

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
DEPARTMENTAL MANUAL

Museum Property Handbook
(411 DM, Volume I)

Chapter 8 Handling, Packing, and Shipping

A. IMPORTANCE OF PROPER HANDLING

Careful handling of objects is a key element of a preventive conservation program. Physical handling is a thoughtful process and often overlooked as a source of potential damage to museum objects.

Some examples of damage caused by mishandling are obvious: a ceramic or glass object that is dropped and shattered or a document that is torn. In other situations, damage may not be evident immediately. For example, metals can corrode from being handled without gloves, or a painting can later crack as a result of bumps and jarring that occurred during movement.

Day-to-day curatorial care, which often requires handling, should be carried out in a precise and thoughtful way. Objects are usually moved and handled during such activities as cataloging, photographing, housekeeping, unpacking and packing for shipment. Handling objects as infrequently as possible is the best way to prevent such damage.

Damage resulting from mishandling museum objects is preventable. Proper handling of museum objects is largely a matter of developing an attitude of sensitivity to museum objects. Handling an object is a process of thinking and planning. Taking care to note structural weakness and surface fragility is the first step in handling objects in a thoughtful way. The safety of each object can be ensured by observing standard practices and rules for handling museum objects.

B. PRACTICES TO ENSURE OBJECT SAFETY

1. Establish Written Rules

Establish a set of written rules for handling objects or archival records. The preparation of written rules on handling fosters a professional attitude and respect for the objects involved. A set of such rules, posted in storage and work areas, helps ensure that all staff and outside researchers involved with handling objects think

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before they handle. Refer to pages 4-6 of this Chapter for written rules.

2. Train and Re-train

In some cases training may be necessary for staff who will be handling museum objects. All training in handling museum objects should involve "hands on" experience in handling techniques. Re-training and frequent reviews of handling techniques are recommended for both beginners and experienced personnel.

3. Use Proper Supplies and Equipment

The use of proper supplies and equipment will ensure that any equipment used to assist in handling museum objects is of good quality and in good repair. The use of supplies such as object support trays, and archival boxes avoids the unnecessary frequent handling of objects. Although there are a few exceptions, cotton gloves should be used when handling museum objects.

Handling equipment may include flatbeds, padded carts, dollies, pallet lifters, and object support trays. Also included are the supplies used with the equipment, such as foam pads used to line carts and trays, furniture pads, acid-free tissue, and cotton gloves. Before moving an object, inspect equipment to ensure that it is safe for both the objects and the handler. Adequate supplies should be on hand. If equipment or supplies are inadequate, postpone moving the object. Do not take risks with museum objects.

4. Plan All Tasks Associated With Handling and Moving

Planning is essential before handling museum objects. Plan storage areas so that one object can be moved without disturbing other objects. The movement of museum objects, even for dusting or cleaning in an historic house museum, should never be considered routine. Thorough advance planning helps to keep the movement of objects at a minimum. Planning also reminds the handler that each museum object is special.

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The planning process includes the following factors:

a. The Object's Structural Characteristics and Condition

Consider stresses that handling and moving will place on an object. An object may be extremely heavy, fragile, or unstable and, therefore, require specialized equipment or more than one person to move it.

b. The People

Evaluate the experience of the people involved. Assign specific tasks to each person. Movers should know where the object is to go, the route to be taken, the equipment to be used, and the time needed to complete the move. If necessary, provide a set of written instructions.

c. The Object's New Location

Ensure that the location is prepared and ready to safely house the object.

d. The Route for Moving an Object

Mentally and/or physically walk through the route to ensure that the route selected is appropriate and clear. Within a structure, study the spaces through which the object will pass (e.g., doorways, stairwells, and display areas). Be aware of all surfaces with which an object may come into contact (e.g., floors and walls). If possible, avoid tight fits.

If the objects are to be transported outdoors, move them when weather conditions (e.g., rain, snow, extreme heat) pose minimum threats. If an object is

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transported some distance or to a location at a different elevation, be aware of weather conditions at the final destination in order to determine the type of protective container needed.

e. The Personal Health and Safety of the Handler

Plans should address any health or safety hazards involved with handling objects, such as lifting heavy objects that might cause back or finger injuries; handling potentially dangerous objects such as historic firearms, ammunition, and medicines; and touching or inhaling fumes or particles from fumigated objects or natural history specimens treated with preservatives (e.g., arsenic).

