

# Collection Care Information Exchange



## Discussion Framework

The exchange of collection care practices between preservation professionals on a one-to-one basis can have added benefits beyond a traditional training setting. While conferences and workshops provide networking and information exchange, it generally occurs without a set curriculum and often at great cost to participants. In developing the Collection Care Information Exchange Discussion Framework, the American Institute for Conservation's Collection Care Network aims to provide a set framework that individuals and institutions may use to guide discussions about collection care practices, policies, and procedures.

Many collection care professionals note that there is a lack of suitable training offered as workshops and at conferences, or that sufficient funds are unavailable for training and travel. It is the CCN's aim that similar institutions and individuals within a region could use the template to demonstrate to supervisors a formal structure for a professional development exchange and the economic value in being able to draw from local expertise.

Collection care staff, conservators, registrars, curators, administrators, and other staff responsible for collection care within their institutions may use relevant sections of the template to guide their conversations. It is ideal to select what will be covered, how much time it will take, and which staff members should participate in the exchange in advance. Interviews with additional staff members and facility tours at the host site can enhance the experience.

Participants are encouraged to develop a short white paper of findings. This solidifies the experience by creating a reference document for participant institutions, and by submitting it to the CCN Collection Care Wiki, builds the corpus of collection care knowledge and resources.

Questions about establishing a Collection Care Information Exchange may be sent to the Collection Care Network at [collectioncare@conservation-us.org](mailto:collectioncare@conservation-us.org).

## Planning for a Collection Care Information Exchange

1. Gain your administration's support to participate in an exchange. The time investment in the exchange and producing a report will depend on the amount of topics you aim to cover and the number of participants.

2. Identify an institution or institutions to participate in the exchange. Aim for a comfortable roundtable discussion setting, selecting 2-5 institutions to participate. Selecting institutions of a similar type to participate will help ensure that information offered during the exchange is relevant to your institution. In the same vein, selecting a institutions of different sizes and types might bring new ideas to the table. Choose institutions in your geographical region in order to save on travel costs.
3. Review the Discussion Framework ahead of time with exchange participants. Determine which topics are most important to your organizations to discuss and how long it will take you to cover those topics. Use the template as a starting point. To cover the whole template in conversation may take 2-3 days. Remember, you may want to include tours of your facilities, or invite other staff stakeholders to join a particular session. Setting aside the proper time also allows you to adjust the schedule as necessary.
4. Schedule an in-person meeting date. Gaining administration's support at the front end is crucial, so that exchange participants can fully focus on the visit.
5. Plan your discussion goals at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session to stay on task. Schedule any additional tours or needed breaks into the schedule. Meeting for long periods can be difficult unless exchange participants agree to commit to the schedule.
6. Assign note takers for each session. That person will be responsible for summarizing shared information for a report after the session.
7. Immediately after the exchange, summarize notes for useful documentation.
8. Develop a one-page summary that can be shared with your administration or supervisor during an exchange session report.
9. Submit a report about participants' findings with the Collection Care Information Exchange to the CCN at [collectioncare@conservation-us.org](mailto:collectioncare@conservation-us.org) following the instructions at the end of this document. Consider for inclusion in the CCN Collection Care Wiki to act as a resource for other institutions.
10. Request an evaluation to help the CCN continue to develop the Collection Care Information Exchange Discussion Framework. See instructions at the end of this document.

## Discussion Topics

### Introduction

Roles at institution

Background

Goals for exchange session – individual and institutional

Institutional challenges to collection care  
Interest in professional development  
Additional staff interviews that can facilitate discussion

#### General Collection Care

State of collection care in participants' institutions  
Staff organization, particularly around collection care  
Collection care program description  
Existing and needed policies and procedures  
Transitioning special projects into policies and procedures  
Raising awareness among administration and other staff

#### Preservation Environment

Monitoring and documentation programs  
Data evaluation and review activities  
Communication between collections and facilities staff  
Evaluating and communicating evolving preservation standards to all staff  
Building relationships with facilities staff

#### Housekeeping

Housekeeping program and scheduling  
Staffing – who is responsible?  
Methods and Products  
Helpful tips  
Challenges

#### Integrated Pest Management

Programs/methods used by participant institutions  
Policies and procedures  
Working with contractors  
Gaining institutional buy-in from administration and other staff  
Troubleshooting

#### Storage

Planning for new storage  
Retrofitting older storage  
Storage materials and supports  
Special issues and projects  
Off-site storage issues

## Lighting

Collaboration between Conservators, Lighting Designers, Curators, and Others  
Methods  
Sustainability initiatives  
Motion sensors  
Tracking of light exposure  
Communicating/negotiating exposure

## Surveys and Risk Assessments

Need for collection surveys  
Purpose of collection surveys  
Condition surveys  
Space surveys  
Inventories  
Collection Risk Assessment  
Benchmarks in Collection Care

## Emergency Preparedness

Existing programs and efforts  
Getting institutional buy-in  
Plan writing  
Setting priorities  
Organizing a response team  
Coordinating with local emergency management and first responders  
Training – outside and within institutions  
Maintaining program momentum

## Special Projects and Issues

Institutional collection care communication and involvement  
Construction  
Collections hazards  
Health and safety in collection care  
Working with contract conservators  
Sharing collection care culture with other contractors and vendors

## Managing Collection Care

Staffing  
Collection care institutional decision-making  
Checklists, workflows, and other management tools  
Professional development  
Training programs for collection care and other staff  
Advocating for change

Managing change  
Managing up  
Sustaining support for collection care

#### Educating about Collection Care

Conservation and Collection Care tours for visitors  
Working collection care and conservation into exhibitions  
Lectures  
Gallery talks  
Website features  
Webinars

#### Fundraising

Developing donors for collection care  
Grants from government and private foundations  
Making a case with administration that collection care is worth funding

#### Tools and Tips

Tools  
References  
Forms  
Equipment  
Training sessions  
Projects that were really worth it

#### **Evaluation**

By evaluating the exchange experience, you can assist the CCN in helping other institutions participating in collection care exchanges. Also, consider providing a report on your exchange for posting on the CCN Collection Care Wiki to help other institutions. Contact [collectioncare@conservation-us.org](mailto:collectioncare@conservation-us.org) to receive a Collection Care Information Exchange Evaluation, submit reports, and convey feedback.