

# Conservation Procedure for RMC Hirshland Gallery Exhibitions

Conservation supports the exhibition program of the Division of Rare and Manuscripts Collections, Kroch Library. RMC exhibitions may be held in the Hirshland Gallery, and the Rotunda, and in certain circumstances, the Lecture and Conference Rooms. See RMC's exhibition documentation for their procedures.

**Conservation contact:** [Michele Hamill](#), Head Conservator (MH92)

Person	Department	Role
<b>Michele Hamill</b> (Head Conservator)	Conservation /DCS	Coordinate lab staff for exhibition support; assess paper/photo/artifacts for condition, stabilization/treatment needs, and mount and environment needs; conduct stabilization/treatment; assist with matting/framing; assist in installation/deinstallation
<b>Trina Parks</b> (Conservator for Special Collections)	Conservation /DCS	Assess bound materials for condition, stabilization/treatment needs, and mount and environment needs; conduct stabilization/treatment; construct supports; assist in installation/deinstallation
<b>Pat Fox</b> (Assistant Book Conservator)	Conservation /DCS	Coordinate with RMC to construct exhibit supports; assist in installation/deinstallation; stabilization/treatment
<b>Senior Conservation Associates</b>	Conservation /DCS	Stabilization/treatment; construct exhibit supports; assist in installation/deinstallation
<b>Rhea Garen</b> (Imaging and Scanning Lab Manager)	DCAPS/DCS	Coordinate exhibition-related digitization; image rare materials; create digital files for distribution
<b>Simon Ingall</b> (Visual Resources Collections Coordinator)	DCAPS/DCS	Image rare materials
<b>Kate Carlin</b> (RMC Exhibitions and Public Services Assistant)	RMC	Coordinate exhibition planning meetings; coordinate with exhibit curators and exhibit-connected staff (Facilities; Communications; CUL-IT); advise and assist with exhibition timeline, preparation and installation activities; lead exhibition check-in meetings; prepare and maintain exhibition inventory and spreadsheet; schedule Conservation review with curators; track and route to Conservation and imaging labs; coordinate installation/deinstallation
<b>Julia Gardner</b> (RMC Exhibitions management)	RMC	Oversee the staffing resources and daily operational needs of RMC's exhibition and outreach program
<b>Exhibition curators</b>	RMC staff; CUL staff; CUL Faculty; Guest	Exhibition development; item selection; case and gallery layouts; installation; other tasks related to publicity, etc.

## CONSERVATION SUPPORT FOR RMC HIRSHLAND GALLERY EXHIBITIONS:

Exhibition task	Time estimate
Planning meetings	10--15 hours
Assessment/consultation	10--15 hours
Stabilization/treatment/enclosures	25--100 hours
Mount construction	25--75 hours
Installation/Deinstallation assistance	10--20 hours

## CONSERVATION TIMELINE:

### STARTING 12 MONTHS OR MORE BEFORE EXHIBITION:

- Conservation is available to consult on questions and concerns as Library staff consider and select possible exhibition candidates.
- Conservation participates in **exhibition planning meetings** (coordinated by Kate Carlin).

### 6 MONTHS, OR NO LATER THAN 4 MONTHS, BEFORE EXHIBITION:

- Conservation review
  - Kate Carlin schedules review with Conservation (Michele Hamill and Trina Parks) and exhibition curators.
  - Conservation reviews all selected exhibition materials (physical exhibit, publicity, web) to assess condition, stabilization/treatment required, and mount needs.
    - Identify items needing stabilization/treatment
      - Document and track identified items on exhibition inventory spreadsheet prepared by Kate Carlin.
      - Document page openings or other display directions on spreadsheet.
    - Recommend strategies to protect vulnerable or fragile items, such as facsimiles, reduced light levels, reduced exhibit duration, or other mitigation strategies to reduce risk of change or damage.
    - Identify mount and support types and any special display requirements.
      - Kate Carlin will schedule a mount meeting with Pat Fox
      - Recommend amount of mount board to be ordered by Kate Carlin.
    - Identify any large or unusual mount needs (matting/framing; oversize supports) or specialized conservation expertise. Large scale and custom matting and framing is outside the capacity of the Conservation Lab (see *Specialized Services for Exhibitions and Loans*) and will be an expense supported by RMC.

### 4-6 MONTHS BEFORE EXHIBITION:

- Conservation performs stabilization and/or treatment on identified items in consultation with curators responsible for collection items.
  - Kate Carlin tracks all movement of collection items on the exhibition inventory spreadsheet. Transport to and from the Conservation or imaging studios is communicated by email.
  - Conservation creates and maintains condition and treatment documentation. Conservation documentation is signed off by Kate Carlin.
- Conservation coordinates with DCAPS and Kate Carlin to route treated materials to the imaging studios as needed.
- Kate Carlin works with exhibition curators to prepare **case maps** for each exhibition case (horizontal and vertical), indicating where and how each item will be placed in the gallery.

