Appendix D: Guidance on Planning for a Research Space

B.   Using the Research Space   D:8

APPENDIX D: GUIDANCE ON PLANNING FOR A RESEARCH SPACE

A. Research Space Definition and Use

1. *What is research space?*

A research space is a dedicated workspace within a museum where researchers (both inside and outside the Service) may view and study collections.

2. *Who needs research space?*

All parks and centers with museum objects or archival collections need a research space. This guidance will help you plan for a new or upgraded research space.

3. *Why should my park have a research space?*

A dedicated research space allows the museum collections to be safely and securely accessed and studied.

4. *What activities should take place in this space?*

Researchers do the following in research spaces:

- Examine collections.

- Work with resources available in the research space, including specialized equipment, publications, finding aids, and online computer catalogs.

- Take notes and write using pencils or computers.

- Request reference, duplication, and available intellectual property rights management and caption services.

- Interact with NPS museum collections management staff.

- Read access policies and procedures and fill out researcher registration forms.

Park and center staff do the following in the research room:

- Assist researchers. Researchers use many research techniques and methodologies. Be flexible and ready to adapt to the needs of the researcher to the extent that the park can afford to provide your assistance.

- Monitor and document collections use, particularly for security and preservation concerns.

- Provide reference, duplication, and available intellectual property rights management and caption services.

• Remove and rehouse materials no longer being used.

B. Research Space Standards

1. *What are the principal criteria for research spaces?*

• Dedicate the space to the research function.

• Provide appropriate security for the collection.

• Provide environmental controls adequate to prevent damage to collections.

• Make sure the space is large enough to accommodate the needs and equipment for the number of researchers expected to use the collection.

• Locate the space convenient to staff offices, collection storage space, researcher staging area (see Section F), and curatorial work area and/or laboratory.

• Make space accessible by persons with disabilities.

• Have electrical outlets, phone service with modem or network hookup for accessing Automated National Cataloging System (ANCS+) data, and any other pertinent utilities to meet the needs of the research function and satisfy all applicable electrical codes (both national and local).

C. Security

1. *What are the security concerns for the collection during research?*

Security concerns include researcher and staff theft, malicious vandalism (arson, damaging or destroying objects, etc.), and "censorship" by researchers who deface or destroy documents that they feel reflect negatively upon their town, family, cultural group, etc.

Research space should be observable from staff offices or work areas. Consider the use of a wall with glass windows. For collections with extremely high value, consider the installation of a video-camera monitoring system to continuously view or record researcher use of the collection. Establish procedures to ensure that staff routinely monitor the space and review the video-camera recordings noting irregularities.

Archival/manuscript collections require more stringent measures because they are not cataloged at the item level, so ownership of missing items is more difficult to prove. Make sure users are continuously supervised. You should take limited materials (two boxes at a time) to the research space and monitor researchers while they work and ensure that they work with one document from one folder at a time. See *MH-II*, Appendix D, Museum Archives and Manuscript Collections, Sections T and U.

Some collections may have low inherent risk because they are of low value, commonly available, and have low demand by the general public as collectibles. Collections of high risk include decorative arts, autographed documents, coinage, postage stamps, and firearms because they are generally of high value, significance, and collectibility. See *MH-I*, Chapter 9, Museum Collections Security and Fire Protection, and Appendix G, Museum Collections Protection, for security standards and specifics on performing a risk assessment. See *MH-III*, Chapter I, Evaluating Collections for Access, Sections 5 and 6; and *MH-II*, Appendix D, Museum Archives and Manuscript Collections, Sections T and U for guidance on providing security during reference usage.

2. *Should the research space have intrusion and fire protection systems?*

The structure housing the research space should have appropriate intrusion and fire protection/suppression systems as determined by a risk assessment.

3. *How many entrances should the research space have?*

The space should have limited entry/exit points—preferably a single door that is a minimum of 36" wide. It may be a double door if larger objects are to be moved in and out.

D. Environmental Conditions

1. *What are the environmental requirements for the research space?*

Conditions in the research space should contribute to object preservation. See *MH-I*, Chapter 4, Museum Collections Environment, for standards and guidance on achieving appropriate environmental conditions. Additional guidance on the environmental requirements for specific object types or materials may be found in the appendices of *MH-I* and the *Conserve O Gram* series.

2. *What temperature and relative humidity levels should be maintained in the research space?*

Don't subject objects to rapid changes in temperature and relative humidity (RH) when removing them from storage. Temperature and RH in the research space should be kept at the same levels as in collection storage space.

3. *How do I make available objects that are stored in specialized environments, such as cold storage or low relative humidity conditions?*

Acclimatize objects stored in specialized cold conditions, such as color and black and white photographic materials, to the conditions of the research space before allowing use. See *MH-I*, Appendix R, Care of Photographic Collections, for guidance on acclimatizing photographic materials. Watch for condensation. You may need to wipe condensation off the housing materials before providing items to researchers.

