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# INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS ADVISOR

A RESOURCE FROM IHS LOCAL HISTORY SERVICES

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## SPECIAL EDITION COLLECTIONS MINIVISOR: REEVALUATING YOUR EMERGENCY PLAN

By Karen DePauw, manager, IHS Local History Services

This is a short-term weekly mini version of Collections Advisor to give you some ideas of things to do from home to propel our work with museum collections. If you would prefer not to receive the weekly editions but would like to continue to receive the monthly Collections Advisor, please email [collectionsadvisor@indianahistory.org](mailto:collectionsadvisor@indianahistory.org) to let us know.



[Civil Defense Rescue Exercise](#). (Indiana Historical Society)

As many of us begin to reopen our museums, some only to staff and others to the public, it is important to look back at what we have learned over the course of these last twelve plus weeks. The Coronavirus Pandemic has forced many of us to confront things we had never considered before, such as what do we do when people cannot gather? In light of all the things we have struggled to figure out in the last weeks, I

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wanted to encourage you to capture those decisions and their reasoning into an Emergency Plan document so you have them for reference in the future. Most of us never thought a major pandemic would come along and we would be forced to reevaluate what we did and how we did it so quickly. Quite a bit of effort has been put in by staff, volunteers, and board members to come up with the answers to the vast questions asked by museums over the last few months.

By recording that information, we can give ourselves a leg up if, or when, this sort of situation ever arises again, whether in the form of a second wave of Covid-19 or a more isolated issue affecting a single museum. Our ability to record what happened provides us a better ability to react quickly. Many of the issues we faced in accordance with Covid-19 are actually difficulties we might encounter in other situations too. For instance, the museum might need to close temporarily and move to virtual programming due to a building safety issue. A local class that recently visited the museum might have an infectious disease outbreak and both people and collection objects in contact with them may need to go into short-term quarantine.

The policies and procedures created to deal with Covid-19 can be included in new sections or incorporated into existing sections of an Emergency plan. Some of the topics to consider addressing are:

- Closing procedures (both to staff/volunteers and public)
- Communications plan (both for staff/volunteers and public)
- Shelter-in-place collections procedure
- Building maintenance checklist (for collections and non-collections personnel)
- Quarantining the Collection
- Suspending collection donations
- Cleaning/sanitation schedules
- Reopening procedures (both to staff/volunteers and public)
- Staggered work schedules
- Virtual vs in-person content delivery protocol

Do not forget to outline who will be making these decisions and how. Are there specific resources they should look to? Perhaps they would look to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for infectious disease, but an architect or local fire marshal for building safety issues. Also indicate what portions of the plan require board approval or input versus what can be decided on and implemented by staff/volunteers.

Recording the discussions and decisions we have already made allows us to set up the organization for a quicker and less stressful response in the future. Even if nothing happens for decades, having some knowledge of what was done in the past can help us to decide what to do in the future. That is, after all, why we all exist. Isn't it?

Since many museum staff/volunteers are headed back to working in buildings, this will be our last Collections Minivisor. I hope it has given you some ideas of how to engage with the collection from a distance and I wish you luck as we all get back into the grove of working on site with our objects. Stay subscribed to continue receiving our monthly Collections Advisor. See you in July!

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[Local History Services](#)  
Indiana Historical Society, 450 West Ohio Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202  
(317) 232-1882 | [localhistoryservices@indianahistory.org](mailto:localhistoryservices@indianahistory.org)

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