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Author(s): Warren, M.

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- Curators should be reasonable too: can you really afford to keep everything?
- Involve yourself in planning collections moves and temporary locations – you will probably know more about this than anyone else.
- It can be very sad if the museum team has to fight hard for what should be obvious, but try your best – its better than whingeing later.

Cathy is completing a study of recent capital projects in local authority museums.
She would be delighted to hear from anyone who has been involved in one of these projects and is willing to share their experience.
cpcpc@supanet.com

Moving the Norwich Castle Collections
Martin Warren, Collections Manager, Castle Museum

The redevelopment of the Castle Museum in 1999 -2001 was an enormous undertaking. Planning had begun several years beforehand but things did not really get moving until a few months before the builders moved in. Assessments had been done on the space requirements of the collections and the packing methods but it was quite late in the day that the decision was made to decant the entire collection to temporary storage off site. This strident advice came from a consultant brought in to revive the project when the regular staff was in danger of being overwhelmed by the sheer scale and pace of the project. It was his emphatic advice that the Castle would become a building site, dirty, dangerous and distinctly out of our control and there was no way he could allow collections to remain in the building. Building contractors, nice chaps though they may be, are no respecters of delicate and valuable collections. They also have the ability to go anywhere they choose when your back is turned, in order to do their jobs, so there could be no secure parts of the building that could be used as temporary storage.

How true that advice proved to be.

We were presented with a short-list of properties available in the city and came to a decision on the basis of a long series of factors, which were weighted for importance and scored for each property. The property with the highest score was in fact a pair of fairly new industrial warehouses on a well-managed estate. The fact there were two small ones rather than one good one was attractive, as we expected there to be a long term need for some smaller scale store when the main project

was over and in fact we still rent one of them today.

The physical security of the properties was upgraded with new doors, bars at windows and new locks throughout. A fire detection and intruder alarm system (seismic and PIR) was put in, and during the phase when the highest values were in the building the insurers insisted on 24-hour guards as well. It obviously worked because we had no attempts at burglary, and we are very grateful for the guards who alerted us when a down-pipe became blocked in a cloudburst and we were able to avoid a disastrous flood.

One of the stores (which we still inhabit) was equipped with two-storey pallet racking from Stortech. We didn't actually use it for storing on pallets but instead it gave us two levels of giant adjustable shelves that we could stack by hand with geology, decorative art, fine art and natural history. It has proved to be very versatile. No items were stored on the ground (for fear of water damage should there be a flood). Anything not on racking was placed on pallets.

The climate in the temporary store was controlled in two ways. One of the stores was already fitted with a large gas-fired heater unit. This was coupled to a humidistat and only switched on when the humidity climbed to unacceptable levels. The other store was unheated and was used to store mainly bulk archaeology and large paintings. The paintings were protected from extremes by placing them in racks constructed from spare Handy Angle and then enveloping the whole length of racking in polythene to form a tunnel. A spare dehumidifier was brought from another store and used to condition the air flowing through the tunnel. The machine was not big enough to manage the entire volume of the store but is did a good job on the contents of the poly-tunnel.

The packing of the entire collections required the recruitment of additional staff with appropriate skills. We had small teams working in many areas of the building. As this was going on while the museum was open to the public we created temporary packing areas by erecting secure screens with locking doors in the galleries. A closed circuit TV was also installed at the museum entrance to discourage anyone was removing things they shouldn't.

Wherever possible items destined for permanent storage was packed into their long-term containers. Natural History for instance was obtaining new steel dustproof cabinets and so the specimens were wrapped and packed into the new European standard plastic trays that would go in them. Keeper Tony Irwin devised an ingenious method of securing mounted bird specimens. (See Issue 19 – Ed.)

