

Historic Housekeeping

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What is museum housekeeping?

In terms of collections management, housekeeping is:

- All of the ongoing actions to preserve museum objects, archives and museum records
 - Prevent damage, minimize deterioration
- Planning and monitoring as much as hands-on care
 - Knowing when *NOT* to clean is equally important as knowing when and how to clean
 - *“Express your museum housekeeping attitude through careful, thoughtful and gentle actions.”*

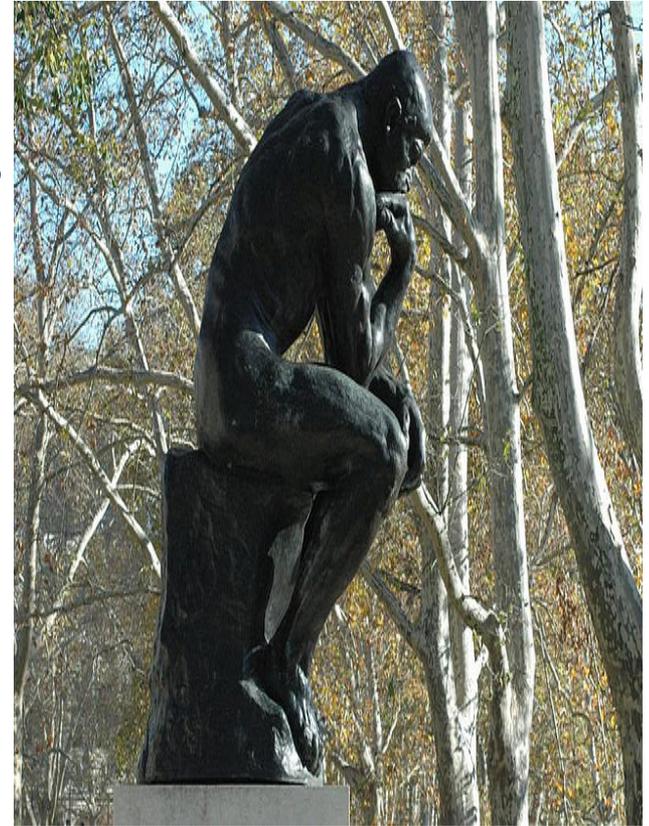


Importance of Housekeeping

- Preventive conservation
 - Simple, inexpensive
- Extends life of objects
- Promotes respect and care of the collections
- Provides healthier environment for staff/patrons

Things to Consider

- Material type and condition of objects
- Cleaning supplies and methods
 - Dependent on material
- Signs of deterioration



Museum Housekeeping Plan

- Framework for consistent care of collections
- Should be written by staff member(s) knowledgeable in preventive care of objects
 - Collections Manager or Curator
- Institutionalizes preventive conservation program
- Shared responsibility – teamwork is important

Museum Housekeeping Plan

- Considers type and condition of collections
- Identifies location of collections
- Identifies routine tasks and special projects
- Identifies equipment, materials and methods to carry out tasks
- Identifies staff responsible for carrying out tasks
- Establishes a schedule for completing tasks
- Records completed tasks



Cleaning Schedule

- Organize tasks by frequency
 - Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Semi-Annually, Cyclically, As Needed
- Use a chart to format your schedule
- Provide space for initials next to each task
- Include a list of supplies required for each task
- Note any objects that have condition issues
- File completed charts chronologically for reference

OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONDITION REPORT						
Project name	Exhibit	Loan	X	Research	Donation	Conservation
Project type						
Project no.	May 4 Visitor's Center – Kent State University					
Condition report date	8 / 9 / 12	Condition report place	Ohio Historical Society			
Object number	H 53198	Accession no.		Referral no.	Loan no.	
Object number type	Catalog no. X	Receipt no.				
Temp. tag no.						
Object name and description:						
Beanie, Kent State University Freshman Beanie made of blue felt and decorated with a gold felt letter "K."						
Dimensions (cm)	Height	Width	Length	Diameter 24		
	Weight	Size (clothing)	Linear feet			
Inherent weaknesses						



Sample Cleaning Schedule

Ohio History Connection
2014 3rd Quarter

Staff: Lesley Poling

Weekly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Clean plex display cases													
Clean glass display cases													
Dust car in Welcome Lobby													
Dust objects on History Mall													
Dust objects in Gallery 4													
Check pits in History Mall – vacuum if needed													



Cleaning Schedule: Considerations

A variety of factors should be taken into account when forming a cleaning schedule or plan.

