Items that heavily or precariously used are at higher risk and in more urgent need of attention.
- The housing of collections is important. Materials stored under poor environmental conditions, in harmful containers, or materials susceptible to theft, vandalism, fire, or other disasters, are all at higher risk.
- Another factor to consider is the value of the materials. The nature of the value of items (monetary, intrinsic, associational, bibliographic), their rarity, their provenance, and their significance to the you need to be considered.

- The personal, nostalgic and historical use of materials should be considered. For how long should you planned for their preservation?

Implementation Priorities

Implementation priorities are high-priority actions that are achievable. Actions that are of high impact and can be implemented with little difficulty probably deserve highest priority. Actions that are difficult to implement and have little impact can often be postponed or even disregarded because they achieve little while requiring great effort.

Priority Actions for Preservation

The following list outlines a range of necessary actions commonly identified by a preservation planning survey. To use survey, checked off all necessary actions; then, rank their priority to organize your long-range plan (e.g. 1 = high priority through 5 = low priority).

1. Building maintenance

___ Get professional inspection

- ___ building
- ___ electric
- ___ roof
- ___ furnace or heating/cooling machinery
- ___ masonry
- ___ basement/drainage
- ___ plumbing
- ___ other _____

___ Set up an inspection schedule

- ___ building
- ___ electric
- ___ roof
- ___ plumbing
- ___ grounds
- ___ drains and gutters
- ___ furnace or heating/cooling machinery
- ___ other _____

___ Set up a building maintenance schedule

- ___ repair windows
- ___ repair roof
- ___ paint
- ___ re-point bricks
- ___ repair masonry
- ___ replace elements (e.g., steps, sills, drainpipes, etc.)
- ___ repair elements (e.g., reattach downspouts, flashings, etc.)
- ___ seal cracks or other openings
- ___ clean gutters

- clear exterior drains
- other _____

2. Climate/Energy Efficiency

Seal windows (e.g., caulk around panes, add weather-stripping, etc.)

Weatherstrip doors

Monitor for temperature and relative humidity changes

Purchase monitoring equipment

- hygrothermograph
- hygrometer
- thermometer
- aspirating psychrometer
- sling psychrometer
- humidity cards
- other _____

Relocate collections out of damp basement

- from hot attic
- away from exterior walls

Add humidifier/dehumidifier

Check location and function of vents

- open louvers
- relocate collections
- unblock vents

Change filters

Set up a schedule for filter replacement

Install fans

- ceiling
- floor
- window

Install storm windows

Other _____

3. Light Control

Block windows permanently

Install

- drapes
- shades
- blinds

- Sleeve fluorescent bulbs with UV filtering tubes
- Add UV film or Plexiglas
 - to windows
 - to exhibit cases
 - to framed objects
- Relocate exhibits or collections away from direct light
- Measure and keep records of light levels
- Rotate valuable objects from long-term exhibits
- Install drapes on exhibit cases
- Replace bulbs with lower wattage lamps
- Remove bulbs from unnecessary fixtures
- Redirect spotlights to provide indirect lighting for exhibits
- Skylight
 - add UV protection
 - paint panes to reduce light
 - black out panes
- Turn off in-case lights (or remove bulbs)
- Purchase blue wool fading standards
- Set up a light exposure test with blue wool standards

4. Pest Control

- Trim shrubs or greenery to provide an 18-inch clearance from building
- Remove potted plants from building interior
- Buy tight-sealing trash container for food remains
- Prohibit food in storage and research areas
- Clean up, including vacuum, immediately after parties
- Remove trash from room each night
- Purchase insect test traps
- Set up a pest monitoring program
- Set up a pest inspection schedule
- Assign responsibility for pest management
- Lower the relative humidity
- Clean storage areas
- Have problems evaluated by exterminator
- Other _____

5. Housekeeping

- Set up a cleaning schedule
- Set up an inspection schedule (2 times/year)
- Purchase HEPA vacuum
- Purchase dustcloths
- Other _____

6. Water Protection

- Find source of leaks (list them)

_____, _____

- Relocate collections away from known leaks
- Relocate collections from below/adjacent to sinks, restrooms, or other water source hazards
- Move all collections items and boxes off of floor in (space name)

