



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA



WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

Identifying potential risks to collections

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- Academic programs at University of Pretoria
- Core concepts
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UP Programs

Online Heritage & Museum Skills (2022)

Brief overview of heritage, general museology, preventive collections care (introductory level)

Bsoc Sci Heritage, Museum & Preservation Studies (2016-)

General museology

Emphasis on theory AND practice

Focus on preventive conservation

MSoc Sci Tangible Heritage Conservation (2019-)

Chemistry & material science

Analytical techniques

Focus on conservation: ethics, development, preventive conservation

Focus on stabilisation & remedial treatment

Core Concepts – understanding risks to collections

Focus on collections care as an integral part of heritage practice

From the moment an object is created, it begins to change as a result of interaction with the environment

Change can be:

- Sudden / Slow gradual loss
- Partial / complete loss
- Cumulative

Change is dependant on

- Nature of the material (organic / inorganic / composites)
- Environmental factors which can act on materials physically or chemically

1 

Physical forces

2 

Thieves & vandals

3 


Fire

4 

Water

5 


Pests

6 

Pollutants & contaminants

7 


Light

8 

Incorrect Temperature

9 

Incorrect Relative Humidity

10 

Dissociation

Agents of Change (Agents of Deterioration)

Frameworks for managing risks to collections

There are several pivotal documents which assist a museum in controlling the care its collections receive to promote their longevity, these include:

- A collections care policy
- A preventive conservation plan
- A housekeeping manual & cleaning schedules including Integrated pest management
- A buildings maintenance plan & inspection schedules (Fire, OHS)
- Disaster/emergency preparedness plan

These documents work together like cogs and one cannot work optimally without the other.

- Identify potential risks
- Action lists & budgeting
- Emergency planning / business continuity / recovery



Identifying potential risks

Preventive conservation framework

Canadian Conservation Institute

Levels of Control

This framework is carried out on three levels:

- Building
- Enclosure
- Object

Methods of Control

Each level has five applicable methods:

- Avoid
- Block
- Detect & Monitor
- Respond
- Treatment / Recovery

The walkthrough checklist

Water: leaks and floods

Check that the roof, walls and windows do not leak.

Check and clean gutters regularly.

Repair down pipes and roof flashing if necessary.

Check and clean drains regularly – every few months

Check for any signs indicating problems relating to the building's damp coursing (rising damp).

Remove any plants growing against exterior walls which will increase moisture ingress into the walls (lateral damp).

Avoid placing collections in storerooms or display areas below ground level.

Check where the floor plain lies relative to the shelving

Check and clean the drains and gutters regularly - every three months.

Check for leaks in the plumbing.

Relocate collections away from known leaks.

Re-route plumbing away from collection areas if possible

Relocate collections away from below/adjacent to sinks, toilets and other water sources.

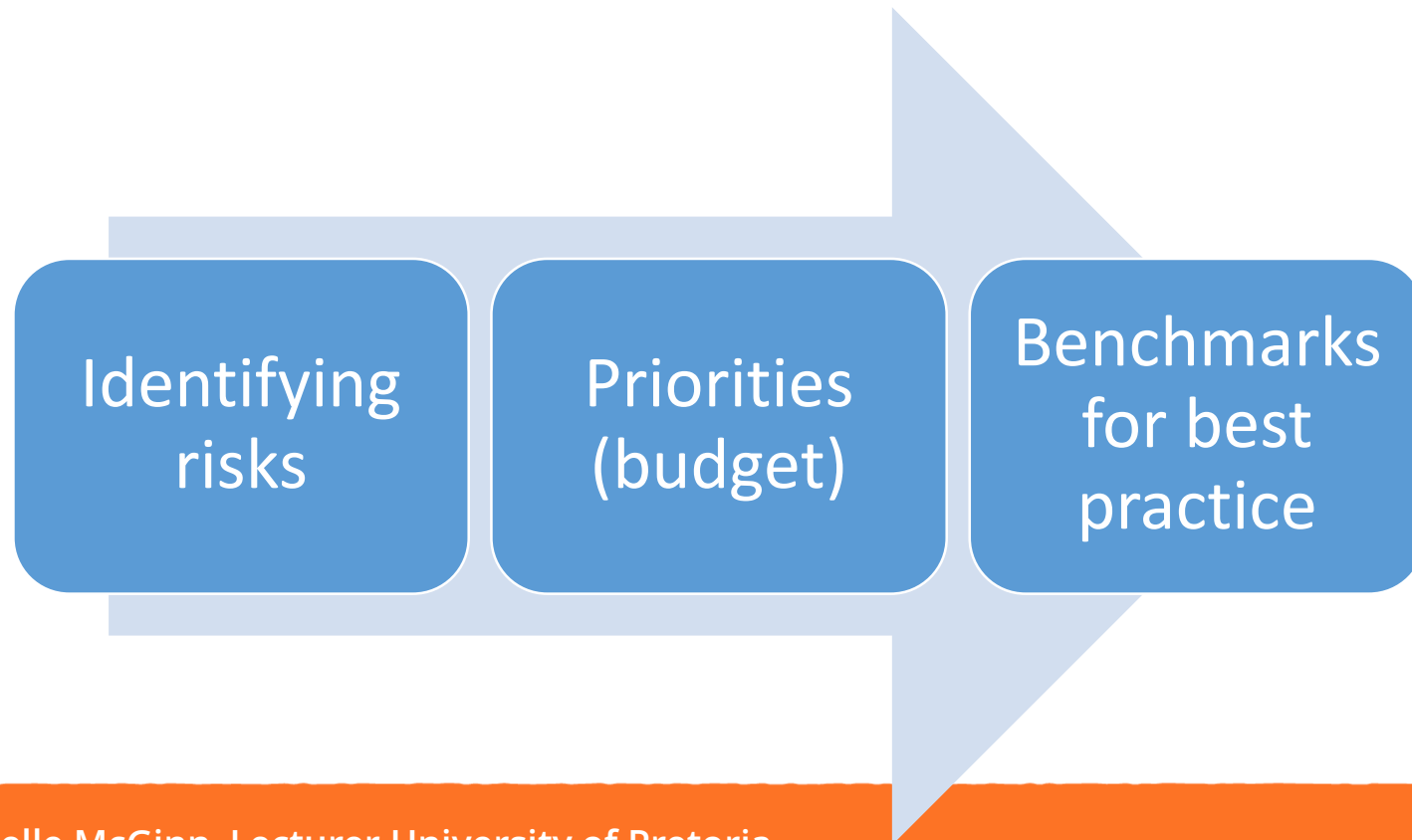
Elevate all objects and storage containers off the floor.

Allocate space and store emergency supplies for flood emergencies.



Preventive conservation

Once particular risks have been identified, strategies can be put in place to **reduce** or **remove** risks to the collections. Monitoring & Adapting systems aiming for best practice in collections management & care



Conclusion

- Items in collections change over time.
- Collections can be damaged.
- Items in collections have a finite useable life.
- Most damage is preventable & one can slow down processes of deterioration through preventive conservation.
- The best defence is a good offense in terms of preventive conservation and starts with identifying risks to collections.
- By using a risk assessment and management framework, regular monitoring and adapting systems to improve the general collections ecosystem, will promote longevity.



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THANK YOU!

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