Practical Preservation: Applied Approaches to Collections Care

Samantha Forsko

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Table 2.1 ***Example Collection Tiering Rubric from the Framingham History Center***

Criteria	**Score: 1pt**	**Score: 2pt**	**Score: 3pt**
Provenance (1pt for known, 2pt for partial, 3pt for unknown)			
Condition (1pt for excellent/good, 2pt for fair, 3pt for poor)			
Relates to Mission or Fits in Collecting Scope (1pt for most relevant - 3pt for least relevant)			
Fills a Gap in Collection (1pt for best fit - 3pt for not filling a gap)			
Storage (1pt for easy to store/uses the least resources - 3pt for complicated storage requirements)			
Significance (1pt for National/International, 2pt for Local, 3pt for none)			
Rarity (1pt for rare - 3pt for common)			
Research or Exhibition Value (1pt for high value - 3pt for low value)			
TOTAL SCORE:			
Final Tier: • TIER 1: scores between 8-12 pts • TIER 2: scores between 12-19 pts • TIER 3: scores between 20-24 pts			

Table 5.1. ***The Agents of Deterioration in Exhibitions***

Agent	Why Risk is Increase during Exhibition
Physical Forces	More handling, such as that which is needed for installation and deinstallation of an exhibition, increases the opportunity for handling incidents such as dropping, scrapping, or bumping. Once on display, there are increased opportunities for interaction with visitors, and accidents do happen. An artifact must be mounted properly to avoid physical forces and gravity from causing long term damage. Even when mounted properly, there are materials that may require a display that is not fully supported, and is inherently damaging for the artifact. An example of this may be a draped textile.
Thieves and Vandals	Artifacts on display are more available to thieves and vandals. Without **security hardware**, and even with security hardware in some instances, small items may be pocketed from display. By having artifacts on display, they are available for the public to interact with, which includes harmful interactions, intentional or unintentional.
Fire	Often, especially in older buildings, there is limited fire suppression. This may mean that artifacts on exhibit would stand a better chance of survival than those in storage because suppression efforts would likely be focused on exhibition spaces, as these areas are often prioritized due to the possibility of there also being humans in these spaces. However, in some cases, it may be the situation that storage areas have better fire protections, such as fire proof cabinets or an enclosed suppression system.
Water	With visitors comes water. It may be in the form of a beverage, some raindrops on their jacket, or even saliva. Often when on exhibit, artifacts are not in protective housings in order to increase viewing ability, but this may also offer less protection in the event of a pipe burst or other water emergency.
Pests	Humans often provide hospitable environments to pests, which often includes access to food. With more visitors comes more opportunities for exposure to pests that could be potentially detrimental to collections. Special events that have food, and therefore possibly pests, also often happen in or near gallery spaces. Artifacts without protective coverings when on display are more vulnerable to pest attack.
Pollutants	Visitors increase the presence of dust and dirt inside of exhibition areas, tracking pollutants from the outside world as well as their own skin particles inside the building.

	Regularly changing exhibition spaces may have more chemical particles that might be damaging to artifacts from paints, varnishes, glues, and other exhibit construction materials. A lack of a primary enclosure makes artifacts on exhibit more vulnerable to these particles.
Light	In storage, it is possible to keep lights off more frequently, and keep artifacts in opaque enclosures. On exhibition, the whole point is to look at the artifacts, which requires light. Not only are artifacts on exhibition exposed to more ambient light, but they are also often intensely illuminated for improved viewing.
Incorrect Temperature	The ideal temperature for visitor comfort is not the same as the ideal temperature for preservation of artifacts; it is typically warmer. Higher temperatures increase chemical reactions and speeds up degradation. Temperature will fluctuate with the amount of visitors in the room, which either requires a very sophisticated climate control system or exposing the artifacts to fluctuating temperatures.
Incorrect Humidity	Temperature and humidity are related, and therefore many of their issues are similar.
Dissociation	This is the one agent that is almost definitely improved by having an artifact on exhibition. Exhibited artifacts usually receive intense study before being put on display, and then once on display, they may invite even more information to be brought forth about them.

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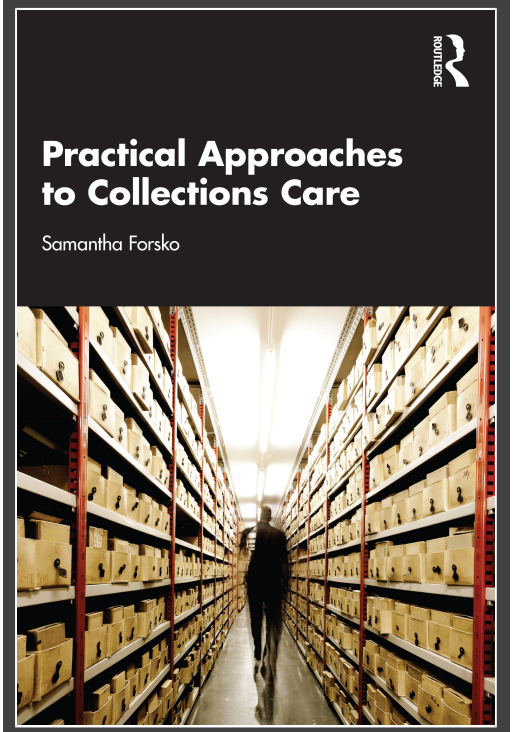

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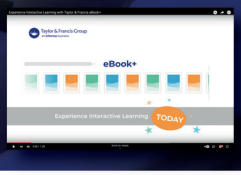

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