Finding information about risks to your collection

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Source materials: Waller 1996, 2003, Michalski, 2004, Heritage Preservation 2009

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| Level | Evidence gathering strategies | |
| Issue | Evidence to observe |
| Location | Walk and look around, photo document, and annotate an air photo or Google satellite image of the location. Make note of issues relative to: | |
|  | Landform | Land slide or slip? (PF) |
|  | Drainage | Note general slope of land – carries water away?  Flood sources: rivers, creeks, (in flood plain?) ditches (blockage and overflow), water mains (Water) |
|  | Features | Nearby forest, bushes, industrial sites, homes as sources of fire.  Standing water, dumps, rotting vegetation (Pests) |
|  | Services | Distance to nearest fire hydrant? Distance to nearest fire station? Is that fire station volunteer or staffed? 24/7? (Fire)  Distance to police station (Cr) |
| Complete observations at the location level before continuing Then consider  **SITE** level | | |
| Site | Walk around the site (property maintained by building owners) both at a distance to be able to see roof, if possible, then close up to see details around doors and windows. Photograph and make notes on printed pictures, plans, and/or sketches. | |
|  | Physical hazards | Note trees that could fall on, rocks that could topple into, vehicles routes could lead to collision with, building. (PF)  Are there outbuildings near the main building that could pose fire risks? (Fire) |
|  | Access | Could fire fighters access all sides of the building? (Fire)  Can vehicles bring objects to building without severe bumps? (PF) |
|  | Drainage | Note slope of the ground near to the building – is water led away? (Water)  Note whether roof is flat or sloped? Changes in slope and/or eaves that might lead to ice jams (Water) |
|  | Visibility | Are sight lines to vulnerable features such as low windows clear? (Cr)  Is the building exterior lit at night? (Cr) |
|  | Sanitation | Vegetation against building versus a “dead zone”? (Pests)  Is garbage held on site? Is it sanitary? (Pests) |
|  | Other / general | “Be the agent” think like a flame, a water stream, an insect pest, a criminal, etc. can you imagine ways to get across the site to arrive at the building, especially undetected? |
| Complete observations at the site level before continuing Then consider  **BUILDING** level | | |
| Building | Walk and look around the building both at a distance to be able to see roof, if possible, then close up to see details around doors and windows. If it can be arranged, gain access to inspect roof. | |
|  | Construction | Is the building an important or registered historic property?  Materials and quality of construction.  Are chimneys or other tall structures on roof secure from toppling and well maintained? (PF) |
|  | Features | Note quality of doors and windows and their seals, single/double glazing? screens on windows? condition of caulking at joints, style and quality of hardware, locks, etc. (Various)  Are vents or other openings covered with screens (Pests)  Are roof drains clear and well maintained? Do they have features to help prevent blockage (cages, etc.) (Water) |
|  | Systems | Note building wide systems, perimeter and/or motion alarm systems (where do they report to? (local, police, both?) (Fire)  Note building wide systems, fire hoses, sprinklers, alarm systems (where do they report to? (local, fire station, both?) (Cr) |
|  | Evidence of problems | Note evidence of damp walls (lichens, staining, salt  efflorescence) (Water) |
|  | Other / general | “Be the agent” think like a flame, a water stream, an insect pest, a criminal, etc. can you imagine ways to get through the building envelope, especially undetected? |
| Complete observations at the building level before continuing Then consider  **ROOM** level | | |
| Rooms  (without collection objects) | Walk through all rooms and halls (at least all adjoin collection holding rooms) noting floors, ceilings, walls, doors, and contents. Take photographs and notes and make annotations on a floor plan. | |
|  | Construction and finishes | Materials and quality of construction and finishes of floors ceilings and walls |
|  | Systems | Are alarms, fire suppression systems, etc. same as those noted under “Building” |
|  | Features | Take note of any hazards such as ignition sources, water sources, poor cleanliness or tidiness, etc. |
| Rooms (special purpose) | Hallways, passages, ramps, lifts, and elevators | Note accessibility, sufficient for movement of largest objects, obstructions present, cleanliness and tidiness |
|  | Loading bay | Note suitability for type of collection, organization, equipment, tidiness. |
|  | Janitor’s closets | Note especially suitability of floor material and wall-base molding, wall materials and finishes, floor drain, damming, general adequacy, cleanliness and tidiness |
|  | Quarantine room | Adequacy, accessibility, cleanliness and tidiness |
|  | Shipping / packing room | Adequacy, accessibility, cleanliness and tidiness |
|  | Kitchen and dining rooms | Note especially suitability of floor material and wall-base molding, wall materials and finishes, ease of cleaning, evidence of regular maintenance, general adequacy, cleanliness and tidiness |
|  | Garbage holding room | Adequacy, isolation (through location and sealing), cleanliness and tidiness |
| Collection rooms | Walk through exhibits rooms noting construction, finishes, features, sight lines, room-level systems, etc. before attending to cases and objects. | |
|  | Construction and finishes | Materials and quality of construction and finishes of floors ceilings and walls.  Evidence of past water damage?  Floor covering? |
|  | Layout | Floor level, especially not if below grade or immediately below roof.  Are any room walls exterior walls?  Are there clear sight lines for staff to readily see visitors at displays, cabinets, etc.? |
|  | Systems | Are there room level climate control systems? heaters, humidifiers, dehumidifiers, etc.?  Are alarms, fire suppression systems, etc. same as those noted under “Building”  Is there plumbing visible? |
|  | Features | Are there windows present? Window coverings? Open or closed? How is window and curtain opening decided (both in theory and in practice)?  Light level distributions throughout the room noting especially any places subjected to direct sunlight. |
|  | Other / general | “Be the agent” think like a flame, a water stream, an insect pest, a criminal, etc. can you imagine ways to get through the room to arrive at collection objects? |
| Complete observations at the room level before continuing Then consider  **STORAGE or DISPLAY UNIT** level | | |
| Storage or display unit | Observe each different model of unit in use. For multiples of the same type evaluate both a typical unit and, if relevant, any sub-standard individual units. | |
|  | Construction | Materials and quality of construction and finishes of cases, shelves, etc.  Are gaskets in place and in good condition? Do they provide an effective seal?  Will units shed water descending from above? |
|  | Stability | Are individual cases stable against collapse or toppling caused by accidental bumping or an earthquake? |
|  | Lights | If display units include lights are they separately ventilated?  Is light UV filtered?  Can the range of light levels be measured or estimated throughout the unit?  Are lights switched on by viewers or by motion sensors? |
|  | Features | Are there light blocking curtains or drop cloths fitted to the units?  Is there active environmental controls with cases?  Are there humidity buffering materials in the units?  Are there pollutant scavenging materials in the units? |
| Complete observations at the storage or display unit level before continuing Then consider  **OBJECT** level | | |
| Object | Observe typical manners of supporting objects whether standing, hanging, within containers etc. For multiples of the same type evaluate both a typical unit and, if relevant, any sub-standard individual units. | |
|  | Construction | Are materials used for support safe for long-term contact with objects? |
|  | Stability | Are supports adequate for expected levels of shock and vibration?  Do supports provide adequately distributed support to avoid distortion of non-rigid objects over time? |

References:

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