Preserving Cultural Collections Through Sustainable Practices

Presenters:
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Sealaska Heritage Institute

• A regional Native non-profit organization -- 501(c)(3)
• Conceived by clan leaders, traditional scholars and Elders at the first Sealaska Elders Conference in 1980
• Mission: to perpetuate and enhance Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian cultures
• Goal: to promote cultural diversity and cross-cultural understanding
• Serves the THT peoples residing in 21 traditional villages and communities in Southeast Alaska; 21,000 Sealaska shareholders residing in Alaska and the lower 48; 70,000 residents of Southeast Alaska; about 1 million tourists in summer months; students and teachers of JSD and UAS; and scholars and researchers from around the world
• The mission of SHI’s Library, Collections and Archives Program is to collect and preserve materials that document the history, culture, heritage, and languages of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people and to make these materials available to the public for educational purposes
HAA AANÍ: OUR LAND
Honoring and Utilizing Our Land
Indigenous people have lived in this land for more than 10,000 years. Our ancestors taught us that everything has a Spirit, and protected the ownership of our land for their children and grandchildren, just as we must do for future generations.

HAA SHUKÁ: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS
Honoring our Ancestors and Future Generation
We maintain strong bonds with our ancestors whom we honor through our lives and in our ceremonies. We also have responsibilities to future generations, and we must ensure that we protect our land and culture for our children and grandchildren and those who will follow them.

HAA LATSEEN: OUR STRENGTH
Strength of Body, Mind and Spirit
The “Way of the Warriors’” path is to achieve physical and inner strength. Above all, young men and women are taught to protect and to care for their families and clans, to seek truth and knowledge and to adapt to changing times while maintaining the integrity of our ancient values.

WOOCH YAX: BALANCE
Maintaining Spiritual and Social Balance and Harmony
Wooch Yax governs interrelationships between clans, tribes, nations and institutions. It must be maintained to ensure social and spiritual harmony. Wooch Yax includes Kaa yaa awuné (Respect for Others) and Át yaa awuné (Respect for All Things).
Walter Soboleff Building
Grand Opening - May 15, 2015
• Designed for energy conservation: wood pellet burner for heating, double intensity toilet flushing, low volume sink faucets
• Energy efficient building envelope: 18” insulation in roof, triple glaze windows, etc.
• Excess building materials were re-cycled or given away
• Comfortable and pleasing interior for occupants
• Certification in process (lengthy process)
Grant Title: Preserving Cultural Collections through Sustainable Practices

Grant source: NEH, Division of Preservation and Access
Grant program: Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections

Submitted: December 2013
Received: July 2014
Completed: September 2016

Grant Amount: $367,852
  NEH Portion: $182,654
  SHI Portion: $185,198
Grant Title: Preserving Cultural Collections through Sustainable Practices

Grant Objectives:
1. To purchase and install conservation-quality compact shelving structures that would be integrated with systems to manage relative humidity, temperature, light and pollutants in a dedicated collection storage space.
2. To construct preservation quality object storage mounts and containers for 100 fragile artifacts identified as in need of storage treatment for preservation purposes, as a component of sustainable practices related to storage treatments.
3. To conduct public education about the project through social media, news releases and a conference presentation documenting “lessons learned” about a potential model for facilities seeking innovative and sustainable museum practices responsive to both environmental and collection impact.
Prior Collections Storage: Closets, Hallway and Offices

- Books
- Ethnographic and art objects
- Manuscripts and photographs
- Recordings
- Furnishings
Pre-Installation
New Floor Plan - Basement

Vault storage footprint:
• 56’ long x 36’ wide x 11’ high
• 1956 sq ft

Designed with climate controls, security, and compact storage equipment
Waterproofing Envelope Below Ground

- 2 Foot Thick Concrete Foundation Slab with Hycrete chemical waterproofing additive
- Carlisle MiraPLY 70 Mil waterproofing
- Waterproof Bentonite membrane that chemically bonds to concrete
- 6" thick expanded polystyrene core
- Corrugated drain tile
- Felt
- 6-8" thick sacrificial concrete rat slab
- Crushed rock
- Drainage Tube
- 24" Crushed, compacted drain rock
Spacesaver (now Workpointe)

• Steel or aluminum construction with electrostatic powder coat paint finish that does not off-gas
• Shelves: 300 lbs minimum capacity (up to 2500 lbs)
• Original configuration:
  • Archival shelving
  • Library shelving
  • Collections shelving (incl. units w hanging rods, drawers, rolled storage
  • Art Racks
Walter Soboleff Building – Vault Preparation
Vault Layout – Initial Proposal from Spacesaver
Space Needs

