Preserving Family Treasures – Textiles and Fabrics

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Objectives

- Causes of damage and deterioration
- Storage best practices
- Safe display methods
What harms a textile?
Culprit #1: Light

- Visible and Ultraviolet
  - Sunlight
  - Florescent bulbs
  - Incandescent bulbs

- Recommended:
  - Avoid direct sunlight
  - LED lightbulbs
  - Low lighting in display space
  - Dark storage space
  - UV filtering materials
  - Rotate display
Culprit #2: Temperature and Humidity

- Work hand-in-hand
  - Low levels: embrittlement
  - High levels: mold, embrittlement, discoloration
  - Drastic fluctuations cause the most damage

- Recommended:
  - Temp: 65-72 degrees
  - Humidity: 45%-55%
Culprit #3: Pests

- The Big 5:
  - Clothes Moths
  - Carpet Beetles
  - Sliverfish
  - Firebrats
  - Mice

- Recommended:
  - Sticky traps
  - Regular cleaning
  - Bag and isolate suspected textiles
Display Option 1: Padded Rod

- Good for:
  - Kimonos
  - Ponchos
  - Tunics
  - Sleeveless garments
  - Quilts & Rugs

- Materials Needed:
  - Acrylic or wooden dowel
  - Polyurethane
  - Pad with polyester quilt batting
  - Unbleached, washed muslin
  - Sewing kit
Display Option 2: Velcro Method

- Good for:
  - Quilts
  - Blankets
  - Rugs

- Materials Needed:
  - Sewing machine
  - Velcro
  - Unbleached, washed muslin
  - Wooden wall strips
  - Polyurethane

Credit: George Washington University Museum
Display Option 3: Shadow Box

- **Best for:**
  - Smaller, lighter, more delicate textiles
  - Nothing larger than 4ft x 8 ft

- **Materials Needed:**
  - Archival foam core backing
  - Unbleached, washed muslin or cotton/polyester blend fabrics
  - Sewing kit
  - Archival matboard window
  - UV coated plex and frame
Storage Option 1: Padded Hanger

- Great for:
  - Sturdy garments

- Materials Needed:
  - Strong hangers
  - Polyester quilt batting or fleece
  - Unbleached, washed muslin
  - Sewing kit

- Pattern
Storage Option 2: Rolled Storage

- **Great for:**
  - Quilts
  - Rugs
  - Blankets
  - Flags
  - Other flat, rectangular textiles

- **Materials Needed:**
  - PVC pipe
  - Unbuffered acid-free tissue
  - Twill tape
  - Storage rack or archival box

- [Tutorial]
Safe Storage Option 3: Flat Storage

- **Best for:**
  - Garments that cannot hang
  - Flat textiles

- **Materials Needed:**
  - Acid-free archival box
  - Unbuffered acid-free tissue
  - Scissors (optional)
Step 1: Cover Metal Accessories
Step 2: Tissue Padding Folds
Step 3: Cover Overlays
Step 4: Pad Folds in Box
Step 5: Additional Tissue Padding
Resources

- National Park Service Conserve O Gram series
- George Washington University Museum resources for textile care & display
- The Henry Ford Museum fact sheet on antique textiles & costumes
- Canadian Conservation Institute Care of Objects and Collections
Conservation Support

- **Ford Conservation Center**
  - 402-595-1180
  - Email: hn.fordcenter@nebraska.gov

- **International Quilt Museum**

- Find a conservator in your area via the **American Conservation Institute**
Questions

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