



PRESERVATION EDUCATION CURRICULUM



NORTHEAST
DOCUMENT
CONSERVATION
CENTER

CLASS 1 LESSON PLAN

Introduction

The Lesson

Part I: Overview (1 hour)

A. Historical Background: Continuities and Contradictions

1. Pre-20th century historical background
2. The 20th century and the rise of professionalism

Little has been written about the history of library and archival preservation. Barbra Buckner Higginbotham wrote *Our Past Preserved: A History of American Library Preservation, 1876–1910* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1990), but perhaps the only other history is the Darling-Ogden article, cited in the **Resources** section, which covers the period from 1956 to 1980. Works tend to be written about particular people who have been influential in library and archival preservation, such as Verner W. Clapp and William James Barrow, or about specific preservation-related events such as the Florence flood. Therefore, the instructor must draw from a wide variety of sources to provide students with an adequate background. If this topic is to be covered in more detail, see **Taking It Further** for additional resources.

B. Defining Preservation, Conservation, and Restoration

1. Preservation
 - a. Umbrella term for all global activities that:
 - i. Minimize chemical and physical deterioration and damage
 - ii. Prevent loss of informational content
 - iii. Prolong the existence of cultural property
2. Conservation
 - a. One component of comprehensive preservation program
 - b. Physical treatment of individual items
 - i. Based on scientific principles and professional practices
3. Restoration
 - a. Physical treatment of individual items
 - i. Intended to return cultural property to known or assumed state

C. Preserving the Artifact or Preserving the Information?

1. Analog
 - a. Bibliographical approach
2. Digital

In-Class Activities

- Ask students to write down definitions for preservation, conservation, and restoration. Discuss the students' responses.
- Preservation stories appear regularly in the popular press; *The New York Times* is a particularly rich source. It can be useful to collect examples of recent disasters, art thefts, digital issues, and the like to demonstrate that preservation concerns are widespread and universal.

Part II: Prolonging the Life of Cultural Heritage Collections (1 hour)**A. Identifying Needs**

1. Risk assessment, surveys, building inspections (in brief; to be covered in more detail in **Class 5: Building-wide Concerns** and **Class 7: Surveys and Assessments**)
2. Library collections
 - a. Collection development policies
 - b. Cataloging
 - c. Selection for preservation (overview of collection- and item-level strategies)
3. Archival collections
 - a. Appraisal
 - b. Arrangement and description
 - c. Selection for preservation (overview of strategies specific to archives)
4. Institutional priorities

B. Developing a Preservation Plan (an overview, to be covered further in **Class 13: Building a Preservation Program)**

1. Relating needs to the institution's mission and priorities
2. Identifying current preservation functions
3. Determining resources
4. Creating a plan and a strategy

C. Components of a Preservation Program

1. Providing a suitable and stable environment
2. Disaster planning
3. Collections care and maintenance
4. Conservation
5. Library binding
6. Reformatting

In-Class Activities

- Have the class brainstorm various strategies for selecting library and archival collections for preservation (e.g., condition, use, importance, value). How do strategies differ for archival and library collections? For example, it is useful to compare appraisal in archives with the conspectus model in academic libraries. How do strategies differ on the collection level and the item level?

- Many students currently work in libraries, archives, and museums. Ask students to identify preservation activities that exist in their institutions. Even institutions that don't have formal preservation programs often have preservation activities. Are there areas in which preservation activities could be undertaken with minimal additional resources?
- Share/Pair—Discuss with your neighbor what type of librarian or archivist you wish to be. What preservation concerns might you need to consider in these areas of specialty?
- When discussing the components of a preservation program, it is sometimes helpful to illustrate institutional practices with models, such as the umbrella, concentric circle, and tree-ring models that have been widely used.

Part III: The Challenges of Managing Analog and Digital Collections (30 minutes)

- A. Differences and similarities
- B. Digitization versus preservation
- C. Who is driving the digital agenda?
- D. The preservation manager and new strategic alliances
- E. Resource issues

Part IV: Course Overview (30 minutes)

Spend one to two minutes on each week's topic. This part of the class session provides a backdrop for topics to be considered in the rest of the course. To familiarize students with leading preservation associations, organizations, and research efforts, a list of relevant Web sites can be distributed. (See [Resources for the Teacher](#) in Class 13.)

During the first class it might be a good idea to gauge the level of student interest for special screenings of preservation-related films. This can be done early in the semester when they are most helpful. There is so much material to cover in this course that it is difficult to justify spending much class time screening films.

Suggested Graded Assignments

- Choose a preservation-related video or DVD to view, and write a critique. At what audience is the presentation aimed? What message is it trying to convey? Is the message accurate? Is it conveyed effectively? How might it have been done differently? See [Resources for the Teacher](#) for references to videos and DVDs (e.g., *Slow Fires*, *Into the Future*, and presentations on bookbinding, library binding, conservation, papermaking, deacidification, reformatting).
- Describe the collections (or a subset of the collections), their use, and existing collecting policies at the student's workplace or a local institution of interest. Make a list of materials that need to be evaluated for possible deaccessioning, and indicate those that might be a priority for preservation based on the institution's mission.
- Summarize current preservation activities at the student's workplace or a local institution of interest. What are they and who is responsible for them? Are existing preservation activities directed at collections that support the institution's mission and collecting policies? If not, what changes are needed?

Suggested Term Projects

- Write a term paper discussing the importance of mission and collecting policies to preservation efforts. Create or revise a mission statement and detailed collecting policy for the student's workplace or a local institution of interest, and devise criteria specific to the institution for identifying valuable collections that may be in need of preservation action.