- Visitation
 - When are visitors least likely to interfere?
 - Or: do you want it to be an educational opportunity?
 - Foot traffic: how much does the area receive?
 - Daily, weekly, monthly, etc.
- Staff availability
 - When will the staff responsible be regularly available?
- Keep a log to know where/how often dirt, dust, and pests accumulate
- Dedicated consistency is the key to success



Cleaning Schedule: Considerations

Prioritize areas where dirt enters the building:

Windows/sills



Doorways



AC/Heat vents



Carpet runners



Staircases

Cleaning Schedule: Considerations

Exterior areas to remember:

Parking lots



Porches



Sidewalks/paths



Historic Cleaning/Modern Home

In your own home...

- Goal: cleanliness, “sterility”
 - Not conservation or preservation, generally speaking
- Can be quick and rushed
 - Doesn’t require pre-planning
- Chemicals often used
- Removing clutter, polishing/shining
- Damages typically reversible or to replaceable objects



Historic Cleaning/Modern Home

In the historic house or museum, housekeeping is a facet of maintenance to encourage preservation

- Goal: preservation
 - Objects will not pass the “white glove,” squeaky-clean, test
 - Removing obvious debris, dust, or dirt that can accelerate deterioration
- Requires cautious, deliberate work
 - Much slower pace
- Requires pre-planning
- Necessary to train and supervise staff
- Generally speaking, no chemicals are used



Object Cleaning – General Guidelines

DO:

- Think critically when deciding how often to clean
- Dust with unscented, lint-free cloth
 - Electrostatic cloths like Dust Bunny[®]
- Clean from the highest point down
- Use a HEPA-filter or canister vacuum cleaner on low suction
- Inspect object for signs of pest or deterioration while cleaning
- Exercise caution when selecting cleaning tools and solutions
- Establish cleaning schedules and designate staff to carry out these tasks

Object Cleaning – General Guidelines

DON'T:

- Routinely clean deteriorated objects
 - Remove from exhibit or seek advice from conservator
- Use commercial cleaning solutions
- Dampen or wet clean objects on a regular basis
 - Introduces moisture, damage over time
- Use collections as storage for cleaning supplies



Vacuums

A very good investment for museum housekeeping

- Use a canister style rather than upright
- HEPA filtration
- Hose/attachments
- Low suction, variable speed (i.e. 0-100% power)
- Do not empty near collections/period rooms



Cleaning Methods: Textiles

Always assess condition and materials before cleaning

- Use a low-powered vacuum setting
 - Attachment: brush or hose, covered with muslin
 - Fiberglass screen in a wooden frame for large pieces
 - Do not pull, rub, or scrub
 - Step by step, row by row
- Dust that gathers in 3D/flocked elements:
 - Loosen with soft, natural bristle brush
 - Sweep toward the vacuum attachment hose
- Do not view as laundry objects (modern)
 - No wet or dry cleaning
- Consult a conservator about stains or damage



Cleaning Methods: Wood

Wooden floors

- Dust regularly with Dust Bunny or dry cotton mop
- Use a hand broom to reach dust that gathers in corners
- Monthly washing with a gentle solution of water and diluted Murphy's Oil Soap is okay
 - Spot test before beginning a new routine
- Avoid sweeping with a push broom



Cleaning Methods: Wood

Wooden objects and furniture

- Wood furniture can be regularly dusted using a microfiber cloth or Dust Bunny
- Use a soft natural bristle brush to gently remove dust from crevices and carvings
- Be careful around detail areas
 - Veneer, gilding, inlay, metal
- Do not use commercial liquids or creams
- Renaissance Wax can be used on finished wood
 - Wax infrequently; every 2-4 years



Cleaning Methods: Glass Objects

Do not submerge glass objects in water or liquid

- Record numbers first
 - Objects can become “un-labeled” if numbers were not properly applied
- Plain, clear glass:
 - Mild solution of distilled water/diluted Orvus paste
 - Gentle rinse with clean cloth and distilled water
 - Dry with lint-free cloth or linen
- Glass with gilding, paint, etc.
 - Spot clean with clean cotton cloth and water/ammonia or Orvus paste mixture
- Mirrored glass:
 - Clean with gentle mix of distilled water and isopropyl alcohol
 - Avoid letting this liquid touch any of the frame

Cleaning Methods: Display Cases

Know the difference between glass and plexiglass

- Glass cases:
 - Commercial glass cleaner
 - Soft cloth, rag, or paper towel
 - Spray cleaner to towel, not directly to glass
- Plexiglass barriers or cases:
 - Do **not** use glass cleaner
 - Can result in plexiglass becoming scratched/cloudy
 - Use concentrated plexiglass cleaner
 - Spray cleaner to towels, not directly to the plexiglass
 - Dust with anti-static cloths to prevent buildup



Cleaning Methods: Metal

Metal does not always equal strong!

