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NSCG Newsletter

Title: Levels of collection care - a self-assessment checklist for UK museums by Peter Winsor

Author(s): Not Listed.

Source: Not Listed. (1998). Levels of collection care - a self-assessment checklist for UK museums by Peter Winsor. *NSCG Newsletter, Issue 9*, 18.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/706>

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Levels of collection care - a self-assessment checklist for UK museums
by Peter Winsor
ISBN 0 948630 62 0 price £6.00 - alternative formats are available

This publication melds the requirements of Registration phase II with the guidelines set out in the MGC series "Standards in the Museum Care of" and sets out three possible levels of achievement of these requirements. The levels are basic practice (required to achieve registration), good practice (achieved by the majority of museums) and best practice (the level to aspire to). The checklists at the back can be photocopied or are available in "alternative formats", presumably standard spread sheets on computer disc. The three levels of achievement are a useful development from the high levels of collection care set out in "Standards", offering a stepped route to achieve "Standards" level best practice via basic practice and a realistic good practice.

For institutions yet to go through Registration phase II, this publication would be a great help during the process of checking procedures and paperwork (the alternative formats would also save a lot of copy-typing.) It will be useful to consultants or in-house staff carrying out first time collection and conservation assessments, perhaps in preparation for a lottery bid. The Standards recommend an annual inspection of collections; this publication also offers a format for an annual in-house audit and review of procedures to enable museums to work towards best practice in all areas. This book would be a valuable addition to any UK conservator or collection manager's library and presents a useful methodology to adopt or adapt elsewhere in the world.

Although threatened performance indicators for UK museums have now been dropped, this publication sets out a far more rounded and comprehensive set of indicators and levels of achievement than the simplistic bums-on-seats indicators sent out for comment and now abandoned.

Papers presented at NSCG AGM 98

STORAGE

**The Conservation Centre, National Museums and
Galleries on Merseyside 14th May 1998**

Environmental Control by Conservation Heating at Ipswich Museum

Ipswich Museums and Galleries has two main buildings, the High Street Museum (listed grade 2, built in 1881), and Christchurch Mansion (listed grade 1, built in 1550).

The High Street Museum, originally a purpose built museum, displays natural history, ethnography and archaeology.

The Mansion, (until a hundred years ago a family house), displays furniture paintings, costume and fine art.

Both buildings were originally designed to be heated by coal fires, but wet central heating systems were installed early this century causing very low relative humidities especially in winter. Relative humidity regularly dropped below 30 % for long periods at a time.

It was evident that the environment was causing damage to objects when splits appeared on recently restored mounted specimens, cracks appeared on painted panels, and veneer began to lift from furniture.

We asked for advice from the Energy Design Advisory Service, the MGC and from the Horniman Museum who have a similar problem, and we set about organising an environmental plan for both museum sites.

We received the promise of grant money and sent out tenders asking consultants if they could solve our problem with 'low tech' solutions. We did not wish to use expensive methods of environmental control such as air conditioning. We did not have the capital for such a solution and nor was it practical to duct conditioned air around two listed buildings.

We engaged Bob Hayes, environmental consultant to the National Trust. He advised us to use his method of Conservation Heating to raise relative humidity levels in our buildings.

