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.

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 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.