Is That the Best Storage Environment?
The Sustainable Preservation Practices for Managing Storage Environments Workshop at Vizcaya Museum & Gardens, October 16 and 17, 2012
By Katherine L. Fleming

“The numbers are not sustainable!” This is the most important statement that Jim Reilly, Jeremy Linden, and Shae Trewin of the Image Permanence Institute (IPI), Rochester Institute of Technology, wanted participants to remember from their workshop. The “magic numbers” that many of us learned about in graduate school—50% relative humidity (RH) and 70 °F/2 °C degrees—do not have any meaning. “Heresy!” some of you might declare, but IPI has the research to back up its statement.

During the 1950s Harold Plenderleith of the British Museum came up with this best practice for maintaining the most suitable environment for the preservation of paper and other objects. Gary Thompson, who worked at the National Gallery in London, perpetuated the idea in his book Museum Environments. Those who later used these figures failed to note that both researchers said this concept was preliminary and needed further study. They also overlooked the fact that the research took place in London and might not be applicable elsewhere. Today, as in the past, the British Museum does not have air handlers because it has little need for cooling, but it does require heaters in the winter. Research now suggests that how an institution manages its internal environment depends greatly on what the climate is like at that location. Conditions in Britain are not the same as those in South Florida.

Erhardt, Tumosa, and Mecklenburg, (2007) in their article “Applying Science to the Question of Museum Climate” (the free download for this and related conference papers on museum microclimates is available at: http://www.conservationphysics.org/mm/musmic/musmic150.pdf) report that the ranges and values originally chosen as standards had little scientific support. Many choices were based on exterior climate, HVAC systems, or implementation costs.

Recent research has demonstrated that determining the appropriate ranges for temperature and relative humidity is much more complex than was formerly understood and requires knowledge about how and why objects deteriorate. But it also reveals that temperature and relative humidity ranges can safely vary much more than previously believed. For example, variations within the range 30% to 60% RH are mechanically safe. There are, of course, exceptions to some of the recommendations. Cold storage is better for photographs and dry conditions are healthier for metals.

The good news for archivists and curators is: “Because the new guidelines are more flexible and allow a wider range of environmental conditions, implementing them is simpler, less expensive, and less time consuming” (Erhardt, Tumosa, and Mecklenburg 2007, 15). Research, such as the long-term aging study of photographs conducted by IPI, continues to provide collection managers with a better understanding of
optimal storage conditions. For example, studies have shown that short-term fluctuations in relative humidity do not really matter. How long does it take for a hardcover book to reach equilibrium after a one-time change in relative humidity? One month! Place documents in enclosures and they will be protected from short-term fluctuations in relative humidity.

Today’s diminishing resources often compel institutions to make “difficult choices as they respond to apparently conflicting mandates to lower operating costs, achieve sustainability goals, and preserve collections” (IPI’s Guide to Sustainable Preservation Practices for Managing Storage Environments, Ford 2012, 2. This Guide was provided at the workshop, and is available for $25 at https://www.imagepermanenceinstitute.org/store/publications/sustainable-preservation-practices-guidebook). With energy costs consuming a substantial portion of institutional budgets, is it possible to practice good collection stewardship while reducing energy costs? The answer from IPI is a resounding: “Yes!” Once freed from the nearly impossible task of struggling to maintain constant temperature and relative humidity levels twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, energy costs can be reduced—at times considerably. One method of achieving this is to maintain more rigorous controls over a small space where the most vulnerable items in the collection are held, while allowing the remaining space to be governed by less rigid standards. Another method, previously considered too drastic, is to schedule night and weekend setbacks and air handling unit shutdowns when staff and members of the public are not present and will not be impacted by temperatures that are too hot or too cold.

IPI believes that by understanding the risks to your collections, it is possible to make informed decisions about what environmental measures can be taken at your particular institution. IPI has developed Preservation Environmental Metrics—algorithms for risk analysis—that convert temperature and RH data from storage spaces (using a datalogger) into useful preservation judgments. Metrics quantify the effects of environments over time and provide scientific measurements. The metrics are used in IPI's Dew Point Calculator [http://www.dpcalc.org/], which uses temperature, relative humidity and dew point to define an environment. The website allows you to plug data into the calculator and receive a Preservation Evaluation that encompasses the type of decay (natural aging, mechanical damage, mold risk, and metal corrosion), an environmental rating (risk, OK, good), and a preservation metric (numerical rating, no risk rating). The results can help you “plan, evaluate, and manage storage environments with respect to preservation benefits, preservation risks, or the realities and capabilities of your system.” Remember, your facilities management people can be crucial to successfully achieving sustainable preservation goals. Although this workshop is not scheduled to be taught again, IPI’s NEH-funded Sustainable Preservation Practices for Managing Storage Environments—Series II is presenting nine webinars free-of-charge between January and September 2013. These presentations will provide information on a variety of topics from recent preservation research to tips for dealing with broad environmental challenges, such as summer heat and humidity and winter dryness. To register or to obtain additional information go to: http://ipisustainability.org/. If you miss the webinars, the PowerPoint presentations from each session eventually will be made available on the IPI website. 
Dear SFA Members,

Happy New Year! And Happy spring semester for you academics. Here’s hoping we continue to grow and evolve in 2013 as our state’s preeminent archival professional organization.