### 2 MONTHS BEFORE EXHIBITION:

- Conservation (Pat Fox) coordinates with Kate Carlin to construct exhibition mounts and supports (cradles, flat mounts) for each exhibition item.
  - Mount and supports are constructed in the exhibit prep room, or in the Conservation Lab. If constructed in the Conservation Lab, items are tracked on the inventory spreadsheet by Kate Carlin.
  - Additional Conservation Lab staff may construct exhibit supports, and assist with matting/framing.

### INSTALLATION/DEINSTALLATION:

- Conservation is available to assist with installation and deinstallation as needed.

## SPECIAL NOTES:

### SMALL RMC EXHIBITIONS:

- Smaller exhibits constitute 2-3 exhibit cases and may be located in the Rotunda, or other secure RMC spaces as approved by RMC curators and RMC Director.
- These exhibits sometimes have a shorter duration, depending on the reason for the exhibition.
- Small RMC exhibitions will follow the steps as listed above, with the following modifications to the timeline:
  - 3-4 months before exhibition: Conservation review
  - 2-3 months before exhibition: Conservation stabilization/treatment; digital imaging if needed
  - 1 month before exhibition: Construction of exhibit supports

### EVENT EXHIBITIONS USING EXHIBIT CASES: (e.g., Reunion; special events; VIP visits; class/instruction)

- 1-2 cases
- Duration may short—a few days or weeks, a semester, and similar
- These exhibitions will follow the steps as listed above, with the following modifications to the timeline:
  - 1 month before exhibition: Conservation review

- 1 month before exhibition: Conservation stabilization/treatment; digital imaging if needed
- 2 weeks before exhibition: Construction of exhibit supports

#### **SHORT-TERM TABLE-TOP DISPLAYS** (e.g., special events, class/instruction)

- These displays are located in secure RMC spaces.
  - These displays are staffed and monitored at all times.
- Foam book supports and similar are used to safely support collection material.
- Curators will alert Conservation and Kate Carlin if collection item(s) present condition concerns or challenges for use.
  - Ability to stabilize collection items will depend on timing and capacity.
    - Conservation can always provide guidance on short-term safe display and can coordinate additional work after use.
    - Curators and RMC staff are encouraged to bring commonly-used collection materials to Conservation's attention so the item(s) can be stabilized as needed before next use.

#### **BORROWING FROM OUTSIDE LENDERS FOR EXHIBITION IN RMC:**

- RMC lacks a full-time registrar and hence does not frequently borrow items. If items are borrowed from outside lenders for exhibition in RMC:
  - Conservation can provide a condition assessment upon receipt as requested by the lender.
  - Items are mounted using standard supports as constructed by Conservation, in communication with lending institution/owner.
    - Specialized mounting and supports may need to be contracted as an expense supported by RMC.
    - CUL Facilities assists with certain installation needs, such as moving exhibition cases, hanging framed items, and advising on any building and facilities issues such as display interaction with HVAC, electrical, fire suppression, or security system elements (e.g., motion detectors).
  - Conservation does not routinely stabilize or treat exhibition items on loan from other institutions/owners.
    - RMC Director, DCS Director, and exhibition curators are notified by Conservation if a loaned item presents a condition issue.
      - RMC contacts lending institution with necessary condition information supplied by Conservation.
      - If it is possible to stabilize/treat a loaned item, a treatment proposal is vetted by the curator, DCS Director, or RMC Director, as needed. Permission is then obtained from lending institution or owner.
      - Conservation stabilizes/treats the loan item and prepares condition/treatment documentation; a copy is supplied to lending institution/owner.

#### **REFERENCES:**

- The American Institute for Conservation (the internationally recognized professional organization for conservation) has extensive resources has exhibition standards and guidelines here: [https://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Exhibition\\_Standards\\_%26\\_Guidelines](https://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Exhibition_Standards_%26_Guidelines) . Exhibit case design, for example, ([https://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Category:Exhibit\\_Case\\_Design](https://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Category:Exhibit_Case_Design) ) contains pertinent information on case security, stability, and access.
- ACRL/RBMS Guidelines: <https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/specialcollections#loanslending>
- Protecting Paper And Book Collections During Exhibition: <https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/2.-the-environment/2.5-protecting-paper-and-book-collections-during-exhibition>.
- Pre-made, non-adjustable acrylic cradles are available for purchase, for example: <https://www.gaylord.com/Exhibit-%26-Display/Display-Accessories/Cradles-%26-Mounts/Acrylic-Lipped-Open-Book-Cradle/p/HYB00832>
  - Adjustable cradles:
    - <https://www.universityproducts.com/benchmark-butterfly-bookmounts.html>
    - <https://www.benchmarkcatalog.com/collections/benchmark-butterfly-bookmounts>
- Foam book supports are used for classes and instruction. For example, <https://www.gaylord.com/c/Medium-Urethane-Book-Mount-Set/p/52171>