



# INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS ADVISOR

A RESOURCE FROM IHS LOCAL HISTORY SERVICES

LOCAL HISTORY SERVICES | INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY | PAST ISSUES | FOLLOW LHS ON:  

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## QUICK TIPS FOR COLLECTIONS CARE

By Karen DePauw, coordinator, IHS Local History Services



[Drive Slow, You Might Meet A Fool](#). (Indiana Historical Society)

### COLLECTIONS

- 1) Label objects with permanent marker to make sure the number never fades.
- 2) When moving cups, jugs, pitchers and the like, be sure to grasp firmly by the handle only. This is what the handle was made for after all.
- 3) When handling metal objects always use your bare hands. Human oils provide a natural barrier to harmful chemicals.
- 4) Always laminate the most delicate paper items in a collection for the maximum amount of protection possible.
- 5) Pledge is great for polishing up old furniture. It gives it a nice shine.
- 6) Do not worry, that musty smell in your storage area is normal. After all, it is old stuff!

### ENVIRONMENT

- 7) Be sure to turn off your air conditioning when you are going to be closed for a few days, and then crank it back up when you open again.
- 8) Flowers and living plants help freshen the air in stuffy old museums.

### POLICIES/PROCEDURES

- 9) Collections management policies are a waste of time. It is best to just judge each item against your personal likes and dislikes.
- 10) Limit deaccessioning decisions to one person as a way to streamline the process.



### ONLINE RESOURCES

[NPS Museum Handbook](#)  
(National Park Service)

[Conserve O Grams](#)  
(National Park Service)

[Hoaxes Database](#)  
(The Museum of Hoaxes)

### FROM OUR LENDING RESOURCE CENTER

[A Guide to Museum Pest Control](#)  
(Lynda A Zycherman and J. Richard Schrock)

[A Deaccession Reader](#)  
(Stephen E. Weil, ed.)

[Collection Conundrums: Solving Collections Management Mysteries](#)  
(Rebecca A. Buck and Jean Allman Gilmore)

### UPCOMING TRAINING AND PROGRAMS

[Preservation Reference Desk: Personal Digital Archiving](#)  
April 3 -  
Northeast Document Conservation Center webinar.

[Implementing NAGPRA: The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act](#)  
April 4 -  
American Association for State and Local History webinar.

**EXHIBITS**

11) Keep exhibit development within a tight knit and exclusive group of people as a way to best share your collections.

12) Taping or gluing object labels to items on exhibit guarantees they will not become separated.

[Object Numbering](#)  
**April 11 -**  
 Wisconsin Historical  
 Society webinar.

# APRIL FOOLS!!!!!!!!!!!!



[Back to School Drive](#). (Indianapolis Recorder Collection, Indiana Historical Society)

**PLEASE DO NOT FOLLOW THE ABOVE ADVICE!** Below you will find the appropriate advice for all of the situations outlined above.

**COLLECTIONS**

- 1) Always use reversible numbering techniques. Although numbers should not easily come off of objects, it is important they remain reversible so as not to permanently harm the collection.
- 2) Handles can become weak over time. Objects with handles should always be carried from the bottom and in a way that supports and protects the item.
- 3) Whenever handling metal objects, wear gloves. There are many things gloves are not necessary for, but metals should never be touched with bare hands. Oils from your skin are harmful to metals the moment they come in contact with them.
- 4) Never laminate historical collections, as it is not reversible. Encapsulate delicate paper items using reversible techniques and appropriate archival materials.
- 5) Chemical cleaning supplies should never be used with collection objects. Most can leave behind a chemical residue harmful to objects. Instead, stick to basic cleaning methods, like dusting furniture with a soft, natural-bristle brush.
- 6) A musty smell can be an indicator of mold, mildew or general water problems. Inspect the item that smells musty and make sure there is not an active mold situation. Some items may just need time to air out and fully dry; others may need treatment from a conservator.

**ENVIRONMENT**

- 7) Consistency is key when it comes to environmental conditions. Even if you do not have a full environmental control set up, keeping the temperature and humidity as even as possible is better than quick and drastic changes.
- 8) Flowers and live plants may add a nice appearance to a museum, however, they are a great vehicle for pests to enter the museum building. Always consider whether the beauty of flowers on

the front desk is worth the risk of months of battling a pest infestation! Stick to quality fake flowers and plants for the ambiance without the threat of bugs.

### **POLICIES/PROCEDURES**

9) A collections management policy should be a board-approved museum document that outlines museum practices in regards to the collection. They help determine how the collection is treated and provide guidance to what should, and should not, be brought into the collection based on the museum's mission.

10) Deaccessioning decisions should never be made by one person acting alone; ideally a collections committee should share the responsibility of decisions.

### **EXHIBITS**

11) Invite members of your community into your exhibit planning process as opposed to developing your plans in a vacuum.

12) Never use adhesives on historical items. It is better to have to reprint the label sitting on the top of a desk because it has blown off and become lost, then to pay a conservator to fix it when the adhesive has caused damage to an item.

**We hope you have enjoyed this little April Fool's edition of Collections Advisor. Remember ... follow the advice at the bottom, not at the top!!!**

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This is a free publication. Anyone may subscribe.

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