

Laying Out Your Storage

- ✓ Using your data from the physical assessment of shelf space, calculate the number of units for your collection. Do not forget to account for thickness of shelves.
- ✓ Develop a layout for the furniture in the storage space. The things you need to account for when developing a layout are: ceiling pipes, pillars, door swings, outlets, aisle width, and ADA requirements. Familiarize yourself with building codes at this stage.
- ✓ The most accurate method of visualizing storage layouts is a computer-assisted-design program. Common programs include AutoCAD®, and SketchUp™. Another option is to cut out scaled drawings on graph paper.
- ✓ Work in cubic footage, not square feet. This means you need height, width, and depth measurements.



3D visualization in Trimble SketchUp™

General Tips

- ✓ Remember if you are doing a space assessment, you are not doing an inventory. It is not the kind of project where you are recording every catalog number and getting exact measurements. The goal is to assess physically how much space your collection actually needs.
- ✓ During the physical assessment, develop a system for tracking your progress as you go. Also develop a recording strategy. A clipboard and paper that you can transfer into a digital file may be your safest bet. One person can record data as the other person examines objects.
- ✓ When determining what shelf height categories you will be able to have, do not forget to account for the space of fitting your arms in the shelf and the space to lift objects to move them.
- ✓ When deciding where to place your oversize collections, locate heavier objects and objects that are challenging to move nearest the doors. Heavier objects should also be lower to the ground to ease access and promote the safety of staff and collections.

Overcrowded basketry storage at the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History.



The Basics of Planning for New Storage

By Jesse Dutton-Kenny, University of Colorado Museum of Natural History | 2016

Defining Your Project

Many museums find that their storage space is incredibly limited. This leads to overcrowding of collections that can in turn lead to lead to compression and breakage. One way to mitigate this situation is to conduct a space assessment of your collection to see how space can be used more efficiently now or in the future. The ultimate goal is to create storage spaces that will efficiently use space, that promote care and preservation of the collection, and that are safe for staff and collections.

To start the process of conducting a space assessment and storage planning, define the scope of your project. Define it both in terms of the areas you will be covering physically and the areas of your collection you will be dealing with. Clearly define what tasks are and are not part of this project before you start.



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Planning Stages

- ✓ Determine your staffing needs and ability for the project. This is rarely a one person undertaking so institutions with limited staffing may consider recruiting volunteers.
- ✓ Determine a basic timeframe for the project. The actual space assessment of one room can take anywhere from a few days to weeks, and an assessment of a whole building could take months.
- ✓ Get to know your space. Is this an existing storage space that you are reconfiguring? Are you moving into a new room? Get measurements and floor plans.
- ✓ Determine your storage furniture needs. You may be using existing furniture and reconfiguring, or you may be looking to upgrade. Make sure you know what aspects of the furniture itself will take up space (for example, thickness of shelves).
- ✓ Determine the organizing structure you will be using for the collection. Should your collection be organized by geography, cultural affiliation, or by object type? Address oversize objects and where your growth space will fit in.

Physical Assessment



Conducting a space assessment in the collections.

- ✓ Gather your tools. You will need: paper, pencils, clipboard, gloves, measuring tapes, ladders, carts.
- ✓ To start the physical assessment, begin by measuring everything. Do this for enough objects until you can determine the categories of shelf heights you will need.
- ✓ These categories will now become columns in your data tracking matrix. Your rows can be different shelf sizes, or organizing principles such as global regions.
- ✓ Once you have your tracking matrix, go through the collection and start ticking off full shelves in your different height columns.
- ✓ For oversize objects that will not fit in your tracking matrix, get exact measurements and list out.