For items requiring temporary storage we employed a variety of packing materi-

als. Double-wall cardboard cartons combined with acid-free tissue wads proved very effective at protecting porcelain but the work of making the wads kept dozens of staff and volunteers busy for weeks! Paintings were wrapped in bubble-wrap, which proved adequate protection for the smaller ones but the larger ones needed very careful handling to avoid damage. Our most ornate frames were protected with wooden travelling frames - expensive but worth it. Geology went mainly into standard plastic Euro-crates. That was a compromise because the geology is actually staying in off-site storage for several years whilst a new facility is created. Bulk archaeology was already in stout cardboard boxes and these were loaded onto half-size Euro-pallet (800 x 600 mm) small enough to manoeuvre in narrow museum spaces. The investment in two hand pallet trucks was extremely wise, as you can move almost anything and any weight on those and the ingenious bogies meant that even their small wheels could negotiate irregular and lumpy surfaces with ease.

It is vitally important to keep records of what was packed and where it is shipped to at every stage of a collections move. Your insurers will require this I am sure and it will be extremely helpful to know where any item is when it comes to moving it back in an orderly manner. Ideally you should be able to supply the collections as the curators require them for display or storage. Every package we created received a bar-coded serial number on a self-adhesive label (Avery have better adhesion that cheaper ones), so it had a unique identity even if some of the objects inside were not in the documentation system. Remember, once packed the item becomes anonymous; which is a security blessing; but you need a system to know where any said object is located.

We used a MODES database with the object format and we recorded accession numbers and short description of what was packed, who packed it, when, an insurance value (per boxful) where it was before it was packed and where it was stored initially before moving off site. This went onto paper forms and then entered to a MODES file. The shipping and movements of packages was also recorded on forms (in triplicate) and entered to another MODES database, which was linked to the packing file. We recorded a list of packages shipped, when they moved them, where from and where to, date and also the shelf location they ended up on and who was the driver, co-driver and the person who placed it at its final resting-place. As a record, the people involved signed forms to show that they took responsibility for that action.

A word of warning: in my experience major redevelopments tend to expel collections from their ancestral homes and you are very likely to find that they don't all fit back in when the development is over. Take care to control the enthusiasm of the project managers for new public facilities and don't let them crowd out the

collections. Also, don't forget to plan for the storage of the packing materials and the (packed and unpacked) collections during the move. All that plastic and cardboard is a big fire-load and needs to be carefully planned. Consider ordering all in one go (to get the best price), but ask for delivery in stages (so you are not swamped with materials).

If anyone requires more detail on the technicalities, or can use any recycled tissue wads please contact Martin.
martin.warren.mus@norfolk.gov.uk

Moving 100,001 things to the new Ludlow Museum Resource Centre
Kate Andrew, Ludlow Museum

A brief history of Ludlow Museum

Ludlow Museum is one of three museums run by Shropshire County Museum Service, the original museum being that of the Ludlow Natural History Society, founded in 1833. The society was at the forefront of local research into the new science of geology, hosting Sir Roderick Murchison during his fieldwork for the Silurian System. The Revd T.T. Lewis, perhaps the true discoverer of the stratigraphy of the upper Silurian was a member. The original museum displayed geology, natural history and local history collections in a single large upstairs room, next door to the fashionable Ludlow Assembly Rooms. The original museum room is in fact now incorporated into the 21st century Assembly Rooms complex.

Like many similar Natural History society museums, the institution fell on hard times after the First World War. Gentlemen from London came to remove the important fossils, in fact almost the entire fossil collection, the mineral collection was sold to Birmingham Museum and by the late 1940s the society was wound up. In the mid 1950s the museum was re-launched in the Buttercross building by the County Council as a local history museum. At first, the museum operated with no curator, but in 1958, the late John Norton MBE was appointed as curator. John set about re-building the collections, retrieving geology and natural history specimens that had been dispersed around the town and receiving back non-type material from the Natural History Museum. He also undertook a massive amount of new collecting in geology, natural history and social history. Over the thirty years of his curatorship, the collection grew, moving first from offices in the current town library, to the old fire station and then in 1972 to a redundant school,