

Collections Care

Organic Materials

Humans have used natural materials from both the plant and animal world to craft tools, clothing, and decorative objects throughout our history and prehistory. Each of these materials has special preservation concerns that stem from a variety of issues such as breakage, internal composition and/or flaws, or special vulnerability to light exposure, pollutants, moisture, and high or fluctuating humidity levels. As with any museum or personal collection, appropriate handling techniques and storage are the first line of defense in the preservation of objects made from any of these materials. Always use clean cotton or nitrile gloves when handling objects and support with both hands; move objects using a tray support, drawer, or box; and practice general good housekeeping in storage and exhibition areas. Specific information and tips appear in the links below.

General Care

- Nebraska Educational Telecommunications: [Saving Your Treasures: Other Organic and Inorganic](#) (video series)

Plant Materials

See also “Collections Care: Wooden Objects and Furniture”

- Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI): [“Care of Basketry”](#), CCI Notes 6/2
- Minnesota Historical Society:
 - [“Plant Materials”](#)
 - [“Wood and Birch Bark”](#)
- National Park Service: [“Storage Supports for Basket Collections”](#) (Conserve O Gram Series, July 1993, number 5/1)

Animal Materials (Including Taxidermy)

- Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI):
 - [“Care of Ivory, Bone, Horn, and Antler”](#), CCI Notes 6/1
 - [“Care of Rawhide and Semi-Tanned Leather”](#), CCI Notes 8/4
- Connecting to Collections Care:
 - [“The Care of Leather and Fur” Webinar](#) (Presenters: Catherine Hawks, Smithsonian Institution; Beverly Perkins, Center of the West; Fran Ritchie, National Museum of the American Indian)

- [“Troublesome Trophies and Fragile Feathered Friends: Introduction to the Care of Historic Taxidermy” Webinar](#) (Presenters: George Dante, Wildlife Preservations, and Eugenie Milroy, American Institute of Conservation (AIC))
- Fuller, Tamsen: [“Storage Methods for Taxidermy Specimens”](#) (Western Association for Art Conservation Newsletter, volume 14 number 2)
- Government of Canada: [“Caring for Leather, Skin, and Fur”](#) (by Carole Dignard and Janet Mason)
- Minnesota Historical Society:
 - [“Quills, Horn, Hair, Feathers, Claws, and Baleen”](#)
 - [“Shell”](#)
 - [“Skin and Skin Products \(Leather\)”](#)
- National Park Service:
 - [“Leather Dressing: To Dress or Not to Dress”](#) (Conserve O Gram, July 1993, number 9/1)
 - [Museum Handbook: Appendix S, “Curatorial Care of Objects Made From Leather and Skin Products”](#)
 - [“Storage Mounts for Feathered Headdresses and Soft-Sided Hats and Caps”](#) (Conserve O Gram, July 1993, number 5/2)
- PBS: [“Overview of Current Ivory Law”](#) (by Bill Phelan, *Antiques Roadshow*, last updated 7/6/2016)
- Smithsonian Conservation Institute: [“The Care and Handling of Ivory Objects”](#)