I’m writing this Presidential letter in this newsletter because our President, Tomaro Taylor was unavailable. A hearty “thank you” to Immediate Past-President, Mike Zaidman for pulling together this newsletter. I’m sure it’s just like riding a bike, Mike!

As a reminder, your SFA membership is effective for one calendar year (January to December). If your membership has lapsed, you should have received a notice via email. Please fill out the online form at: http://www.florida-archivists.org/Membership.php and send it in to the address provided. You won’t want to miss out on any news, for instance, the planning for our annual meeting in Tallahassee. Local Arrangements Chair, Burt Altman is dotting every “T” and crossing every “I”, um, you know what I mean....

We can count on Burt to make sure we will have an enjoyable and enriching experience in Tallahassee in May.

If you have an opportunity to visit Tallahassee before our annual meeting, please heed this message from Burt:

“If you plan to be in Tallahassee during the next year, make sure to check out the new exhibit at the Historic Capitol, New Worlds: Identity, Perception, & Politics in Florida. The exhibit features 40 rare prints and early Florida maps (15th-20th century) from the collection of Michael and Dr. Linda Fisher.”

I plan to check out this exhibit in May for sure. Planning for future meetings was also on the agenda of the October board meeting. The next SFA annual meetings are scheduled in Winter Park in 2014 and Miami in 2015.

Please feel free to contact me or any other board member with your ideas and concerns. Thank you,

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SFA Member News

Elizabeth Schlaerth has left Barry University and is now Head Records Manager for PeytonBolin, PL, in Fort Lauderdale. PeytonBolin is a real estate law firm.

... Emily Gibson is the new Visiting Archivist for the Pan Am Collection, Otto G. Richter Library, University of Miami.

Institutional News

The Henry B. Plant Museum [www.plantmuseum.com] will have an antiques evaluation on Sat., Feb. 2, from 10 am to 12 pm. Bring your favorite object to get evaluated by their experts for $5 per item with a limit of four.

... The Orange County Regional History Center [www.thehistorycenter.org] is presenting a Collections Management Workshop: Wedding Dress Preservation on Sat., Feb. 9 from 10 am to 12 pm.

... The State of Florida’s Division of Cultural Affairs is compiling a list of all arts and culture districts in the state. The information will be used to demonstrate to state legislators the important economic role of the arts. To contribute, please provide the name of the arts district, the city/county, website, and contact information to Tim Storhoff [timothy.storhoff@dos.myflorida.com].

... The Florida Collections Care Forum was recently created on Facebook to facilitate discussion and planning among collections care professionals in museums, archives, special collection libraries, historic houses and sites, archaeology collections, and conservation within the state of Florida. The group provides a great opportunity to share articles, projects, and questions among professionals with like interests and issues. It is also an environment that can enable you to find colleagues in which to share projects or develop presentations for conferences, seminars and workshops. Need to know where to buy archival supplies? Need to know what that thing is in your collection? Looking for a co-chair for your collections panel? This is the place. If you are interested in joining, please find the group at [www.facebook.com/groups/346368782122558/].

... In Tallahassee, there is a new exhibit at the Historic Capitol, New Worlds: Identity, Perception, & Politics in Florida. The exhibit features 40 rare prints and early Florida maps (15th-20th century). The exhibit will end Dec. 31 [www.flhistoriccapitol.gov].

... The Florida Cultural Alliance [www.flculturalaffairs.com] is leading efforts to build greater understanding of and support for Florida's investment to provide funding for eligible 2013-2014 Florida Division of Cultural Affairs grant applicants. If you agree that the arts and culture industry is vital to Florida's creative and innovative economy and should be integral to the development of our state's strong economic development plans and policies, please speak up. It's our job to communicate the why and the how to the decision makers.

Conferences, Workshops & Webinars

The fifth annual Archival Education [www.ischool.utexas.edu/aeri2013/proposals.html] and Research Institute, June 17-21 at the University of Texas at Austin. Application deadline Feb. 3.

... The Gold Coast Archives Group will meet on Wednesday, Feb. 6 at 10 am at the Cuban Heritage Collection, Special Collections, and University Archives at the Otto G. Richter Library at the University of Miami. RSVP to Natalie Marie Baur [nbaur@miami.edu].

... Heritage Preservation is proud to announce Caring for Yesterday’s Treasures—Today [www.heritagepreservation.usr.list-manage.com/track/click/u=00cbcc194404641e5454b972&id=2aa78fa5]
a new series of free online courses about the preservation of archival and historical collections. Tailored to meet the needs and schedules of staff and volunteers at libraries and archives, each course includes four to six 90-minute, interactive webinars presented by preservation experts.

... Society of Baseball Research Analytics [www.SABR.org/analytics/2012] Conference presented by Major League Baseball and Bloomberg Sports, Mar. 7-9, Sheraton Downtown, Phoenix, AZ.

