

INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS ADVISOR

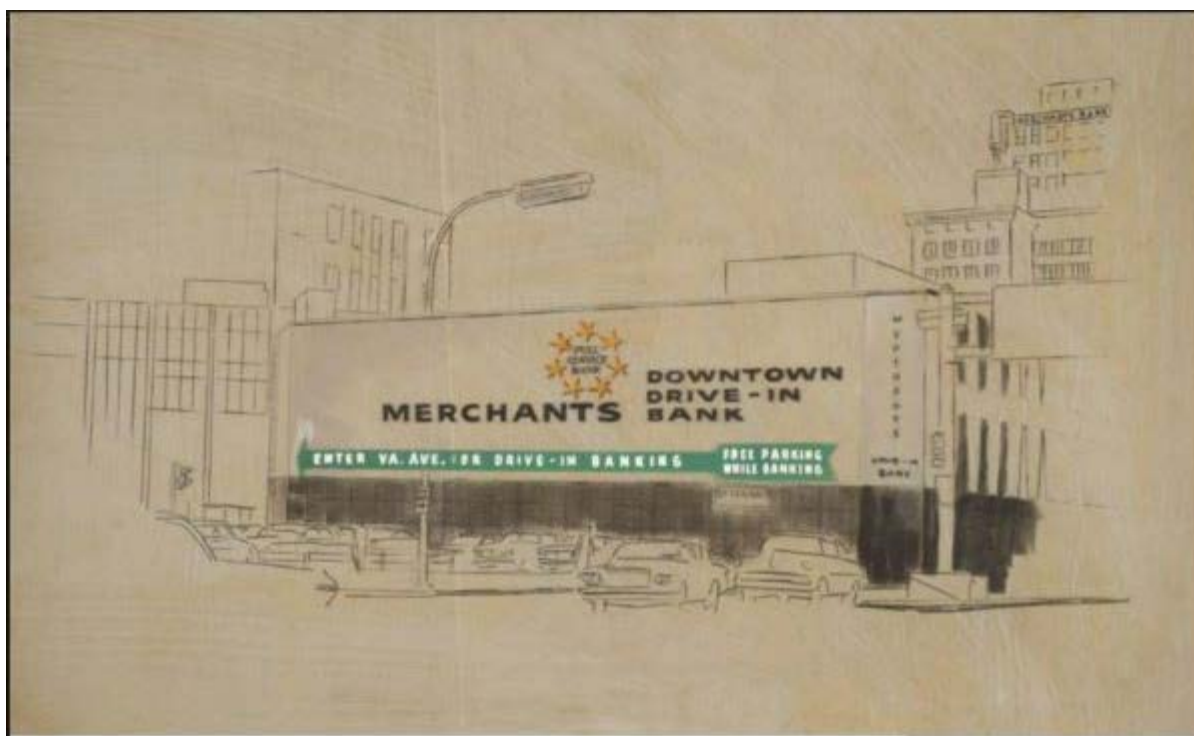
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Budgeting for Collections

By Karen DePauw, Manager, Local History Services

It can be easy to think about collections as a passive thing that just exists at our institutions, but there are a number of costs associated with the keeping and care of collections. Having even a basic understanding of the costs associated with having a collection can be helpful, not just in budgeting for current and future needs, but also for identifying potential areas for fundraising and grants. Whether budgeting for the collection is new to your organization or something you have been doing for years, below (in no particular order) are a few things to consider including in your collections budget.



[Merchants Bank Downtown Branch](#) (Indiana Historical Society, P0767)

- Acquisition funds – These funds are typically earmarked to acquire objects that are up for sale and would be important additions to the collection.

Cleaning supplies – This might include large items, like a HEPA vacuum, or smaller items like natural bristle brushes for dusting.

- Database – The initial cost of a collections management system and/or annual license fees or costs to upgrade and update the system.
- Deaccession-related costs – There may be costs associated with deaccessioning, such as transporting items to a more appropriate collection or sending items to auction.
- Emergency Response Supplies – This would include supplies helpful to have on hand in case disaster strikes, from trash bags and paper towels to personal protective equipment.
- Equipment upgrades and purchases – Technology can be an important tool for keeping track of collections. Things like up-to-date computers, scanners, or digital cameras would all fall into this category.
- Exhibit supplies - Think specifically about the pieces of an exhibit that help protect collections while on display, such as cases, mounts, and mannequins.
- Future needs – This might include both predictable needs, like a new server because of an upcoming digitization project, or unpredictable, like money for future object conservation.
- Insurance – Some organizations might hold specific art insurance policies to cover the collection and others might have it wrapped into a larger insurance policy. Either way, it is important to budget for that expense so it is there if it is ever needed.



[Currency] One Dollar (Indiana Historical Society, R1695)

- Maintenance and repairs to storage spaces – From fixing broken shelving to updating and repairing HVAC systems, these types of expenses can also be both predictable and unpredictable, so a level of preparation is always good.
- Maintenance of collection items - Some collection items might require annual care, such as keeping vehicles up and running or pianos tuned.
- Postage – While it might seem small, making sure that costs associated with collections mailings - like mailing Deeds of Gift - are accounted for can help you understand the true cost of collecting.
- Preservation Supplies – Whether temporary storage solutions, like Sterilite tubs, or longer-term solutions, like acid- and lignin-free boxes, preservation supplies are an ever-present need for collections. Also under this category might be general supplies like #2 pencils, paper tags, or nitrile gloves.
- Staff – These costs might be for permanent staff or for contract labor or interns.
- Storage fees – If the organization relies on off-site storage for some of its collection, there are often rental fees associated with it.

Subscriptions – This category might encompass subscription services used to research the collection, such as newspapers.com or ancestry.com.

- Utilities – The portion of the utilities tied to collection storage spaces can be considered here.



[Irwin Bank Gingerbread House](#) (Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Family Collection, Indiana Historical Society)

The categories listed above are not necessarily direct-care costs as might be defined by museum ethics for appropriate use of deaccession funds but are rather general costs to consider that might come up if you have a historic collection at your organization. Keeping these categories and costs in mind can help approach potential donors for funding of collection costs, or support grant applications to cover certain costs.

For more in-depth information about some of the above categories, like [cleaning supplies](#), check out our previous Collection Advisors.

Further Resources

- [Collections Advisors](#) (Indiana Historical Society)
- [6 Ways to Fund Museum Collections Care](#) (McMurray Stern)
- [Budgeting for Collections Care](#) (Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts)
- [Capitalize on Collections Care](#) (Institute of Museum and Library Services)
- [When Less is All You Got!](#) (Connecting to Collections Care)

Collection Trainings

[Forget the Best: Good and Better Approaches to Preservation](#)

Oct. 11 – (Connecting to Collections Care)

[C2C Care Course: Keeping Collections Safe in Storage](#)

Oct. 13 to Nov. 17 – (Connecting to Collections Care)

[Getting Started with Digitizing Photos and Documents](#)

Oct. 18 – (Northeast Document Conservation Center)

[DHPSNY: Not-So-Impossible Choices: Determining Priorities for Collection Salvage](#)

Oct. 20 – (Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts)

[AASLH 2022 Virtual Conference](#)

Nov. 1-3 – (American Association for State and Local History)

[Webinars](#)

Recorded – (Indiana Historical Society)

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