



INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS ADVISOR

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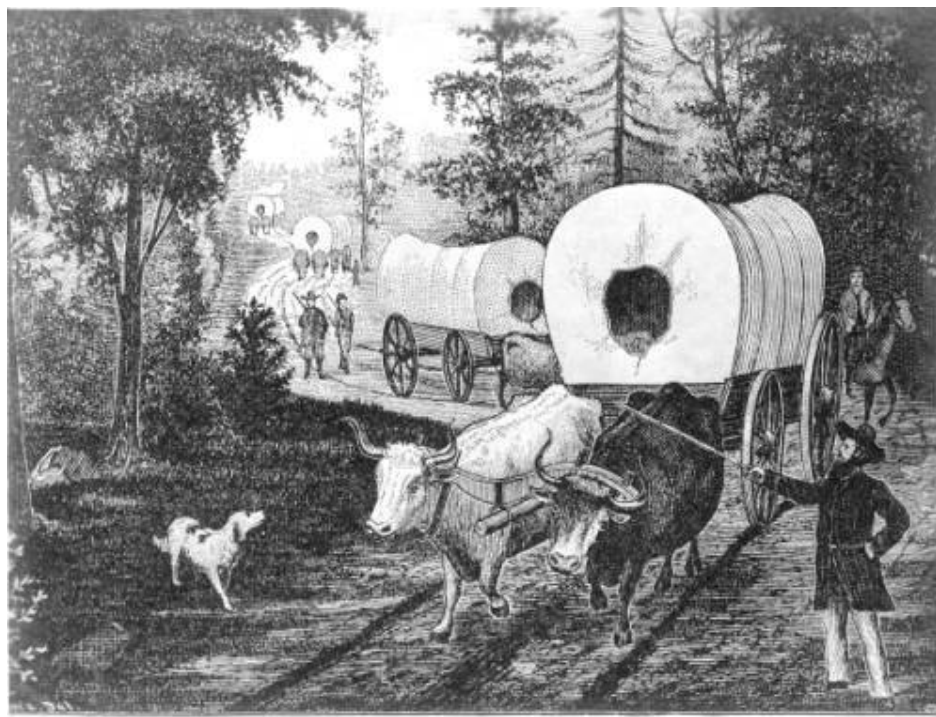
Issue 77 | March 2018

MAKING A COLLECTIONS MOVE

By Karen DePauw, coordinator, IHS Local History Services

Last month Collections Advisor focused on planning collections storage and research spaces, so this month the focus is on what to do when it comes time to make the big move. Moving a large segment of the collection can be intimidating. There is often a fear of something getting lost in the process, but with a little planning, coordination and preparation all can go smoothly.

Planning is an essential first step when making a collections move. Whether moving items temporarily or permanently, having a plan helps accomplish the task as smoothly as possible. Consider some of the following when making a plan.



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WAGON TRAIN ON NATIONAL ROAD. (Bass Photo Co Collection, Indiana Historical Society)

If the move is temporary (e.g. clearing out a room for a remodel with the intention of everything going back in upon completion), think about how long the collection will be displaced. The time frame could largely affect whether another area of the museum can become the temporary holding place, or if the collection will need to be housed off-site for a period of time. If an off-site location is needed, allow plenty of time to find a secure facility with environmental controls if possible. If an environmentally controlled space is not easily found, consider the time of year and schedule the collections move then (perhaps the collection being moved would be less affected by the cold than the heat, making winter more ideal than summer).

If the collection can be relocated temporarily to another museum space, make sure to plan well



ONLINE RESOURCES

[Chapter 7: Museum Collection Storage](#)
(National Park Service)

[Appendix D: Guidance on Planning for a Research Space](#)
(National Park Service)

FROM OUR LENDING RESOURCE CENTER

[Managing Previously Unmanaged Collections](#)
(Angela Kipp)

[Reshaping Museum Space](#)
(Suzanne MacLeod, ed.)

[Moving Archives](#)
(John Newman and Walter Jones, eds.)