<u>TOUGHNESS</u>	<u>BRITTLENESS</u>	<u>DUCTILITY</u>	<u>MALLEABILITY</u>	<u>CORROSION RESISTANCE</u>
Copper	White Cast Iron	Gold	Gold	Gold
Nickel	Gray Cast Iron	Silver	Silver	Platinum
Iron	Hardened Steel	Platinum	Aluminum	Silver
Magnesium	Bismuth	Iron	Copper	Mercury
Zinc	Manganese	Nickel	Tin	Copper
Aluminum	Bronzes	Copper	Lead	Lead
Lead	Aluminum	Aluminum	Zinc	Tin
Tin	Brass	Tungsten	Iron	Nickel
Cobalt	Structural Steels	Zinc		Iron
Bismuth	Zinc	Tin		Zinc
	Monel	Lead		Magnesium
	Tin			Aluminum
	Copper			
	Iron			

* Metals/alloys are ranked in descending order of having the property named in the column heading

Cleaning Methods: Metal

Always use gloves when handling metal objects

- Use soft, natural bristle brush to remove dust
- Do not rub or use a cloth – dust particles can scratch the surface of an object
- Do not attempt to remove layers of corrosion (rust)
- Tarnish = a protective barrier
 - Only remove when object displayed
 - Calcium carbonate with distilled water as a paste
- Remember: Polishing always removes a layer of original metal

Cleaning Methods: Books

Examine physical condition before cleaning

- Expose enough of spine to get a firm grip
- Keep book firmly closed when dusting
- Vacuum with micro-attachment, or dust with a lint free cloth or natural bristle brush (fragile books)
- Dust away from binding: bound edge to paper edge
- For unstable books, use gentle air jet
- Clean bookshelves with a magnetic cloth; change frequently



Cleaning Method: Books

- Dust no more than quarterly
- Do not sweep floors near bookshelves
- Do not use rubber bands to hold books together
 - Cotton twill tape, 1-2” wide



Cleaning Method: Carpets (Historic)

- Remove your shoes
- Use HEPA filtered vacuum on low suction
- Vacuum through fiberglass screen
 - Weak/loose spots use gentle lifting motion
 - Use tweezers to pick up any leftover debris
- If in good condition, vacuum without screen
 - Step-by-step; row-by-row



Cleaning Method: Carpets (Historic)

- Do not attempt to wash or spot clean
- Do not vacuum like you would at home
- Do not drag or rub the brush attachment along the carpets



Cleaning Methods: Ceramics

Identify the type of ceramic before cleaning

- Glazed=Hard, glossy surface; secure glaze

porcelain, stoneware



- Unglazed=Soft, porous; flaking glaze

earthenware, archaeological artifacts



Cleaning Methods: Ceramics

- Remove jewelry before handling
- Use gloves when cleaning unglazed ceramics
- For glazed pieces, clean and dry hands are acceptable
- Dust monthly with natural bristle brush or lint free cloth
 - Stable pieces with smooth surfaces

If the debris is particularly stubborn....

- Damp wipe porcelain and stoneware
 - Except on pieces with cracked glaze or over-glaze decoration
- Mild cleaning solutions mixed with deionized or distilled water
 - Orvus, Vulpex
- Test on small area
- “Rinse” object with distilled water applied with cloth or cotton balls to get rid of any residue
- Air dry



Cleaning Methods: Paintings

- If no obvious signs of deterioration, gently dust 1-2 times per year
- Use soft-bristle artist brush
 - Brush slowly, gently in one direction (across or down) and then reverse direction for the second brushing
- If framed with glass, buff with clean dry chamois
- Don't attempt to dust paintings with loose or flaking paint
- Don't dust frames if gilding is flaking
- If a painting is particularly fragile or in need of a thorough cleaning, consult a conservator



Cleaning Methods: Ceramics

Please don't

- Clean your antique ceramics in the dishwasher
- Immerse the following in liquid:
 - antique ceramics, unglazed ceramics, objects having gilt/luster/painted surfaces, deteriorated objects or those with chipped/cracked/scratched glaze, repaired objects (they may still have cracks)
- Damp clean archaeological objects, low-fired or unfired pieces

Thank You!

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