

Georgia Healthy Collections Initiative

Sample Institutional Report

2008-2009

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for participating in the Georgia Healthy Collections Initiative (HCI) Test Survey! In addition to providing general information about the status of collections preservation in Georgia, the survey was designed to determine the current position of each participating institution's preservation program on a "stair-step" scale of 1 to 4 (minimal, basic, advanced, and comprehensive).

To this end, 19 questions within the HCI Survey were used to calculate an overall current stair-step level for each institution, as well as stair-step levels for each of the seven categories in the survey. Scores from .50-1.59 were Level 1, scores from 1.60-2.59 were Level 2, scores from 2.60-3.59 were Level 3, and scores from 3.60-4.00 were Level 4. Rankings for your institution are provided in this report, both overall and within each preservation category.

For each category, this report also provides background information and suggested actions that you might take to move preservation activities to the next "stair-step." This is a very general evaluation, and is not meant to replace an overall preservation assessment, but we hope that it will assist you in addressing preservation needs within your institution. Internet links to additional information are also provided.

Finally, we want to emphasize that all information in this report will be kept private. Data from the HCI Survey will be shared in aggregate, but no identifying information will ever be shared about any individual institution.

OVERALL STAIR-STEP LEVEL

2.37 = Step 2

CATEGORY STAIR-STEP LEVELS

Intellectual Control	2.00 = Step 2
Preservation Management	2.67 = Step 3
Environmental Control	2.40 = Step 2
Emergency Planning	2.40 = Step 2
Collections Care	2.00 = Step 2
Expenditures and Funding	3.00 = Step 3

RECOMMENDATIONS BY CATEGORY

Intellectual Control

What is intellectual control? Essentially, it means knowing what materials your institution holds, understanding their content and characteristics, and describing them in a useful way. Intellectual control over collections is crucial to effective preservation. Resources available for preservation of collections are often limited, so relative priorities must be set and resources allocated to those materials that are most important to the institution. It is difficult to do this when collections are uncataloged and their characteristics and relationship to the institution's mission are unknown.

Good intellectual control over collections provides additional advantages; it helps you make your holdings accessible to users and makes it easier to keep track of collections during use. It also allows you to compare your collections to those of other institutions, which can be helpful in setting your own preservation priorities (you may target your preservation activities toward unique collections and/or those that are not preserved elsewhere).

Intellectual control takes different forms depending on the type of institution; a library or museum may catalog each book or object (providing descriptive detail that might include title, author or creator, physical description, provenance, history, accession information, etc.), while an archives may create more general finding aids that provide background and provenance of collections, but describe them at the folder or box (rather than the item) level.

Cataloging records should be made available electronically; this makes access and information-sharing easier. Again, the method(s) used will vary depending on the type of institution. These might include use of the standard MARC format, Encoded Archival Description (EAD) for web-based access, and/or database software such as Access, File Maker Pro, Archon, Archivist's Toolkit, Past Perfect, Voyager, or PINES. See Northeast Document Conservation Center's [Preservation 101, Session 1](#) for a general introduction to intellectual control for libraries and archives. The [American Association of Museums](#) and [Association for State and Local History](#) websites are good places to start for information about managing museum and historical collections.

*Your current stair-step level in this category is **Step 2**. To move to **Step 3**, we recommend that you:*

- Continue existing cataloging projects, with the goal of cataloging a majority of your collections.
- Add detail to existing cataloging records as appropriate, including records of preservation activities that are carried out on items or groups of items.
- Computerize your cataloging records if this has not been done.

Preservation Management

The term preservation management describes the process of analyzing collection preservation needs, identifying resources, and determining how best to allocate those resources. Specific preservation management activities might include devising a mission statement and collecting policy, conducting a preservation assessment, assigning staff responsibilities for preservation activities, and writing a preservation plan for your collections.

The mission statement should identify your institution's overall goals for the collection. In very general terms, it should indicate what your repository will collect, what types of users it will serve, and how you will care for your collections. It is very important to include a reference to preservation in your mission statement, since this will help to give preservation equal status with other institutional activities such as making collections available to users. The mission statement (and an accompanying collecting policy that provides more detail) will guide your preservation decisions by articulating your institution's overall goals so you can identify the collections in need that are most important to those goals.

For most institutions, the best way to assess preservation needs is to conduct a preservation assessment. This is normally a one day survey (most often done by an outside consultant) in which the surveyor evaluates the collections, the building, and existing preservation activities. A report with recommendations for future action is provided, often with short-, medium-, and long-term priorities for preservation.

The preservation assessment can be used to create a preservation plan for your collections. Staffing for preservation will be crucial to successful implementation of such a plan. While it is not practical for smaller institutions to have full-time preservation staff, it is important for institutions with a commitment to preservation to give staff members specific preservation responsibilities and sufficient time to carry them out.

See Northeast Document Conservation Center's [Preservation 101, Session 1](#) for information on mission statements for libraries and archives. See the [American Association of Museums](#) for information about mission statements for museums, as well as other standards and best practices. The [American Association for State and Local History bookstore](#) also provides a variety of technical leaflets and other publications, some of which address preservation management issues.

