Knowledge is Power: Assessing Collections for Preservation Planning.

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U.S. Government Publishing Office
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Assessing collections
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Collection assessment

Experience
Observations
Anecdotal evidence
Feelings
Worry

Evidence
What a survey can tell you

- Collection Care, Binding
- Conservation Treatment
- Box
- Brittle paper
- Digitize
- Collection Environment
Outcomes

• Accurate definition of condition categories
• A ranking of condition categories
• Number of items/books in each category
• Percentage of total items surveyed within each category: = 100 % total sample
• Projected numbers within each category in the total collection
Designing the survey instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition Category</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine 1</td>
<td>No Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good 2</td>
<td>Low Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair 3</td>
<td>Moderate Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor 4</td>
<td>High Priority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Designing the survey instrument

1: Fine. No Action Required
The publication looks new. The binding is tight without any sign of wear. The pages show no signs of dirt or mold. All maps and foldouts are present without any tears. Supplementary material is present, without any sign of wear and housed in the original pockets or enclosures.
Designing the survey instrument

2: Good: Low Priority
The binding shows signs of use, but all pages are tightly bound. Binding board corners may be bent but no other damage is present. Maps and foldouts may show wear, but are not torn. All supplementary material is present, but has been used and may have been misfolded when returned to pockets or enclosures.
Designing the survey instrument

3: Fair: Moderate Priority

Cover boards and the spine may be loose, but are still attached. End pages may be loose or missing. The cover boards and pages may show signs of dirt or other stains. The spine may be pulled away from the text block at the top. Pages, maps and foldouts may be torn, but all information is present. Unbound material is stored folded or unbound materials are bent from sagging on the shelf or in boxes.
Designing the survey instrument

4: Poor: High Priority

The binding shows evidence of severe wear such as loose or missing cover boards or spine piece. The text block is loose within the cover boards. Many pages are torn, or are pages are brittle and cannot maintain an attachment in the binding. Maps, foldouts and supplementary material are torn or missing.
Designing the survey instrument

Recording Shelving Conditions

- Moderate dust
- Thick dust
- Evidence of pests
- Clumps of dust and mold
- Unsupported items
- Items packed too tight
Designing the survey instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Fine, Good, Fair, Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Fine, Good, Fair, Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Fine, Good, Fair, Poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Designing the survey instrument

A visual dictionary of condition types and their definitions avoids desensitization and increases survey accuracy.
Sampling Methods

Accidental or Grab Sample: Samples conveniently drawn from a population. Not representative, but useful for testing the category ranking and condition type definitions.

Systematic Sample: Elements selected from an ordered sampling framework (book shelves)

Simple Random Sample: A sample where each element has the same probability of being chosen.
Sampling Methods

*Cluster Sampling:* Random samples within a systematic sampling framework. The intent is to be as random/neutral as possible to avoid selection bias, while still covering all possible physical locations in a non-random fashion to avoid the accidental skewing of data.
Sampling Methods

*Two Stage Cluster Sampling*: Two-stage cluster sampling, is obtained by selecting cluster samples in the first stage and then selecting sample of elements from every sampled cluster.
Determining the sample size

- Total population size (How many books)
- Specific margin of error +/- 1-5%
- Desired Confidence level - usually 95%, 99%
Performing the survey

• Form a survey team
• Create a visual dictionary of condition types
• Create survey forms with a space to record the cluster/shelf and the item call number info for the selected volume or use laptops or tablets.
• Random number generator essential for selecting cluster and items
• Begin surveying in pairs to compare judgement
• Fatigue is a factor in skewing results
Reporting the results

• Produce a formal report of your findings
• Begin with a description of the collection you surveyed and its significance to the library
• Include a summary of your total findings and a summary of your recommendations or priorities
• Describe your survey design and implementation
• Describe and illustrate your complete findings and recommendations in a separate section
• Use tables, charts, graphs to illustrate your results
• Include your visual dictionary and other source material
• Photograph issues you discover as you survey
Additional information:

• Northeast Document Conservation Center  
  [www.nedcc.org](http://www.nedcc.org)

• Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts  
  [www.ccaha.org](http://www.ccaha.org)

• American Institute of Conservation  
  [www.aic.org](http://www.aic.org)
Additional information

Sample size table calculators and random numbers

http://www.research-advisors.com/tools/SampleSize.htm


https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm

https://www.random.org/sequences/
Additional Information

The ABCs of Bookbinding, an illustrated glossary of terms for collectors and conservators

https://www.amazon.com/ABC-Bookbinding-Illustrated-Collectors-Conservators/dp/1884718418
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