

# INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS ADVISOR

A RESOURCE FROM IHS LOCAL HISTORY SERVICES

Issue 158 | December 2024

## Winterizing Your Collections

By Tamara Hemmerlein, Director, Local History Services

It isn't unusual for museums to close to visitors for a couple of months during certain times of the year. For many, it's an opportunity to take a deep dive into collections work – inventories, condition checks, rehousing projects, etc. For others, their sites become inaccessible due to weather or other environmental factors and staff may have limited access to buildings and collections. No matter what the winter situation is, it's important to plan for the winter.



*Hagenbeck-Wallace Winter Quarters (Indiana Historical Society, P0248)*

Start with the big picture and think of your building as the envelope for your collections. Make a plan to help ensure that you are doing all you can to prepare your building for changes in the weather and the times when no one is onsite.

If your site is one that closes entirely for part of the year, an important step is to check with your insurer to determine what you need to do to maintain insurance coverage. Do you need

to develop a site inspection schedule? Is there a need for someone to be onsite for a specific amount of time? Do you need to show that you've taken extra security measures? Consider letting your local fire department, law enforcement agencies, and security company know that the building will only be periodically occupied. They may be able to give you some advice or provide extra monitoring.

Check on all your building systems. Acquaint everyone with any shut off valves or boxes and show them how they work. This is also a great time to ensure that everything is correctly labeled. Know what should be done with each of your utilities. Are there some that should be shut off? Are there some areas that will need to be checked on periodically? Should you drain the pipes? Does someone need to be tasked with checking the pipes if the temperature drops below freezing? If there's an emergency, who should be contacted to determine whether your Emergency/Disaster Preparedness Plan should be activated?

Think about managing light, temperature, and relative humidity. If you plan on lowering or raising the temperature of your building, you'll need to do it slowly so that the collections objects have time to adjust to the changes. Take into consideration the varying types of objects in your collections. If you have zoned HVAC, you'll need to think about how you'll accommodate object care needs. If you have doors or transoms, you may be able to open and close them to manage temperature changes. It's also important to continue to monitor the environment to check for changes. If your building isn't open to visitors, then you may be able to limit lighting in some areas. You may also consider closing shades so that outside light exposure is limited.

Consider talking to a pest control company to find out how to best monitor the building. Do a walkthrough of your collections spaces to set a baseline for conditions. If you have an integrated pest management system, refer to it to be sure that you're following your plan. Do you need to replace insect traps with new ones? Is someone going to do periodic walk throughs – checking the traps, looking for evidence of pests such as piles of sawdust, dead insects, eggs, or larvae casings? Who should be contacted if you find evidence of an infestation? Check and double check that all food and trash has been removed from the building.

If your site is closed for part of the year, it's important to remember that it still needs to be cared for and monitored so that both your buildings and collections are kept safe and secure.

## Resources

- [Collections Advisors](#) (Indiana Historical Society)
- [Timely Tips](#) (Indiana Historical Society)
- [Resource Page](#) (Association of Indiana Museums)

## Collection Trainings

[Good Care for Good Reads \(and More!\)](#)

**Dec. 7** (Conservation Center for Art and Historical Artifacts)

[DHPSNY: Processing Priorities: Setting Goals for Your Collections](#)

**Dec. 10** (Conservation Center for Art and Historical Artifacts)

## Webinars

- [Recorded](#) (Indiana Historical Society)
- [Recorded](#) (Texas Historical Commission)

---

This is a free publication. Anyone may subscribe.  
Read past issues of Collections Advisor [here](#).

[Local History Services](#)  
(317) 232-1882 | [localhistoryservices@indianahistory.org](mailto:localhistoryservices@indianahistory.org)