C. GENERAL RULES FOR HANDLING MUSEUM OBJECTS

- ! Handle objects and archival documents as infrequently as possible.
- ! Handle every museum object as though it were irreplaceable and the most valuable in the collection.
- ! Never smoke, eat, or drink in the presence of objects.
- ! Do not wear anything that might damage the object. To avoid scratching and snagging surfaces, be careful of breast pocket contents, jewelry, watches, belt buckles, name tags, and bureau badges.
- ! Use only a pencil while working near objects to avoid applying a permanent damaging mark. Never use ballpoint, fountain, or felt-tip pens near objects. Use measuring tapes and magnifying glasses with extra care to avoid touching the object and causing accidental damage.
- ! Keep hands clean even when wearing gloves. All materials and surfaces in contact with the object should also be

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clean.

Wear clean white cotton gloves at all times, except when handling objects like ceramics and glass that are too smooth to grip safely through gloves, objects that have oily or tacky surfaces that can attract cotton fibers, or objects that may pull off on cotton fibers such as a basket. Use white cotton gloves or white cotton sure-grip gloves (e.g., PVC dots on palm and fingers) when handling plant, bird, mammal, and insect specimens. Surgical gloves

can be worn when handling wet specimens or specimens containing arsenic or other toxic materials.

- ! Know the condition of the object before moving it. Ask the following question: What is the strongest part of the object? Observe an object's center of gravity and lift it by supporting its strongest structural component. Never lift an object by its protruding parts, such as handles or rims, because these areas are often the weakest.
- ! Handle only one object at a time, using both hands. Use one hand for support and use the other hand for balance. Objects of more than one component, such as a teapot and lid, should be handled separately to avoid abrasion. Stabilize loose parts that cannot be removed.
- ! When handling an object for cataloging or research, it may be necessary to place it in an unstable position. Exercise extreme caution in these situations. If distracted (e.g., by a telephone call) set the object down on a stable base or surface.
- ! Never hurry while handling objects. Handling requires total concentration on the object and the moving involved. Move slowly.
- ! If an object is damaged during handling, record the incident. The format is similar to an accident report; detail the events that led to the damage. Save all pieces and report the accident to the appropriate personnel. Take photographs of the damage scene and the damage to the

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object if possible and complete a condition report.
Conservation photographs can be taken at a later date.

- ! In addition to the above general rules, there are specific rules for handling different types of objects (e.g., paintings, furniture, metals, paper, textiles, glass, ceramics, and stone). Refer to Section I of this Chapter for references on handling specific types of objects.

D. RULES FOR MOVING MUSEUM OBJECTS

- ! Lift objects. Do not push or drag them. Support objects from the base and side.
- ! Lift objects by their most stable surface. Do not handle objects by projecting parts, such as handles or rims. These areas are often the weakest. Use the most stable area of the object as its base.
- ! Do not overload carts or containers used to move objects short distances. Make sure objects are padded, secured, and separated from other objects. Padding should be of acid-free materials.
- ! Do not allow objects to protrude beyond the sides of containers or moving equipment.
- ! Exercise caution if there is a need to walk backwards when moving objects.
- ! Plan the movement of objects so that each person knows what to do, equipment is safe for objects and people, and the route is clear. Limit the number of personnel responsible for moving objects.
- ! Make sure objects moved together on a carrier are of the same size, weight, and material. For example, do not move ceramics and heavy metal or wooden objects in the same container.

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- ! Ask for help in moving large or heavy objects. Take no risks with museum objects or personal safety.

- ! Use as few movements as possible. Take the container to the object rather than the object to the container.

E. IMPORTANCE OF PROPER PACKING AND SHIPPING

One of the most hazardous times for museum objects is during travel. Applying appropriate techniques and procedures for packing and shipping objects are essential elements of a preventive conservation program. Moving and transporting an object from one location to another location involves the following steps: preparing the location for packing and shipping the objects, and carrying out the process of packing and shipping. The hazards of transit are numerous. Objects in transit may be subjected to rough jarring or dropping by movers, continual vibrations on an airplane, or exposure on a loading dock in the rain. Travel hazards include improper packing, shock, vibration, sudden changes in temperature and relative humidity, and mishandling, theft, vandalism, and loss. For example, humidity fluctuations can weaken adhesives and cause soluble materials to migrate. Vibration may dislodge object attachments.

The goal of protective packing is to consider the worst possible hazards that an object may be subjected to during shipment and then to overcompensate thus minimizing those hazards. Ensure that objects are packed in such a way that the container and packing materials absorb shock and vibration, that the internal crate environment buffers against external temperature and relative humidity fluctuations and that packing materials used do not cause potential harm to the objects. Each object requires a unique packing solution. A properly packed container makes the crucial difference between whether an object arrives safely or damaged.

