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Timely Tips: Handling Large Collection Objects

By Tamara Hemmerlein, Director, Local History Services

Museum collections are full of objects of all shapes and sizes. Sometimes we need to move them from one area to another in our storage spaces or from storage to an exhibit space and back again later. To safely make those moves, it's important to create a plan and know how to handle large objects during internal moves around the museum.



[Timely Tips: Handling Large Collections Objects](#) (Indiana Historical Society)

Consider yourself. Large objects are often heavy and can be unwieldy. Be sure to wear sturdy shoes and consider wearing a back brace. Think about the size and weight of the object you need to move and be honest about your physical ability to move it. Most large objects require at least two people, for both the safety of the object and the safety of the movers. Don't hesitate to hire professional movers if you need to.

When moving large objects, you can use a dolly. If the item is sturdy enough and your path is smooth, you might be able to use a flat furniture dolly. But you never want to use the furniture

sliders because pushing a piece of furniture can easily cause damage.

Examine the object before you move it. First, check to make sure the piece is securely joined together. For instance, case furniture, like Hoosier cabinets, are sometimes designed as two separate pieces. Check to see if these two pieces are securely joined together or if they can, and should, be moved separately. Also, look for parts that *should* be joined together but might not be, like tabletops. For objects with drawers, it's often best to take out the drawers and move them separately.

Identify any weak spots, like joins, and plan the move accordingly. Locating these will help you figure out where to safely lift the object. With some items it can be impossible to completely avoid weak areas, but knowing they are there will help you ensure the safety of the object.

Measure doorways, check the turning radius, and clear your path before moving any object. Make sure the path from where you are to where you are headed is clear of obstructions. And don't forget to look up for low lights or sprinklers! Also, check doorways and turning radiuses to make sure you and the object can both get through.

Remember there is no such thing as too many helpers. A good place to start is for two people to move the object and one person to open doors and be an extra set of eyes when going through doors and turning corners.

Moving those large objects through the museum can be a little intimidating and may produce a little anxiety. But if you plan ahead and think through the handling process both you and your objects will be just fine.

Further Resources

- [Collections Advisors](#) (Indiana Historical Society)
- [Conserv O Grams](#) (National Park Service)
- [Timely Tips](#) (Indiana Historical Society)

Collection Trainings

[Arsenic in Collections](#)

September 6 (Connecting to Collections Care)

[The Poison Book Project](#)

September 20 (Connecting to Collections Care)

[Water We Doing? Wet Treatment in Conservation](#)

September 21 (Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts)

[Webinars](#)

Recorded – (Indiana Historical Society)

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[Local History Services](#)

(317) 232-1882 | localhistoryservices@indianahistory.org

