

A Year in Review

By Karen DePauw, Manager, Local History Services

As 2022 heads into its final month, it is a great time to review the last year. It can be so easy to start out the year with great intentions before falling into a cycle of moving from one thing to the next without looking back. By taking a moment to look back on a few things, we can identify what worked and what could work better. We can also take some time to review the general activities of the year and make sure everything is ready to move into the next.



[G.A.R. Review](#) (Indiana Historical Society, P0402)

Consider reviewing all collections policies and procedures. Collections Management Policies and other collections-geared policies often have built-in reviews, so this might just be a time to make sure those either happened this year or are firmly on the calendar for the future. Procedures, on the other hand, can be a bit trickier. It can be so easy to decide that if a procedure is not broken then it does not need reviewed but taking the time to review and adjust procedures can be very helpful. This review is not nearly as intense as those for policies and can often be done just by the people, or person, who primarily follow the procedure.

Along these same lines, look at the donations from the last year. Make sure each one either has a temporary receipt or a signed Deed of Gift. Follow up with any donations that are still in limbo. Check to see if any loan paperwork needs updating. And go through the collection storage spaces and make sure everything is put away and tidy, from items that came off exhibit to new collections needing home locations.



Peggy Williams Holiday and Private Charles Spinelli (Indiana Historical Society, M1225)

Another thing that can be helpful to review is research requests from the last year. Knowing what types of items and what topics have been of most interest to researchers might help guide the collections work of the next year. If you find researchers are particularly interested in the Great Depression, you can use that information to identify the next round of items to digitize or catalogue to make them more accessible.

If your organization does environmental monitoring, this is also a good time to check what it has been doing over the entire year. It is so easy to get to a point where you read out or collect the information but then get bogged down in other things that you forget to really LOOK at it. Take the time to go back over the data to identify any weird temperature or humidity spikes. Or to identify any places with high levels of UV lighting that should be adjusted. Compiling a yearly environmental report can help the museum identify problems in the future and understand trends and patterns over the entire year. Comparing what is happening in January 2023 to what happened in January 2022 helps you see if the problem is new or is something predictable due to the time of year. The report may also help you prioritize fixes to any environmental issues.



[Holy Angels School](#) (Indianapolis Recorder Collection, Indiana Historical Society)

Although the end of the year can feel a bit crazy, it can be a great time to work on these tasks. Most collections do not see an influx of donations around the holidays but can at the beginning of the year. By doing a review now, changes to policies and procedures can be in place before that influx begins anew. Additionally, if things are too crazy to get a review process going, it is a good idea to schedule these things for early in the next year to make sure they get done as soon as possible.

Further Resources

- [Collections Advisors](#) (Indiana Historical Society)
- [Timely Tips](#) (Indiana Historical Society)

Collection Trainings

[Leveraging Federal Resources to Improve Museum Security and Resilience](#)

Dec. 8 – (Texas Historical Commission)

[Fundraising from Donor Advised Funds](#)

Dec. 8 – (Lilly Family School of Philanthropy)

[Webinars](#)

Recorded – (Indiana Historical Society)

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