- Ethnographic Collection: 149 linear feet + oversize
- Manuscript Collection: 446 linear feet + oversize
- Photograph Collection: 20 linear feet + oversize
- Recording Collection: 182 linear feet
- Rosita Worl Papers: 96 linear feet
- Unprocessed Collection: 117 linear feet
Storage Design Choices

- Workpointe suggested color coding with different colors for library, archives, and ethnographic objects

- Final selection: Cottonwood
Vault Layout - Full Option
Vault Layout – Final Proposal
Archives

- Compact storage
  - 28.5’ long x 8.15’ high

- Shelves
  - 42” length x 11” high x 15.75” deep
  - 128 shelves per carriage
  - Hold up to 300 lbs

- One double-sided unit to allow for oversized items like maps and panoramic photographs
• Compact storage
  • 28.5’ long x 8.15’ high

• Shelves
  • 2 23” wide x 15” high x 11” deep
  • 8 35.5” wide x 15” high x 11” deep
  • 140 shelves per carriage
Issues

• Replaced 15” deep shelves with 11” deep shelves

• Center-stops vs backstops:
  • This was not discussed in initial order and became an issue later
Ethnographic Objects

• Compact storage
  • 28.5’ long x 8.15’ high

• Drawers (sliding trays)
  • 1.75” high and spaced 2” apart vertically

• Shelves
  • 42” wide x 24” deep
Issue

• Doors:
  • Tall and narrow
  • Flimsy
  • Did not fit together well
  • Fitted with strong magnets

• Solutions:
  • Spacers added to hinges
  • Removed magnets
Issue

• Locks:
  • A different key for each cabinet

• Solution:
  • Change out locks so one key works on all locks in each row
Rolled Storage

• Storage capacity:
  • 28 rolls at 7’ long and 7” in diameter

• Types of objects:
  • Pendleton blankets, plain woolen blankets
Issue

• Rollers:
  • Too long for racks

• Solution:
  • Cut rollers and reinstalled plastic end caps
Art Racks

• Storage capacity:
  • 2 double-sided rows
  • 8.75’ height x 15.85’ width x 18.75” depth

• Accept “S” hook to allow storage of hanging artwork
Issue

• Parts:
  • Workpointe did not ship all the parts

• Solution:
  • Workpointe ordered parts and installed later
Textile Cabinets

• Delta Designs - Series 700

• Cabinet size
  • 8’2” wide x 5’4” deep x 5’ high
  • 14 drawers
  • 6” adjustable base

• Custom drawer sizes
  • 60” deep x 90” wide x 3” high
Issues

• Installation
  • External frame was not collapsible
  • Storage of parts
  • Elevator damage

• Solution
  • Reorder collapsible frame
  • No end solution for elevator
Damaged Elevator
Preparing for the Move
Storage Mounts for Sustainability

• Storage mounts were made for:
  Baskets, masks, textiles, totem pole models, stone tools, dolls, war helmets, armor and pipes

• The grant called for a contractor (Jon Loring) to make 100 storage mounts. He made over 130.
Storage Mounts for Sustainability

• Dual purpose mounts:
  • Protect the more sensitive objects from the rigors of moving
  • Serve as long term storage mounts in new location
Storage Mounts and Packing Supplies - Purchases

ULINE $653.00
TALAS $2,614.05
Total $3,267.05

Other potential vendors:
• Benchmark
• Gaylord
• University Products
Installation Issue: Need for Staging Area
Installation Issue: Need to Cover Floors
Installation Issue: Damaged Equipment
Three Types of Damage

1. Many items damaged in shipment: pull-out trays, tray brackets, dents on cabinet doors, dented/bent/warped archival shelves
2. Damages caused by installers
3. Problems in manufacturing: check for paint issues and poor fit
Installation Delays

• Initial install:
  • January-February 2015

• Interim install:
  • June 2015

• Final install:
  • December 2015
Lessons

- Plan well in advance starting with building construction
- Stay with it, work through it, and find a technician who knows the equipment
- Document all damage to building and equipment with photographs at time of incident
- Negotiate reimbursement of damages with contractor
- Plan to have a staging area for delivery and for damaged equipment
- Need to cover floors and pad elevator walls
- Expect shipping and installation delays
- After each installation, make a checklist of every issue noted and discuss with contractor to plan resolution
Devil’s Club