*Your current stair-step level in this category is **Step 3**. To move to **Step 4**, we recommend that you:*

- Include preservation in your institution's mission statement, to place it on an equal footing with other institutional activities.
- Use the general preservation assessment of your institution and collections to create a long-range preservation plan. Short, medium, and long term priorities should be determined, if this was not done as part of the preservation assessment process.
- Write preservation responsibilities into staff job descriptions, ensure that time is provided for staff to carry them out, and provide ongoing training, education, and networking opportunities for staff with preservation responsibilities.
- Use qualified external service providers for preservation needs requiring specialized skills or technologies (e.g., microfilming, scanning, treatment), as appropriate.

Environmental Control

Control of temperature and relative humidity (RH) greatly affects the lifespan of your collections, but the importance of environmental control is sometimes overlooked because the detrimental effects of poor conditions are not obvious in the short term. In fact, high temperature and RH can dramatically lower the life expectancy of collections, while moderate stable conditions result in a longer life expectancy. Why is this? In simple terms, high temperature and RH provide fuel for the chemical reactions that contribute to deterioration.

Guidelines for temperature and relative humidity vary by type of collection. For paper collections, a temperature of 70°F or lower, and a stable RH between 30% and 50% is recommended. In practice, there are a number of issues that affect environmental control, ranging from outdoor conditions, to the type of climate control equipment used, to whether or not temperature and humidity settings are changed from day to day. It is absolutely essential to monitor and track temperature and RH in storage areas on an ongoing basis. This provides an accurate picture of climate conditions throughout the year, allowing you to make changes to climate control equipment as needed. See the [Image Permanence Institute](#) for information about current research into the effects of temperature and RH on collections.

Light control is also important to the long-term preservation of collections. Light exposure is cumulative, and it can cause fading, weakening, and discoloration. Light exposure can be a problem in storage, exhibition, and/or use of collections. Possible protections against light damage include turning off lights, installing timers on lights, using shades or blinds, installing UV film, using low-UV fluorescent bulbs, using UV-filters for fluorescent bulbs, boxing collections, limiting the length of exhibitions, providing covers for exhibit cases, and setting upper limits for light levels in exhibit areas. See Northeast Document Conservation Center's "[Protection from Light Damage](#)" for a summary of the effects of light on paper collections.

*Your current stair-step level in this category is **Step 2**. To move to **Step 3**, we recommend that you:*

- Add a standard HVAC system to your collection storage areas if this has not been done. You may also need additional RH control, such as supplemental dehumidification in summer. Educate facilities staff about climate needs for your collections.
- Run temperature control equipment 24 hours a day (do not turn off the heat on weekends or at night). Run RH control equipment 24 hours a day also, if it is possible and safe to do so. Be sure staff and facilities personnel do not alter temperature or RH settings for personal comfort.
- Use one or more continuous monitoring instrument(s)—e.g., hygrothermograph or datalogger—to record climate conditions regularly in all collection storage areas.
- Maintain records of all climate readings so that they can be analyzed to determine if changes are needed. Assign responsibility for downloading or transcribing readings to specific staff members.
- Protect collections from visible and UV light exposure in storage areas, ensuring that most items are protected.
- Protect collections from visible and UV light exposure during exhibition and use, ensuring that most items are protected.

Emergency Planning

Most institutions have an emergency plan for staff/patrons, but many do not include salvage of collections. Important elements to include in a plan for collections include: emergency numbers,

emergency response instructions, salvage instructions for the types of collections held by the institution, collection salvage priorities, services and suppliers (especially local freezer facilities for wet collections), facilities information, insurance information, and information on dealing with local emergency management personnel (e.g., police, firefighters, emergency managers).

An emergency plan will not be effective if staff members do not know how to use it. Staff members must be regularly trained in using the plan, and the plan must be updated at least once a year. Copies should be widely circulated throughout the institution and stored offsite as well. It is also very helpful to put together a kit of emergency supplies that staff can use to begin salvaging collections as needed – but be sure that they know how to use the supplies properly. Quick response to a water disaster can prevent additional damage and mold growth. This kit must also be reviewed frequently and replenished as it is used.

Emergency planning includes preventive activities as well as emergency response. Both fire prevention and security play an important role in safeguarding collections and preventing emergencies. Fire can damage collections beyond hope of recovery, and valuable collections can be lost or damaged due to theft and/or vandalism. Manual alarms, fire extinguishers, automated fire detection, and automated fire suppression equipment can be used to protect against fire. Alarms, security systems, guards/patrols, and monitoring of collection use can all be used to enhance security. Fire protection and security systems should be monitored 24 hours a day whenever possible.

See Heritage Preservation's [Heritage Emergency National Task Force](#) for information on emergency preparedness for collections, as well as the American Institute for Conservation's [Disaster Response and Recovery](#) page. See Northeast Document Conservation Center and Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners' [dPlan](#) for a free online template that allows you to create a disaster plan for your institution.

