

Collections Care

Metal Objects

Humans have been using metal for thousands of years to craft everything from jewelry and weaponry to tools and machinery. Though it is thought of as a durable, hard-wearing material, metals are vulnerable to physical and chemical damage that is usually irreversible at worst or can require extensive intervention by a professional conservator at best. As with any museum or personal collection, appropriate handling techniques and storage are the first line of defense in preserving metal objects for future generations. General tips for caring for these objects include the use of appropriate gloves (clean cotton or accelerant-free nitrile, which is preferable) whenever handling metal objects, minimizing fluctuations in humidity and temperature in storage and display areas, and general good housekeeping in storage and display areas to prevent the accumulation of dust and other materials. Further tips on caring for metal objects can be found below.

General Metal Object Care

- American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC): [“Caring for Your Treasures – Metal Objects”](#)
- Connecting to Collections Care: [“Care of Metal Objects” Webinar](#) (Presenter: Deborah Long of the Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center, Omaha, NE)
- Henry Ford Museum: [“The Care and Preservation of Historical Brass and Bronze”](#) (by Clara Deck, Senior Conservator)
- National Park Service:
 - [“Caring for Outdoor Bronze Plaques, Part I”](#) (Conserve O Gram Series, September 2005, Number 10/4)
 - [“Caring for Outdoor Bronze Plaques, Part II”](#) (Conserve O Gram Series, September 2005, Number 10/4)
 - [“Caring for Silver and Copper Alloy Objects”](#) (Conserve O Gram Series, May 1999, Number 10/2)
 - [Museum Handbook: Appendix O, “Curatorial Care of Metal Objects”](#)
- Victoria and Albert Museum (London, UK): [“Caring for Your Metal Objects”](#)

Historic Weaponry

- Connecting to Collections Care: [“Lock, Stock, and Barrel” Webinar](#) (Presenters: Toni Kaiser of the National WWII Museum in New Orleans, and Paul Storch of the Minnesota Historical Society)
- National Park Service, [“Caring for Historic Longarms”](#) (Conserve O Gram Series, May 1999, Number 10/1)
- Victoria and Albert Museum (London, UK): [“Shooting Yourself in the Foot: The Dos and Don’ts of Working with Weapons”](#) (by Rachel Church, Conservation Journal, Summer 2003, Issue 44)

Historic Vehicles and Farm Equipment

- Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI): [“Care of Machinery Artifacts Displayed or Stored Outside”](#), CCI Notes 15/2
- Connecting to Collections Care: [“Care and Preservation of Historic Motorized Vehicles” Webinar](#) (Presenters: Mary Fahey of the Henry Ford Museum and Derek Moore of the Western Reserve Historical Society)
- Debra A. Reid: [Interpreting Agriculture at Museums and Historic Sites](#) (book), “Collections Care and Management,” p. 97 – 99 (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017)
- Henry Ford Museum: [“The Care and Preservation of Historic Motorized Vehicles”](#) (by Malcolm Collum, Senior Conservator)
- National Park Service: [“Preparing Historic Motorized Vehicles for Storage or Exhibit”](#) (Conserve O Gram Series, September 1999, Number 10/3)