Remember: During any movement, especially packing and unpacking, an object is subjected to its greatest risk.

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F. PREPARATION FOR PACKING AND SHIPPING OBJECTS

Packing and shipping museum objects require the following preparation:

1. Inspect and Document Condition of Each Object.

Determine if the object can be safely shipped. As necessary, consult with designated accountable officers, regional curators or contractors. Carefully examine each object considered for shipment to determine if its condition allows for safe travel. The structure or condition of some objects, like fragile glassware, wooden musical instruments, paintings on wood, pastel paintings, charcoal drawings or cracked porcelain, may preclude their safe travel. Look for evidence of structural or surface weakness.

Before shipping, document the condition of all objects (e.g., Condition Report; refer to Museum Property Handbook, Volume II, Chapter 5, Section G). This way, if damage occurs during travel the outgoing condition is documented for insurance and other purposes. A portable light source and a magnifying lens can be used to identify signs of surface weakness such as separation and lifted parts. Note areas of previous repair. Repaired areas might be weaker than original fabric and therefore more susceptible to damage. Repaired areas may also be stronger so that adjacent original material may be vulnerable to damage. With furniture, check to see that all attachments and joined sections are firm. Make sure paintings fit tightly in their frames, that the glazing is secure, and that there are no loose wires or hangers. Also check for tears at the canvas edges. Examine objects for signs of biological infestation. Photograph objects before they leave the unit to provide a visual record in case the object is damaged or lost during shipment.

2. Determine Method for Shipment

The value of an object may determine the method of shipment (e.g., a painting may need to be transported by

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a courier). The choice of shipment often determines the type of external case needed. The fragility of an object and the transportation distance also are factors to consider.

3. Prepare a Workspace for Packing.

If a permanently designated packing area is not available, an area that can be cleared temporarily for packing should be prepared. Select a space that is accessible to the controlled storage area and that does not require moving objects up and down stairways and around tight corners or through narrow doorways. Equipment needed for packing includes a sturdy table with a padded surface for objects. Pad the table with a few sheets of 1/8" ethafoam covered with 4 mil polyethylene sheeting securely fastened beneath the work surface. Pad a work surface for textile objects with unbleached muslin over polyfiber batting. Keep the table free of tools and other materials while packing. Tools needed for crating or soft packing, in addition to archival materials, may be scissors, packing tape, measures, twill tape, labels, and screw drivers.

4. Allow Sufficient Time to Pack Objects.

Good packing techniques can require hours and, in some instances, even days of time. It is important to schedule enough time to ensure that objects can be packed properly and without hurry.

G. PACKING THE OBJECT

1. The Exterior Container

Good quality and design of the container in which an object travels contribute to the object's chances for safe travel. The exterior container is always selected before packing because the choice of container is based on the condition and value of the object(s).

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The amount of space needed for the interior packing should be appropriate to the needs of the object. The method of transportation, the distances and duration of the trip, how often the objects should be packed and unpacked and subject to environmental changes, will all be factors in determining the type of packing needed. A good museum container is puncture proof, light-proof, water-tight, and protective against shock, vibration, and environmental changes. Shipping crates may be made of metal or wood. Soft packing materials include cardboard, and polyethylene padding, and corrugated archival board.

If an object or specimen is to be sent by U.S. mail, UPS, or other non-art handlers, the packed shipping container should be neatly wrapped and labeled. Poorly constructed and careless wrapping invites rough treatment, whereas, a properly wrapped box should encourage care by handlers. Kraft paper is an excellent exterior wrap for cardboard boxes.

Shipping containers need clear identification markings. Put arrows on the sides to signify which end is up and letter neatly on the top face, "OPEN THIS SIDE." The package should be labeled "fragile." Do not mark package with phrases, such as "works of art" or "museum objects", which may attract thieves. Packages containing natural history materials may be marked "scientific specimens"

and "no commercial value." Adhere all labels with tape to ensure that they remain affixed for the entire trip.

Centrally locate the typed or printed address. For added protection, always place a duplicate label inside the package. Mark the total number of boxes on the address label, (i.e., box 1 of 2 and box 2 of 2). Street addresses are preferable to P.O. Box addresses. All addresses should include the telephone number on the label. Always include the name of the recipient on the address label and call recipients in advance so that they will be expecting the packages. Print the name of the contact person, the address, and telephone number in permanent marker ink directly on the container. This procedure ensures that, if the wrapper is torn, the

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package will not have to be opened. Each shipping container should be labeled with a destination address, contact person and phone number.

