

[View as web page](#)

# INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS ADVISOR

A RESOURCE FROM IHS LOCAL HISTORY SERVICES

[LOCAL HISTORY SERVICES](#) | [INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY](#) | [PAST ISSUES](#) | FOLLOW LHS ON:  

Issue 100 | February 2020

## CELEBRATING 100 ISSUES

By Karen DePauw, manager, IHS Local History Services

To celebrate Issue 100 of Collections Advisor, I thought it would be fun to take a look back and gather up tips from previous issues. However, it turns out that 100 tips is quite a bit for one go, so here are the first 50 tips from 100 Collections Advisors. More to come!



One of my all time favorite photos to appear in Collections Advisor. ([Issue 43](#))

- 1) When considering digitizing your collection, keep in mind that “a description of a document or image may not capture the attention of a possible patron as much as seeing a high-quality image.” ([Issue 3](#))
- 2) Consider hosting a Conservator’s Holiday in order to concentrate volunteer efforts for a short time on one specific project. ([Issue 4](#))
- 3) “Be sure to keep careful records of why changes to (collections) numbering systems are made to avoid confusion in the future.” ([Issue 5](#))
- 4) The best type of hanging method for two-dimensional works is to mount a “D”-ring on either side of the back of the frame rather than using eye hooks and picture wire. This provides more stability for the item when it hangs. ([Issue 8](#))
- 5) “If your collection is housed in a historic building, it just may be your most important artifact. [...] The building is also the first line of defines in caring for your collections. Without a weather-tight facility, collections are vulnerable to deterioration from moisture, pests or temperature fluctuations.” ([Issue 9](#))
- 6) “Object labeling is not a fast process and involves several steps. Labeling should be done carefully and not cause damage to the object. [...] Remember it is important to do no harm. If you have any questions about the best way to label an object, check with a conservator before you begin.” ([Issue 11](#))

### ONLINE RESOURCES

[Collections Advisor](#)  
(Local History Services,  
Indiana Historical  
Society)

### UPCOMING TRAINING AND PROGRAMS

[Identifying and Preserving Motion Picture Film](#)  
Feb. 20 -  
Connecting to  
Collections Care  
webinar.

- 7) "Conservators are those professionally trained in the evaluation, examination, treatment, storage, display and environmental requirements of artifacts." ([Issue 12](#))
- 8) "Check with local law enforcement agencies to determine if you need to obtain permits for firearms in your collections. Permits may be necessary for certain classes of weapons even if they are in museum collections." ([Issue 15](#))
- 9) "Check with a pharmacist before emptying old medicine bottles. [...] A pharmacist will be able to advise you how to properly and safely dispose of the medicine." ([Issue 15](#))
- 10) When unpacking a box of potential donation items "Expect the unexpected. Sometimes there are surprises in the boxes. [...] Be cautious." ([Issue 16](#))
- 11) "Store (plastics) in dark, cool, dry and ventilated places. Don't isolate the object inside an airtight container to 'cook' in its own vapor." ([Issue 17](#))
- 12) "Wash your hands. And don't use lotion before you work with your photos and documents." ([Issue 19](#))
- 13) "Store books upright on shelves so that they don't lean. Leaning can cause permanent warping of the bindings and pages." ([Issue 19](#))
- 14) "One of the leading causes of damage to collection items is poor environment and storage conditions. The best environment to store your materials is one that is dry, cool and stable with good air circulation and minimal light exposure." ([Issue 22](#))
- 15) "When touching books, it is important to have clean hands to reduce the transfer of finger oils and dirt which could cause staining or damage." ([Issue 22](#))
- 16) "A good collections management policy is important for any collecting institution." ([Issue 23](#))
- 17) "Museum objects connect visitors in meaningful ways to other times in history, different cultures and new ways of thinking about our place in the world." ([Issue 24](#))
- 18) "People who are blind or have low vision are the demographic group most underserved by museums because of the highly visual nature of exhibits. [...] To provide equitable access to collections, a museum should establish very clear policies and procedures for allowing visitors with visual impairments to touch objects. [...] A growing trend is the development of specialized touch tours which have proven to be extremely popular." ([Issue 24](#))
- 19) "Integrated Pest Management programs are prevention programs that take into account the possibility of infestation from a variety of sources. Involving staff and volunteers in reducing or preventing infestation helps preserve a collection long-term." ([Issue 25](#))
- 20) "Incoming collections [...] come from a variety of environments and should be segregated from the rest of the collection." ([Issue 25](#))
- 21) "Inspecting areas of the building vulnerable to infiltration by insects, birds or rodents should be done on an annual basis." ([Issue 25](#))
- 22) Food and live plants should not be allowed in areas that house collections as they can attract pests. ([Issue 25](#))
- 23) "Regularly inspecting objects on display and in storage for signs of insect activity helps uncover existing problems." ([Issue 25](#))
- 24) "A disaster can happen to any museum at any time. [...] While board, staff and volunteers of museums can't prevent most disasters, we can prepare for them. We can take measures to protect our collections better and make recovery processes easier." ([Issue 27](#))
- 25) "When we look at different objects, we realize that many are the sum of many parts. [...] Certain characteristics make objects prone to deterioration and knowing about those characteristics allows you to become more knowledgeable about how to gently handle, move and

use objects with care." ([Issue 29](#))

26) "Gloves are worn when lifting artifacts that are metal, gilded, varnished or have coatings that are vulnerable to corrosive hand oils." With other items "washed hands are suitable." ([Issue 30](#))

