



# PRESERVATION EDUCATION CURRICULUM



NORTHEAST  
DOCUMENT  
CONSERVATION  
CENTER

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS

### Suggested Term Projects

The following is a list of activities that might be carried out by students as a term project. Some of these ideas might also be modified to use as group projects or shorter-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. (*Class 1*)
- Contact staff at a nearby library's special collections. Ask them to select ten to fifteen books that represent a range of conditions. Have students choose five books that are candidates for conservation attention. Students are to study the interesting or significant features of each book, as well as the conservation concerns for each, and summarize them in a term paper. Also have students research the estimated value of each book using both auction catalogues as well as online sources (e.g., Addall, Abebooks). (*Class 2*)
- Create a detailed listing of a specific collection at the student's workplace or a local institution of interest, noting the types of materials that are included and the general condition of each category of material. Write a paper summarizing the problems and suggesting priorities for preventing additional damage and dealing with damage that has already occurred. Provide suggestions for storage, handling, environmental control, reformatting (if appropriate), and conservation treatment. (*Class 3*)

#### Examples:

1. Historical book collection
  2. Archival collection—note the various types of materials included (e.g., documents, photographs, pamphlets, small books)
  3. Photographic print collection—note the types of photographic processes that are included
  4. Collection of maps, plans, and/or architectural drawings—note the types of reproduction processes included
  5. Scrapbook collection—note the types of materials included in each scrapbook (e.g., photographs, ephemera, documents, clippings)
  6. Collection of art on paper—note the media (e.g., paint, watercolor, pastel) and support used
- Create a detailed listing of a specific multimedia collection at the student's workplace or a local institution of interest, noting the types of materials included and the general condition of each category of material. Write a paper summarizing the problems seen within the collection. Suggest priorities for preventing additional damage and dealing with damage that has already occurred. Provide suggestions for storage, handling, use, environmental control, and reformatting (if appropriate). (*Class 4*)

#### Examples:

1. Photographic negatives and transparencies—note the types of materials included (e.g., glass plate negatives, film negatives, slides)

2. Motion picture film—note the various types included (e.g., 35 mm, 16 mm, 8 mm) in your collection, indicating which were produced commercially (and thus may be duplicated elsewhere) and which are unique recordings. For amateur films, make a listing of the events/activities documented to the extent possible.
  3. Sound recordings—list the formats that are included (e.g., disc recordings, cylinders, reel-to-reel tapes, cassette tapes, CDs). In most cases, you will want to focus on unique recordings, rather than commercially produced recordings that are duplicated elsewhere. Where possible, include a listing of the events/activities documented in the tapes. If it can be done without damaging them, consider producing a written transcription of the information on the recordings.
  4. Videotapes—list the formats included (e.g., VHS, Beta), focusing on unique recordings, not commercially produced tapes that are duplicated elsewhere. To the extent possible, include a listing of the events/activities documented in the tapes.
  5. Magnetic disks, CDs, and DVDs—list all magnetic disks, computer CDs, and computer DVDs that contain unique digital data with long-term value. Provide a description of the format, the data contained on the item, and the hardware, operating system, and software required to access the data. Make a plan for periodically copying data with long-term value and migrating it to new formats as needed.
- Write a report on an environmental-related problem, monitoring system, or pest/mold incident at the student's workplace or a local institution of interest, and suggest how practices learned in *Class 5* could be used to improve the situation or could have been used to respond better to the problem.
  - Students (alone or in a group) could use the information gained from the assigned readings and lecture on collections care to design a 60-minute lesson plan for a workshop on care and handling of library/archival materials for the staff and public of different library/archival settings, such as academic, public, school, historical society, and the like. Ask each person or group to present a lesson plan to the entire class. (*Class 6*)
  - Visit a museum, archives, or library exhibition and write down preservation-related observations about the exhibit. The student should sketch a floor plan of the exhibit and note the following:
    - a. Emergency exits
    - b. Smoke alarms
    - c. Fire extinguishers
    - d. Monitoring devices for environmental conditions
    - e. Security devices
    - f. Mounting and display of objects
    - g. Other items of interest

Have the student write a paper describing his or her experience visiting the library, archives, or museum exhibition and discuss the following questions:

How can an institution exhibit its materials and provide a safe haven for them while making them available to the public? Will achieving one aim be at the expense of the other? How did the institution visited address these issues? What did it do right? What could be improved? If your library or archives were asked to contribute some of your rare holdings to an exhibit, what would be some of your concerns? (*Class 6*)

- Conduct a general preservation survey of an institution, or a collection condition survey of a specific collection (in their home, workplace, or a nearby cultural heritage institution) and write

up a report. Other activities could include developing a 30-minute presentation on the findings of their survey project and presenting it to the class or the staff of the institution surveyed. *(Class 7)*

- Identify materials in need of conservation treatment at the student's workplace or a local institution of interest. Research possible grant funding sources, get estimates for treatment of the materials, and write a grant proposal for their conservation treatment. *(Class 8)*
- Identify a collection in need of preservation microfilming at the student's workplace or a local institution of interest. Contact several preservation filming vendors, get cost estimates for filming the collection, and write a grant proposal for filming the collection. *(Class 9)*
- Prepare general guidelines for selecting collections for digital imaging at the student's workplace or a local institution of interest. Identify specific collections that would be good candidates for digitization, and write a paper detailing the reasons why and the issues that would need to be considered in planning the project. *(Class 10)*
- Write a research paper on a topic of the student's choice, such as the historical development of digital preservation initiatives, digital repositories, differences between U.S. and international digital preservation efforts, and so on. *(Class 11)*
- Write a disaster plan or update a plan for a library, archives, or other institution that holds cultural resources. *(Class 12)*
- In a given region of the country, search for resources, supplies, and services for disaster recovery needs. Add those vetted resources to the Web site <http://matrix.msu.edu/~disaster/>. *(Class 12)*
- Develop a full-scale preservation plan for the student's home institution or an institution of interest. *(Class 13)*
- Develop a grant proposal for the student's workplace or a local institution of interest. A Preservation Assistance Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities would be an appropriate length for the proposal and helpful to the home institution. *(Class 13)*
- Develop a local or regional advocacy campaign for preservation related to "bigger-picture" issues. *(Class 13)*
- Write a term paper on a case study of a collaborative effort with suggestions for future directions for the collaborative group. *(Class 13)*
- Identify a research topic of interest to the student, and write a term paper that provides an overview of current research efforts in that topic. *(Class 13)*