



Museum of Health Care at Kingston Standards and Procedures Manual

Conservation Standard

The Museum formally recognizes its responsibility to preserve the objects that it holds in trust for future generations. The Museum demonstrates its stewardship of the collection by implementing preventive conservation procedures and conservation treatment procedures that ensure the long-term preservation of the collection.

The *Curator* or *designate* is responsible for the care of the collections, and implements preventive maintenance programs, determines priorities for conservation treatment and demonstrates a commitment to national standards of ethics regarding conservation. The Curator ensures that artifacts are durable enough to withstand any proposed use including exhibits, loans or interpretation. The Museum accepts its obligations regarding municipal, provincial and federal requirements concerning collections.

The practice of conservation is dedicated to the preservation of cultural property. It is based on two basic approaches, and both are designed to extend the life of objects.

CONSERVATION APPROACHES

Preventive measures are recognized as the primary means of protecting objects in the Museum's collection. Preventive measures are designed to minimize potential causes of deterioration in artifacts. These measures manage the Museum's environment in storage and display, including monitoring of temperature, relative humidity, levels of lux and lumen*, particulate matter, pests, and physical security from handling and theft. Keys to the Museum and its artifact storage areas are strictly controlled and documented.

* *Acceptable conditions for a mixed collection are temperature: 18 - 25 degrees centigrade; relative humidity: 40% - 60%; light levels: 150 - 300lux and maximum of 75 watts/lumen.*



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The Museum has a program of staff and volunteer instruction in safe handling procedures, and in the packing and transport of artifacts. Only those who are appropriately trained have access to artifacts. In-house training, a resource library and outside training programs are available to staff and volunteers who research, document and exhibit artifacts. There is a staff manual that documents emergency procedures, and the staff is trained in those procedures. Any preventive conservation undertaken takes place in an appropriately ventilated area when necessary. White cotton gloves are standard practice, and staff and volunteers use particle masks when necessary.

Conservation treatment procedures are undertaken to prolong the life of artifacts that are physically or chemically unstable, and halt or reverse damage or deterioration sustained by an object. These documented procedures retain the authenticity and physical integrity of the object and are undertaken only by those appropriately trained to do them. Any intervention by a conservator is preceded by an examination and treatment proposal. Proposed treatments respect the integrity of the object and use methods and materials compatible with long-term preservation. The Museum utilizes the expertise of the Queen's University Master of Art Conservation Program, the Canadian Conservation Institute, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, Heritage Branch, and qualified conservators in private practice.

CONSERVATION DOCUMENTATION

The *condition report* is created to document and describe the physical condition of objects in the collection - for new acquisitions and for artifacts prior to and upon completion of exhibit or loan. The *treatment report* documents any treatment conservation undertaken on an object, and becomes part of the historical record of that object.

The Museum ensures that all artifacts in the collection, whether owned or borrowed, are correctly documented with respect to ownership, incoming and current condition, and need for conservation treatment.



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ARTIFACTS IN STORAGE

The Museum provides storage areas that are used solely for the storage of artifacts, have restricted access, and are clean, orderly, spacious and equipped with suitable and safe shelves, cabinets and supports. Artifacts are organized according to type and collection, and will eventually be stored according to their MeSH (function) designation.

There is regular monitoring of artifacts in storage.

ARTIFACTS ON DISPLAY

Artifacts on exhibit either on site or in a partner institution are housed appropriately in regards to environment, and are safe from theft and public handling. Artifacts are in stable condition and able to withstand the display environment, and are displayed with safe supports and materials. Artifacts are the final elements of the exhibit to be installed. There is regular monitoring of artifacts on display on site and in partner institutions.