2. Positioning the Object Inside the Container

Evaluating the object's structure and planning for the worst possible travel scenario are critical in determining the object's orientation inside a packing container. Consider the object's weight and center of gravity and imagine which part of the object will receive the least breakage if the package is dropped. The heaviest part of the object should be placed low and as near to the center of the container as possible. Flat art works covered with glass should always travel vertically. Detach, and pack separately, component parts of an object such as a teapot and lid. Moving parts should be immobilized or removed and packed separately. Make a support for heavy portions of the object. Do not pack objects dissimilar in weight in the same container.

3. Covering and Wrapping the Objects

An initial covering is used to protect objects from abrasive packing materials and to serve as a moisture buffer. Use soft, unbuffered acid-free tissue paper for most objects. As much as possible, avoid tape when covering objects because the tape can adhere to the object. Instead, tuck the tissue in on itself or into an appendage. Be careful not to exert stress on the object

by wedging tissue too tightly. Never crumple tissue in wads. Insert smooth pillows of tissue between objects.

The appropriate initial wrap for paintings is glassine paper or waterproof polyethylene paper (Tyvek®). Do not use plastic polyethylene sheeting as a preliminary covering because it traps moisture from condensation when temperature changes occur during shipment. This situation creates the risk of mold growth and other adverse reactions in the event of high levels of localized relative humidity. When shipping archeological metal in polyethylene bags, be sure to punch a hole in

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the bag before inserting the object to prevent condensation.

After covering the object, round off with tissue all projecting parts and handles. To illustrate this point, imagine a teapot. Soft, unbuffered acid-free tissue is placed around the spout, inside the teapot, and in the negative space of the handle. The end result is a rounded-off ball of tissue with projecting parts becoming an integral part of the whole. Wrap the entire teapot in one sheet of tissue or air-cap to hold the padding in place. Since this layer does not come in direct contact with the object, it can be taped to hold the package together. Label this exterior wrapping with object identification (e.g., object name and catalog number).

4. Cushioning the Object Inside the Container

Packing materials (e.g., air-cap, "potato chips," and polyethylene foam blocks) "float" the object inside the container, absorb shock and vibration, and create a minimal thermal barrier. A general rule of thumb is to provide at least two inches of cushioning between objects in the same container and between the container walls. Allow 3-4 inches between fragile items like ceramics and glass and between heavy fragile objects. Separate movable components of an object (e.g., separate a glass lamp's chimney from its metal base). Weight, fragility and sensitivity to environmental conditions (e.g., relative humidity and temperature) are criteria to consider in determining the number of objects to be packed in one container.

A variety of techniques can be used to cushion objects and provide shock absorption. Selection depends on the fragility, size, construction of an object, and on modes of transportation. These techniques include double-boxing, cavity packing and padding negative spaces.

a. Double-Boxing

Double-packing (packing an object in two sequential

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boxes) is an excellent cushioning procedure to use for short distance travel with one stop. To do this, immobilize the object and cushion it inside one box. Pack the first box inside a second box that is at least 2 inches larger on all sides. Completely fill the spaces between the boxes with newspaper or foam. Corner blocks or plastic shaped like doughnuts can be used instead of cushioning between the boxes. Corrugated fiberboard or wood can be used for either of the two containers. All objects should come in contact with only archival packing materials.

b. Cavity Packing

Small to medium-sized objects may be packed in successive layers of polyethylene foam sheets. This technique is clean and easy to use in repacking. The object shape is measured, marked on the foam with a pencil, and then the contour is cut out with a bread knife or electric carving knife. To protect against the abrasive polyethylene material, cover the cavity with soft, unbuffered acid-free tissue (Tyvek® or other smooth-surfaced inert material).

c. Padding Negative Spaces

A method to use for less fragile objects is to round off an object in tissue paper, then wrap it in successive layers of air-cap, place it inside the container, and pad the remaining spaces of the container.

Pieces of soft foam can be used to fill in the excess area. Traditionally, expanded polystyrene foam, often called "peanuts" have been used in the excess volume. However, "peanuts" placed loose in the container create a situation that allows for the shifting of an object. Loose "peanuts" obscure vision and add to the anxiety of the unpacking process. If "peanuts" are used, put them in small polyethylene bags and use the bags to cushion the wrapped object(s). Polystyrene foam in the form of "potato chips" is an excellent material for this

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purpose.