UPCOMING TRAINING AND PROGRAMS

[Museum Boot Camp](#)
March 5 -
Carnegie Center for Art and History, New Albany.

[Making the Case for Your Museum](#)
March 7 -
Wisconsin Historical Society webinar.

[Pitching Your Project](#)
March 8 -
Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center, Indianapolis.

enough in advance to ensure the holding place does not get booked for a rental or other activity in the midst of the collections move. If the museum has a closed season, look into doing the work and making the move during that time when collection items from storage can be temporarily stored in exhibition spaces. All of this takes quite a bit of organization and pre-planning, especially if working with outside vendors and contractors to rehabilitate the current storage space.

A collections move to a brand new location can be a bit easier in terms of not requiring a holding space for a long period of time. However, planning is still very important in these instances. Make sure the space being moved into is thoroughly ready to receive the collection. Museum collections often contain fragile items. Make sure all work in the new space is completed prior to moving collections. Also, consider if the new space is being painted or furnished with materials that will off-gas and leave a few weeks after completion for those things to naturally occur before introducing the collection into the space.



[Construction in the Indiana Statehouse.](#) (Indiana Historical Society)

Consider exactly how the objects will physically move from one space to another, whether to a temporary holding space and then back again, or to a new permanent home. Decide if all of the items from the current space will be moving or if this will also become an opportunity to go through the collections currently housed together. This may mean relocating some items to a different storage area, such as a rogue shovel in costume storage moving to tools storage, or it may mean identifying potential deaccessions. Designating a space for potential deaccession items could be a good thing when the move begins, allowing for the easy collection of these items so once the dust settles on the move they can be carefully examined and put through the museum's rigorous deaccession process to determine whether or not they will ultimately rejoin the collection in its new home.

Also, think about how many people will be needed to move certain items. Are there large pieces of furniture or art requiring at least two people to move? Are there particularly heavy collection items, like machinery or milling stones, requiring specialized equipment or hired assistance? If additional hands or hired workers are needed, think about the process of when these things need to move. Will they move first or are they buried in the back and move last? Can they all be moved on or around the same day? Thinking about this before beginning to move objects can help make for a smooth move.



[Piano Movers at Wilking Music Company](#). (Bass Photo Co Collection, Indiana Historical Society)

As the collection is prepared, consider what kind of moving supplies will be needed. Keep in mind the supplies used for moving a collection do not have to fit the same requirements as the supplies used for long-term storage and preservation. For instance, although bubble wrap can harm glassware and ceramics as the plastic degrades over time, it may still be the best option for wrapping these delicate items so they arrive safely at their destination. If the items will remain in their moving containers for less than a year, it is very possible to incorporate things like plastic tubs, cardboard boxes, moving blankets and bubble wrap. Protecting the items for the short term is key during a collections move. As moving containers are being packed, be sure to label them with the contents (object name and accession number) to make finding things during and after the move easier.

Finally, remember to think about how the temporary or new permanent storage space needs to function before moving a single artifact. This can be a great opportunity to make sure like items are stored together. For instance, rather than having ten dress boxes stored throughout the room, make sure they all stay together. Also, with temporary storage especially, think about any items that might need to be accessed between the moves and make sure they are in an easily accessible space. This can be particularly important if the museum will be functioning at normal capacity during the move, such as continuing to work with researchers.



[Furniture Movers in Spiceland, Indiana](#). (Indiana Historical Society)

Furthermore, considering how the new space will be arranged before the items are ever removed from the old space will make for a smoother move. Think about it the same way as moving from one house to another it is imperative to go in knowing which room will be the bedroom and which the office so that as boxes are packed at the old house they are marked appropriately to identify their contents and destination. Thus, once moved to the new house, they do not need to move from place to place until they find their permanent home. Collection items tend to be fragile and moving them as little as possible reduces the risk of breakage, so decide where the item is going (room, shelving unit, even shelf if possible) before it is ever moved.

There is quite a bit to consider when moving large segments of the collection, but with a little bit of planning, coordination and preparation the move can go off without a hitch.

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