... The Oral History Association [www.oralhistory.org] Annual Meeting will take place Oct. 9 - 13 at The Skirvin Hilton Hotel in Oklahoma City, OK.

... Consider presenting at the 36th Annual Historical Administration Program Association Symposium, The Business of Museums: Not-for-Profit is No Excuse [www.d.eiuapoa.org] on Sat., Apr. 13, at Eastern Illinois University.

Calls for Grants, Papers, Proposals & Applications
Kate Theimer is editing a series of books for Scarecrow Press highlighting innovative best practices for archives, best examples of how professionals working in archives and special collections are adapting to changes, and creatively solving problems. Four books will cover outreach, reference, management, and description. Proposals (1-2 paragraphs) due Jan. 31 [www.archivesnext.com/?p=3265].

... The J. Franklin Jameson Archival Advocacy Award Subcommittee of the Society of American Archivists seeks nominations for the 2013 award. Applications are due Feb. 28. For more SAA awards and the nominations process, visit [www.archivists.org/recognition/index.asp].

... The deadlines for Art Works grant applications [www.arts.gov/grants/apply/index.html] will be Mar. 7 & Aug. 8, and for Challenge America May 23. Sixteen organizations in the state of Florida were selected to receive Art Works grants worth a total of $412,000 for FY 2013, and we encourage all applicable Florida arts and culture organizations to continue applying for these prestigious grants.

... The first panel meeting for the Division’s new Fast Track Project grants program was held on Nov. 15 [www.florida-arts.org/programs/fastrack/]. Ten grants were recommended for funding out of the forty-eight submitted applications, and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture approved these recommendations and sent them to the Secretary of State for approval. The Fast Track Project grants program is designed to provide expedited access to funds supporting small organizations through arts and cultural projects. This grant will be given twice per year and the next deadline is Apr. 12.

New Publications
The Last Train from Key West: The End of the Over-Sea Railroad (Doris L. Brady) tells the story of two pioneer families trapped during the 1935 Labor Day Hurricane. Proceeds from the $15 book exclusively benefit the Delray Beach Historical Society. Contact the Society for a copy [dbhsarch@bellsouth.net].


... The Broward County Library collection is loaded with treasures from Africa, items from a shipwreck and other fascinating pieces. Now, patrons can view them without leaving their homes thanks to a new ebook [www.digilab.browardlibrary.org/about], “Top 100 Artifacts: The Special Collections of Broward County Library."

... Coproduced by the National Archives and Records Administration and SAA, the free guide, Resources for Volunteer Programs in Archives [http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/Resources-for-Volunteers_Final.pdf] describes volunteer activities underway in various archives and provides examples of useful materials, such as volunteer applications, handbooks, emergency contact forms and volunteer job descriptions. Use this resource to revamp or launch a brand-new volunteer program at your own archives and be sure to share this guide with colleagues and friends.
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www.florida-archivists.org/Officers-Committees.php

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**2013 Annual Meeting**

The Society of Florida Archivists will convene May 8 – 10, 2013, in our state capital, Tallahassee, for the 30th Anniversary Annual Meeting at the Hotel Duval (www.hotelduval.com) ($119 per night). In Tallahassee, you'll find lovingly restored 19th-century homes and buildings, including the 1845 Old Capitol, which sit among towering pines and sprawling live oaks. The trees form virtual tunnels along Tallahassee's five official Canopy Roads, which are lined with historic plantations, ancient Native American settlement sites and mounds, gardens, quiet parks with picnic areas, and beautiful lakes and streams. You'll also encounter the modern era, beginning with the New Capitol Building, which towers 22 stories over downtown.

This year’s conference promises interesting and informative sessions, workshops and poster sessions. On Tuesday, May 7, SAA will have the “Basic Electronics Workshop,” which will take place at the FSU Main Library. All registration information will be released soon.

**Session Proposals are due Friday, February 1.**
Submissions and questions should be directed to Burt Altman via email [baltman@fsu.edu] or fax (850-644-1221); proposals received after the deadline will not be considered. Submitting presenters will be notified of the outcome of the proposal review process on or by February 22.

**Conference Registration Fees**
SFA Members $90 / Non-SFA Members (includes one year SFA membership) $110 / Students $50 / One-Day $55. Registration available:
www.florida-archivists.org/Annual-Meeting.php

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The Florida Archivist
We invite you to join the Society of Florida Archivists. Don't miss the continuing education opportunities offered by SFA each year, information about what's happening in archives in Florida in our newsletter, and the chance to mix with other archivists at the SFA Annual Meeting.

Specific benefits of Individual Membership are:
- Reduced registration fees for all of the Society's events.
- Subscription to The Florida Archivist.
- Full voting privileges in elections and at the annual business meeting.
- Eligibility for leadership positions in the Society.
- Discount on selected archival publications.

Membership in the Society of Florida Archivists helps all of us keep in touch with important archival developments and make a valuable contribution to the profession within the State. We hope you will become a part of this effort!

Questions? Contact Mary Flekke mflekke@tampabay.rr.com.