To make a cushioning brace, measure the distance between the object and the container, and build polyethylene blocks and mounts to fill in the space. Open objects (e.g., pots and baskets) should be lightly filled with tissue to equal the force of surrounding packing material pushing in on the object. Cover the closed-cell polyethylene with a less abrasive material (e.g., soft, acid-free tissue) to protect the object.

Before closing the container, place packing material above the object to prevent movement if the container is overturned. However, the object should not support the weight of this material. Avoid too much compression so that padding material does not cause damage to fragile object. Cushioning material should support and enclose but should not compress. Overpacking an object does not allow any movement and may cause a pressure break. Underpacking allows too much movement and can result in impact breaks. Packing materials should be positioned firmly around all enclosed items so that no part of any item contacts the container walls and so the contents cannot shift position.

5. Packing Materials

Considering the nature of the object, its particular needs, and the time it will be in transit is crucial when selecting packing materials. For instance, fragile objects like ancient glass, slip-surfaced ceramics, and corroded metals are susceptible to mechanical damage caused by abrasive foams. Acidic tissue should not come in contact with acid sensitive works. Plastic bubble pack and foams may leave imprints on polished metals, varnished woods, oriental lacquer, and other smooth-surfaced objects if used without the recommended layer of acid-free tissue. To prevent such damage, curatorial staff should select appropriate materials for each packing situation. **Objects should be returned or sent to the next destination in the original packing**

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materials. Refer to Appendix J for a list of appropriate packing materials and their sources.

NOTE: Store packing materials in a clean, dust and pest-free, controlled environment. Wooden containers and packing materials absorb moisture and pollutants. If possible, store them in an environment with stable humidity between 40-65% RH. If crates have absorbed more moisture than is recommended for museum objects, allow the crate to acclimatize to an environment equivalent to the object's environment at least two weeks prior to shipment. Open the lid to speed interior adjustment. Before packing, check all materials for insect infestation.

6. Inventory List

Place an inventory of all contents inside the lid of each packing container. The list should include a heading identifying the unit of origin; the destination; the name of the contact (Authorized Staff) at the receiving institution or unit; and the object name, catalog number and brief condition description of each item. If the packing configuration is complicated and if unpacking in an incorrect order can cause damage, then include written unpacking instructions or a sequence of photographs showing the proper packing or unpacking techniques. Refer to Museum Property Handbook, Volume II, Chapter 5, for more information on inventory lists.

H. SHIPPING THE OBJECT

One of the most important factors in selecting a particular art packer or carrier is its reputation with other museums. Contact local museums for recommendations on tried and tested museum object handlers and shipping companies. After a company has been selected, discuss and confirm the following points of information about the shipment: size and weight limitations, insurance coverage, cost, payment terms, and pick up and delivery times. Finally, be prepared to supervise and give specific instructions for shipping

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objects. If the handlers are also packing they should be supervised by the designated staff member.

1. Transportation Alternatives for Museum Objects

Options for transporting museum objects include: motor freight, air freight, U.S. Postal Service, private parcel services, personal transport, or courier. Selection depends on size, weight, distance, fragility of the object, and extra services that may be needed. Specific features and limitations of the transportation alternatives are as follows:

- a. The U.S. Postal Service is acceptable for objects and/or specimens that are not fragile and are not of high value. Always mail "priority" class to reduce transit time. A completed package must weigh less than 70 pounds and measure less than 108 inches in combined length and girth. Send object only by certified mail with a return receipt requested.
- b. Private parcel services such as, United Parcel Service (UPS), Emery, or Federal Express are recommended for shipping sturdy objects short distances (e.g., 100-500 miles). These companies may not transport objects of an "unusual value," flammables or explosives. A completed package must weigh less than 70 pounds and measure less than 131 inches in combined length and girth. UPS offers next day delivery, second day delivery, as well as pick up and delivery service. An Acknowledgement of Delivery form is available to senders. All packages are automatically insured for \$100 but additional insurance can be purchased. When shipping to a large institution, specify that delivery should be accepted by (signed for) by a specific person or department at the ultimate destination. Otherwise, objects may be left on a loading dock or at a reception desk.
- c. Art shuttle vans and special product trucks offer transportation for museum objects. These services are offered by some national van lines and specialized art handling companies. Unless an

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exclusive truck is requested, the objects are subject to side routing, delay, and transfer between vehicles. Find out, in advance, the exact route and transit schedule. Ship only in trucks that have air-ride suspension to absorb road shock. Transport objects sensitive to the environment in a climate controlled van. Cost for van shipping is based on size of shipment, weight, distance, and the extra services that may be needed (e.g., pick-up or non-stop delivery), climate control, and daily progress reports. The cost of an exclusive truck is high, but it ensures that the objects are the only objects on the truck and the only stop is your destination. Usually, an exclusive truck also means that the driver will act as a 24-hour guard.

