More Objects Than Expertise

A Collaborative Housing and Access Project

2016 MPMA Conference, Oklahoma City
Today’s panel

• Rebecca Schulte
  University Archivist, University of Kansas (KU) Libraries

• Whitney Baker
  Head of Conservation, KU Libraries
  Instructor, KU Museum Studies Program

• Brecken Liebl
  2016 Graduate, KU Museum Studies Program
Background: University Archives

Rebecca Schulte
Improperly stored objects
Object storage
Museum Studies Class Project

Whitney Baker
Program Design

- University of Kansas Museum Studies graduate class, *Conservation Principles and Practice*
- Focus on the science of environment and storage; ethics
- Use University Archives objects as examples
Condition report assignment

• Visit by a museum collections manager

• Follows video and discussion of proper object handling

• Discussion of gloves, measuring devices, and magnification devices
Condition report assignment

• In-class examination of typical museum objects
Condition report assignment

- Introductory information: name, date, one-word object name
- Item description
  - Identifying numbers and maker’s marks
  - Dimensions (in centimeters)
  - Design details
  - Material composition
  - Manufacturing techniques
Condition report assignment

• Item condition
  • Types, extent, and location of damage
  • Dates and reasons for damage (when known)
  • Previous repairs
  • Sketch or photographs
  • Rating of overall condition
Condition report assignment

Object: Vespers Robe

- Praying, fading on both cuffs
- Threadbare fluting
- Holes
- Fading, threadbare collar
- Tape
- Discoloration

- Discoloration
Conservation lab students
UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

Alumni Association

Mask worn by Moses Gunn during
Titus Andronicus, 1967

Series No. 64/0       Box No.
University of Kansas Libraries

420 — 5 — 3 — 8
Housing Strategies

Brecken Liebl
Handy Housing Materials

- Standard sized archival boxes
- Corrugated board
  - E-flute/B-flute
- Tissue
- Polyethylene foam boards
  - Ethafoam /Plastazote
- Foam knives
- Tyvek
Foam Knives

- QC Hot Knife
- Benchmark Foam Knives
  Square point: straight lines
  Pottery knives: curved shapes

(University Products)
Football
Materials

• Archival box
• Tissue
Civil War Coat
**Materials**

- Archival box
- Cotton fabric
- Polyester fiberfill
- Tissue
Buttons
**Materials**

- Archival slide boxes
- Polyethylene zip-top bags
Wood Carving
Materials

- Corrugated polypropylene box
- Plastazote foam
Compass, Measuring Tape, Watch

Materials
- Archival boxes
- Plastazote foam
Civil War Items

Materials
- Archival box
- Corrugated board
- Plastazote foam
Plaster Masks
Materials

- Archival boxes
- Ethafoam
- Tyvek
Viewing Device

Materials
- Archival box
- Corrugated board
- Tyvek
- Plastazote foam
Streetcar Rail and Spikes
Materials

- Polypropylene box with silicon gasketed lid
- Plastazote foam
- Ethafoam
- Tyvek
- Silica gel desiccant packets
- Humidity indicators
Rolled Textiles
Materials

- Archival cardboard tubes
- Tissue
- Unbleached cotton fabric
- Cotton tie tape
- EMT Conduit (rods)
- Galvanized double loop chain (playground chain)
- Tie-down S-hooks
Social Media

Whitney Baker
Inside Spencer: The KSRL Blog

Ribbon Roundup

Among the many treasures in the Kansas Collection are the Fowler-Rose-Thompson Collection ribbons. These beautiful silk ribbons depict Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt and commemorate the Aimea, Kansas Congregational Church’s “Old Folks Day.” The over 100-year-old ribbons arrived in the conservation lab stored vertically in an archival folder. Due to their age and fragility, the ribbons were torn, fraying, and unstored. After the ribbons were flattened and mended by Whitney Baker, Conservator for KU Libraries, their storage situation needed to be addressed.

Three ribbons from the Fowler-Rose-Thompson Collection, call number RH MIS 88. Click image to enlarge.

To better preserve these delicate ribbons, an entirely new housing arrangement was in order. The priorities for the new housing were to 1) ensure that the ribbons were stored horizontally to prevent any sagging or further wrinkling of the fragile silk and 2) to minimize the need for direct handling of the ribbons. A hinged, floating mount achieves both requisits.

The floating mount arrangement that Whitney advised allows for the attachment of the ribbons to a piece of mat board without the use of damaging adhesives. Instead, strips of polyethylene tape run through slits on either side of the ribbons. The polyethylene tape acts like a seat-belt, holding the ribbons in place without obstructing the view of the ribbons.
The challenge: A note to the archivist and two of several metal Jayhawk items all to be housed together.

I worked as a conservation student employee and Museum Studies intern during my last two semesters at KU. For one of my projects as an intern, I was asked to upgrade the housing for some metal Jayhawk paraphernalia. The parameters: all material should stay together in one box, including the accompanying written documents. I was provided a rather small, off-the-shelf box and told that all items should fit within that enclosure.

After considering various arrangements for best placement, I used plastazote foam, an inert (non-damaging) material that is easily cut into the correct size for each object. I took a picture of the proper place for each item and placed it, along with the written
Recent posts on housing

- Silk ribbons in a window mat structure
- Plaster life masks in a standard size document box
- Civil War officer’s personal effects kept in one box
- Group of Jayhawk paraphernalia in one box
- Doll and doll furniture collection in two-layer box
- Scrolls in custom-made boxes
Outcomes
Rebecca Schulte
Thank You!

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