27) "Before moving a piece of furniture, examine it closely for any loose or damaged joinery." ([Issue 30](#))

28) Many types of objects are light sensitive and light damage is both cumulative and irreversible. One way to think about displaying light sensitive objects is to consider that "you can display the object frequently now, or you can display it seldom so that your great-great grandchildren might get a chance to see it." ([Issue 31](#))

29) "The high humidity that results from basement dampness can cause irreversible damage to the structure of your historic building and to the irreplaceable collections housed inside. Preventative maintenance and creating a cyclical maintenance checklist are two proactive ways that you can reduce the cost of repairs and ensure that your collections are protected from the elements." ([Issue 32](#))

30) "As technology evolves, creating online catalogs and video tours becomes an efficient way to provide better access to collections and puts them within virtual reach of visitors through our websites. Going digital is also a powerful accessibility asset to people with disabilities and supports any organization's mission to offer an equal opportunity for all people to benefit from the educational and aesthetic value of collections." ([Issue 34](#))

31) Make your website compatible with screenreader software, provide verbal descriptions of images, and caption your videos. This will increase the accessibility for more of your audience. ([Issue 34](#))

32) "Be aware that rapid changes in RH or temperature are very harmful to materials. Strive for consistency." ([Issue 35](#))

33) For collections storage "Use metal furniture with powder coat finishes. Do not use wood. Finished and unfinished wood may outgas peroxides and other organic vapors contributing to acid migration." ([Issue 35](#))

34) "Indiana's Museum Property Law (IC 32-34-5) can help museums and historical societies gain ownership of lingering loans, undocumented property and abandoned property in our collections." ([Issue 37](#))

35) "A collections committee is appointed by an organization's board of trustees to oversee the collections. Typically, collections committees oversee: accessioning; deaccessioning; collections policy matters; and loans to and from the museum." ([Issue 43](#))

36) Use public programs, traveling exhibits and online platforms to promote awareness for your collections and their care. ([Issue 46](#))

37) "Even if you are not ready for a strategic plan, your staff, board and volunteers can still plan strategically. By integrating even the most basic plans for collections care, fundraising and interpretation into an institutional plan, you can help ensure that your organization remains sustainable and relevant." ([Issue 47](#))

38) "Disaster and emergency planning is not a quick or easy process, but you don't have to start with a blank slate; there are lots of resources available online to help you." ([Issue 49](#))

39) At the beginning of a new year "review your museum policies and standards and make sure they are up-to-date and accessible with clear and concise notes. Go over them with staff and volunteers." ([Issue 51](#))

40) "Don't collect anything and everything: Make sure your collections policy is current, and that you have good procedures in place for accessioning items. Only accept things that truly fit your organization's mission and that you can properly care for." ([Issue 51](#))

- 41) "Close all hooks and eyes and zippers before storing garments." This prevents damage from snagging on other garments whether stored boxed or hanging. ([Issue 52](#))
- 42) Use acid-free boxes and acid-free tissue paper to store collection items. ([Issue 52](#))
- 43) "Use padded hangers for garments that are strong enough to hang" in storage. ([Issue 52](#))
- 44) "Never hesitate to seek out the services of a professional conservator, historian or appraiser who can help to authenticate an object of great historical value if it seems to be questionable in any way, especially if the museum is contemplating a purchase." ([Issue 53](#))
- 45) "In its simplest form, performing a collection inventory is the act of taking stock of all of the collection objects in the possession of a museum. [...] If you are unsure of what is in your store rooms, where items are located, or if your paperwork is up to snuff, an inventory is the first place to start." ([Issue 54](#))
- 46) Performing an inventory allows you to "get to know your collection." ([Issue 54](#))
- 47) Utilize unscented clay cat litter to help absorb odor from old books. ([Issue 56](#))
- 48) "The recommended light level for light sensitive items is approximately 50 lux." ([Issue 58](#))
- 49) "Collection objects tend to like different temperatures, but most can be quite happy with a consistent temperature between 64 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit as long as the temperature does not fluctuate too quickly or too frequently." ([Issue 58](#))
- 50) "As a general rule of thumb, keep RH (Relative Humidity) between 30 and 50 percent with daily fluctuations below 3 percent and seasonal fluctuations below 10 percent." ([Issue 58](#))

## HERITAGE SUPPORT GRANTS ARE BACK!

The Indiana Historical Society is pleased to announce the [continuation of its Heritage Support Grants program](#), an initiative launched in 2015 and made possible by a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. The program will award \$2.5 million to local historical organizations during the next five years.

Summary of Proposal submissions for the first cycle of Project grants, which range from \$5,000 to \$50,000, are due by **March 3, 2020**. Upcoming proposal deadlines for Mini grants, which range from \$500 to \$4,999, are June 2, 2020, and Sept. 1, 2020.

Specific funding priorities for upcoming grant opportunities include the following: collections stewardship; diversity, equity, access and inclusion; sustainability; and planning. Eligible organizations must be incorporated as nonprofits in the state of Indiana with history as a significant component of their missions and annual budgets of less than \$300,000.

[LEARN MORE](#)

---

This is a free publication. Anyone may subscribe.

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

**WE DO  
HISTORY.**  
INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Smithsonian  
Affiliate



PROUD MEMBER OF THE  
International Coalition of  
SITES of CONSCIENCE

Indiana's Storyteller™, Connecting People to the Past