_____, _____

- Other water protections _____

7. Fire Protection

- Ban/restrict smoking
- Inspect fire detectors
- Clean fire detectors (see manufacturer's instructions)
- Test fire detectors
- Set up a cleaning, testing, and inspection schedule for fire detectors
- Conduct fire safety inspection
- Inspect fire extinguishers
 - purchase
 - recharge
 - replace
- Mount fire extinguishers in accessible places
- Remove or correct fire hazards
- Design emergency evacuation plan
- Other fire protections _____

8. Security

- Install locks on storage areas
- Upgrade exterior locks
- Replace locks
- Inventory collections
- Install/improve window locks
- Remove plants obscuring windows
- Install exterior lights
- Replace bulbs in exterior lights
- Other security precautions _____

9. General Risk Reduction (Emergency Preparedness)

- Write emergency preparedness plan
- Locate freezer for emergency storage of wet material
- Store emergency supplies (sponges, etc.)
- Update existing emergency plan
- Identify salvage priorities
- Complete a hazards inventory
- Set up a backup schedule for collections records
- Back up catalog, computer disks, shelf-list, or other collections records
- Provide for a copy of backup records to be kept off-site
- Review insurance coverage with insurer
- Other _____

10. General Storage

- Relocate collections/objects
- Replace plywood or particle board shelves
- Add shelving
 - regular
 - oversize
- Add map case(s)
- Add/replace file cabinets
- Add racks and hanging folders for file cabinets
- Box collections to protect them from wood furniture

Line shelves to protect collections

Line drawers to protect collections

11. Books

Replace rubber bands with fabric tape

Replace knifing bookends with non-knifing book supports

Add bookends

Measure for and order custom book boxes

Make polyester book jackets (for red rot)

Straighten shelves

Turn spine-up volumes spine down

Make sure books are fully supported by shelves (add oversize shelves if needed)

Dust

Remove inserts (dried flowers, bookmarks, etc.)

Inventory or read shelf list

Other _____

12. Pamphlets

Make enclosures

Replace acidic enclosures and binders

Other _____

13. Manuscripts and Documents

Inventory collection

Remove or replace fasteners

Estimate quantities and sizes of

folders

hanging folders

boxes needed for rehousing

Re-house in

folders

boxes

Remove or isolate newsclippings and other very poor paper

Other _____

14. Oversize Objects

Provide map case or other oversize storage furniture

- Make folders
 - Melinex (mylar)
 - paper
- Replace tubes for rolled storage
 - buy “archival” tubes
 - wrap tubes with neutral or buffered paper
 - roll objects on outside of tubes
- Other _____

15. Framed Objects

- Reframe using museum-quality mats
- Unframe and store in
 - folders
 - mats
- Store in individual items in
 - boxes
 - flat file
- Build framed storage bin
- Other _____

16. Newsprint/Newsclippings

- Isolate clippings from good-quality paper using
 - interleaves
 - folders
 - Melinex (mylar)
 - paper
- Photocopy
- Microfilm
- Other _____

17. Scrapbooks/Albums

- Photocopy
- Microfilm
- Box
- Other _____

18. Photographs

- Inventory

- Purchase and use lint-free gloves
- Separate photographs from document files
- Provide proper support for photos on brittle mounts
- House prints and negatives separately
- Isolate
 - nitrate film stock
 - early safety film
- House nitrate/early safety film negatives in individual buffered enclosures
- Duplicate (list category or collections _____)
- Frame or reframe photographs using museum-quality mats
- Unframe photographs and store in
 - boxes
 - flat files
 - hanging files
- Sleeve and box glass plate negatives
- Make enclosures for broken glass plate negatives
- Investigate cold storage for color photos
- Make enclosures for cased photographs
- Other _____

19. Repair Program

- Decide what procedures are feasible
- Identify an experienced technician or conservator for advice and assistance
- Identify and obtain necessary equipment and supplies
- Set up a space reserved for repairs
- Create or adopt guidelines for identifying objects in need of repair
- Create guidelines for matching repairs to damage
- Document repair procedures and materials in use
- Coordinate other preservation strategies (microfilm, binding) with repair program
- Flatten materials for storage