- d. Air freight is a fast transportation method, but can be expensive and objects are subject to considerable handling. With air freight the object is out of the unit's control for the least amount of time. A typical scenario for an air freight journey is as follows: the object is transported on a truck or van to the airport; it sits on a loading dock; a fork lift is used to carry it to the plane; it flies on the plane; (it may be transported on more than one plane before reaching its final destination); a forklift unloads it; it may sit for a time on the loading dock; and a van takes it to the final destination. Air freight companies usually contract for pick up and delivery van service. Vans are not driven by museum object or art object handlers. Museum objects are handled like any other freight at this stage of travel. Pack objects with this fact in mind.

To prevent situations of unnecessary loading and unloading or a crate sitting unattended on a loading dock, plan routing carefully to minimize stop-overs and plane changes. Another threat is the pressure differences between ground and flight level that may affect pressure sensitive objects.

Packing size limitations are related to the airplane

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configuration and its loading doors. Air shipment charges are normally determined by weight and dimension of the shipment. The services of an air-freight forwarder may be helpful to coordinate air and ground transport. These companies own no planes, but have offices and agents who book the services of all available airlines. At high costs, exclusive air freight may be arranged on cargo carriers. In situations where an exclusive cargo carrier may be necessary, a courier would need to accompany the cargo to ensure proper handling and decrease the possibility of loss.

- e. Use of couriers decreases the possibility of loss. To ensure safety, an unusually fragile museum object, or one of high value, or one that is politically sensitive, should be accompanied by a courier during transit. A courier is also recommended if the trip is complex with many carrier changes. The courier should be someone knowledgeable in conservation, museum registration, and object handling techniques.

When couriating objects on an airplane, payment for a seat for the object may be necessary. Check on airline size limitations before planning for a hand-carried shipment and a shipping container. Secure it with a seat belt unless the object can fit under the courier's seat. A courier never lets the object out of sight; does not carry hand luggage that gets in the way of the object; does not tell other passengers of the package contents; boards and disembarks after other passengers. If the museum object is in the cargo section of an airplane, the courier supervises the loading and unloading and accompanies it from planeside to cargo shed.

If objects are traveling in an exclusive cargo carrier the courier should physically stay within close range of the object. All arrangements need to be made in advance with the airlines.

- f. Some rules of thumb for the short distance movement of objects by staff members are as follows: Never

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leave a museum object unattended in the vehicle. Deliver it to its destination as quickly as possible, avoiding unnecessary intermediate stops. Try to minimize subjecting the object to drastic environmental changes, such as going from the climate controlled museum storeroom to a humid summer day and then to an air-conditioned car. Personal transport, although not recommended, may be necessary. Usually objects and specimens of small size and minimal monetary, historic or research value are transported in personal vehicles. As a protection for the employee, all documentation should be completed and signed. Refer to Museum Property Handbook, Volume II, Chapter 5.

3. Receiving and Unpacking the Container

Upon arrival, museum objects should not be opened for 24 to 48 hours to allow the item to acclimatize to the new environment. After unpacking the objects, isolate and periodically examine them for signs of infestation. Set out sticky traps. Place objects on a white background, such as white archival board or foam-core, to facilitate observing signs of active insect infestation (e.g., frass, eggs, or insect parts). The length of time for isolation will vary based on the material and potential pests.

If damage has occurred, retain the crate and all packing material, follow procedures outlined in Volume II, Chapter 5, and notify the shipping company and any insurers if applicable. Use as much care in unpacking as in packing museum objects. Do not pull at pressure sensitive tape; carefully cut it to avoid excess pressure on the object and do not damage the object when cutting tape. Check objects against the packing list to ensure that everything is accounted for; complete Condition Reports to ensure accountability of the condition of the objects and/or specimens on receipt. Check and completely flatten all packing materials to ensure that no object pieces or small items are left behind. If the object is to be repacked, place packing materials inside the box or crate and save the container. Also take

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careful notes on the unpacking sequence and label all packing boxes and supports so that they can be reinstalled properly. Packing containers are specially designed for short-term transportation needs. Objects should never be stored permanently in packing containers.

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