*Your current stair-step level in this category is **Step 2**. To move to **Step 3**, we recommend that you:*

- Continue developing your emergency plan, with the goal of creating a usable product, even if it does not cover every possible emergency. Assess the most serious risks faced by your institution and plan for those first (e.g., hurricane, flooding). Important elements to include are: an emergency call list, a list of local freezer storage space in case of a water disaster, basic instructions for salvaging wet collections, information about collections insurance, procedures for accessing money, and a list of priority collections and their locations.
- Circulate the emergency plan among staff, and train staff to use the plan. Hold training sessions or exercises at least once per year.
- Put together a supply kit for responding to significant damage to collections. This might include boxes for packing out collections, freezer paper, absorbent paper, flashlights, scissors, tape, a wet-vacuum, portable fans, etc.
- Install a fire detection system that is monitored 24 hours a day, if this has not yet been done.
- Install a security system that is monitored 24 hours a day. Ensure that procedures for monitoring collection use (e.g., registration forms, requiring users to check personal belongings, arranging for continuous observation of researchers during use) are universally enforced.

Collections Care

The term “collections care” includes the provision of proper storage and handling for collections, as well as proper housekeeping, conservation treatment, and reformatting. Appropriate storage furniture and enclosures, as well as careful handling, can lengthen the life of collections, but poor-quality furniture and enclosures, improper handling, and poor housekeeping can cause serious damage to collections. Active intervention in the form of treatment for damaged collections and reformatting of at risk materials is also important.

On the most basic level, every institution must provide adequate and appropriate storage space for its collections. While some collections do not grow, most institutions do add additional materials over time, and must be prepared to properly house them. It is also important to provide sufficient appropriate storage furniture, so that collections are not overcrowded, jumbled, and/or in danger from being stored on the floor or in attics/basements. Individual items or collections should also be stored in preservation quality enclosures, and collections on exhibit should be protected by preservation quality mounts/supports and exhibit cases.

See the Regional Alliance for Preservation’s [Key Resources](#) page for specialized bibliographies that point to resources on collections care for libraries, archives, museums, historical societies, and house museums.

*Your current stair-step level in this category is **Step 2**. To move to **Step 3**, we recommend that you:*

- Take steps to provide space for 3-5 years of collection growth. This may require weeding of existing collections and/or adding additional space to house new ones.
- Rehouse collections into appropriate storage furniture, with the goal of housing most collections properly.
- Rehouse collections into appropriate enclosures as needed.
- Improve exhibit conditions, with the goal of exhibiting most collections according to preservation recommendations. Actions might include making/purchasing preservation quality mounts/supports, refurbishing and/or rebuilding exhibit cases, and monitoring and improving climate conditions within cases.

Expenditures and Funding

While some preservation activities can be undertaken for minimal cost, any significant progress in preserving collections requires an ongoing commitment of funds. Ideally there should be a line-item in the institution’s budget for preservation/conservation of collections, but if this is not possible, sometimes general budget funds can be used for preservation activities, such as purchasing enclosures and other supplies. Grant funding can also be used to fund specific preservation projects, but it cannot replace an ongoing financial commitment from the institution itself. In setting preservation priorities, institutions must always balance the cost of an activity against its importance to the institutional mission. See Northeast Document Conservation Center’s [Preservation 101, Session 8: Program Funding](#) for additional information on budgeting, funding sources, and grant-writing.

*Your current stair-step level in this category is **Step 3**. To move to **Step 4**, we recommend that you:*

- Add a line-item to the institution's budget for preservation/conservation activities.
- Continue to pursue grant funding regularly for special preservation/conservation projects.

Advocacy and Training

Promoting awareness of conservation/preservation activities among staff, administration, and trustees can greatly increase the institution's commitment to preservation of collections. Staff training is also crucial to a successful preservation program. Workshops, in-house training, and attendance at conferences help staff members maintain preservation skills, learn about new preservation developments, and network and share ideas with preservation staff at other institutions. [LYRISIS](#) provides preservation classes, workshops, and other resources in the Southeast region.

An excellent resource for information about preservation/conservation is Conservation OnLine (CoOL), maintained by the American Institute for Conservation. The Conservation DistList, a preservation/conservation discussion list, is also maintained by AIC. See the Quick Links on the [AIC main page](#) for current information about CoOL and the DistList.

*Your current stair-step level in this category is **Step 2**. To move to **Step 3**, we recommend that you:*

- Increase the amount spent on staff attendance at workshops or conferences relating to

CONCLUSION

Thank you again for your participation in the Georgia Healthy Collections Initiative Survey. We hope that this report has been helpful to you. In the next phase of this project it is hoped that the survey will be administered to a wider range of collections-holding institutions in Georgia, and that the stair-step component will be automated to allow you to return to the survey and calculate whether your preservation program has moved to the next stair-step level. We will let you know about new developments as this project moves forward.

