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# INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS ADVISOR

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Issue 94 | August 2019

## FUN WITH FOSSHAPE!

By Kathy Lechuga, book conservator, Indiana Historical Society

For [Indianapolis Colts: The Exhibit](#), the Conservation department assisted with preparing several textile artifacts for display. The most challenging objects to prepare for the exhibit were the two Colts cheerleader uniforms. The costumes consisted of separate tops and bottoms, which would allow much of the mannequins to be seen, so the mounts needed to be visually pleasing for the costumes to really stand out while on display. The costumes also needed the support of a full form in order to be exhibited successfully and safely because even though they're contemporary objects, they were still compromised in some areas since they had been worn during performances.



### ONLINE RESOURCES

[Collections Care Webinar Archives](#)

(Connecting to Collections)

[Making Display Forms with Fosshape](#)

(University Products)

[Using Fosshape](#)

(Wonderflex Fosshape)

### FROM OUR LENDING RESOURCE CENTER

[The Care and Display of Historic Clothing](#)

(Karen M. DePauw)

[A Practical Guide to Costume Mounting](#)

(Lara Flecker)

### UPCOMING TRAINING AND PROGRAMS

[Online Course: Basics of Archives](#)

Sept. 30 - October 25 -  
American Association for  
State and Local History  
webinar.



None of our mannequins were small enough to accommodate the dimensions of the cheerleader costumes, so we borrowed a form from the Indiana State Museum that we could use as a mold to create our Fosshape mannequins.

Fosshape is a non-woven polyester material that has gained popularity in the Conservation field for textile supports and mannequins. It was originally used in the theater industry and feels like a soft felt fabric at first but shrinks and hardens after being heated or steamed. Conservators like using this material because it is safe to use with collections objects and allows us to create relatively inexpensive mannequins quickly and easily.



The first step in the process was to drape muslin fabric on the borrowed mannequin to create a pattern. Once the draping was complete, the patterns were transferred to the Fosshape fabric, the pieces were cut out, machine-sewn together and the tube was slipped back on to the form for steaming.



Left: Fosshape tube after placing on mannequin. Right: Steaming the fosshape to make it form to the mannequin.

Steaming shrinks the Fosshape around a form and once it dries and cools it hardens, creating a fairly rigid shape. The hardened Fosshape "shell" was stuffed with polyester batting and the neck and legs were capped with Ethafoam polyethylene plank. We now had our mannequins.



A gray cover was sewn to cover the Fosshape forms to provide a smooth surface and to provide an aesthetically pleasing form that allowed that colors of the costumes to really pop. The costumes were placed on the mannequins and additional padding was added where more support was needed.

Ready for game day!



To see these mannequins in person, visit [Indianapolis Colts: The Exhibit](#) before it closes on August 10.

This is a free publication. Anyone may subscribe.

[Local History Services](#)  
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