You may remove metal objects from dry/desiccated conditions (below 35% RH) for short periods of time for research without damage. Be sure to return objects to their specialized storage as soon as possible after use.

4. *What light levels should be maintained?*

Maintain light levels that do minimal damage to objects. Lights should be UV filtered to limit damage to light sensitive objects. Sunlight should be excluded from the space. Design the space with no windows. Use coverings that exclude ultraviolet and visible light on existing windows.

Fluorescent lights should have UV filters. Provide additional desktop lights for workspaces with low wattage bulbs. See *MH-I*, Chapter 4, Museum Collection Environment, for more information on proper light levels for specific objects.

E. Space Issues

1. *How much space do I need for a research space?*

The space should accommodate the number of researchers that typically use the collection. Review the history of prior usage. For collections of continuing and high research use, anticipate an annual growth rate for the research space of between 1-10%. The space should be of sufficient size to accommodate the equipment necessary to serve the needs of the researchers for the next 10 years.

Each researcher will need, at a minimum, 9-15 square feet of work surface such as a desk or worktable. The space should be large enough to examine objects, organize work, and read references. Consider the size of objects being researched. More space will be needed to research large, oversized or long objects, such as furnishings, architectural drawings, or long firearms, than would be required for a slide or herbarium collection.

Research space for large, frequently researched collections may occupy as much as 25% of the combined storage and work space (exclusive of exhibition space) in the facility, although it is more common for the research space to take about 10% of the total space in a museum facility.

2. *Where should the research space be located?*

Research space should be adjacent to or close to curatorial offices, collection storage, and curatorial workspace in order to limit the distance objects must travel from one location to the other.

Research on large, heavy, or unwieldy objects, such as architectural fragments or cannons may, with continuous supervision, occur at the location where the objects are stored.

F. Researcher Staging Area

1. *What is a researcher staging area?*

The staging area is used to check, store, and secure the researcher's outer garments, handbags, briefcases, and packages while research is conducted. These items should not be brought into the research space. A staging area should be established outside of, but close to, the research space to accommodate the needs of the researcher.

2. *Does my park need a researcher staging area?*

Yes. Parks with space to establish a staging area should do so. This is particularly important if the collection has frequent research use by many researchers. Parks lacking space to establish a separate staging area should use the curator's office or the curatorial workroom as the staging area.

3.   *What equipment should I have in the researcher staging area to serve the needs of researchers?*

Consider providing a hat and coat rack and shelves or lockers for checking, storing, and securing the researcher's outer garments, handbags, briefcases, and packages while research is conducted. Lockers that offer a key in exchange for a coin deposit are very useful. Through signage, indicate that NPS assumes no liability for property left in the staging area.

G. Equipment for Research Space

1.   *What furniture and equipment should be placed in the research space?*

Have one or more large work or library tables (36" x 72" to 48 x 96") or sturdy desks (36" x 60") with an appropriate number of chairs. Consider folding tables that can be set up as needed if space is limited. Work surfaces should be clean, washable, stable, well-lighted, and three times larger than the largest materials being researched within the space, so that researchers can work with groups of materials for comparison purposes. You will also need to provide a desk with unrestricted view of the entire space for the research space supervisor.

If applicable, provide a microscope with light source and magnifiers for examining objects and natural history specimens, a computer with access to ANCS+ data, videotape and audiotape playback equipment with earphones, microfilm or microfiche reader, printer, typewriter and TV/VCR. Audio/ video equipment are generally not housed in the research space and could be placed on mobile carts for moving in and out of the research room as needed. Also make available (but generally do not keep in the research space) dollies, carts, and book trucks for moving objects.

Include a small reference library with finding aids (never leave the only copies of finding aids in the research space; store additional copies elsewhere), dictionary, ANCS+ manual, *Museum Handbooks*, atlas, encyclopedia, thesaurus, taxonomy books for the types of natural history specimens being studied, archeological references, *Who's Who*-type biographical dictionary, and other standard reference works.

Use a bulletin board to display the policy and use procedures. These policies should also be presented to the researcher to read and sign at the time of registration.

H. Access for Researchers with Disabilities

1.   *How do I make the research space accessible to persons with disabilities?*

Access to the research space must meet all requirements as specified in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Specifically, the space will have:

•   passageways a minimum of 36" wide

•   doors a minimum of 32" wide

- ramps, if a change in floor level exceeds ½"

- elevators, if the building is multistory

- platform lifts, if the installation of an elevator is impractical

I. Utilities

1. *What utilities are needed for the research space functions?*

Outlets should be provided for task lighting and to run electronic equipment, such as laptop or desk computers. Outlets should be adjacent to the work surface that the researcher uses. Electrical service must meet local and national codes.

Phone service with appropriate jacks should be provided to allow a computer local area network to be established if access to ANCS+ data is to be provided.

Natural history collections research may require a fume hood and sink with running water.

J. Planning for Research Space in a New Facility

1. *How do I plan for research space in a new facility?*

Work with key park, support office, regional, other central office staff (architect, archivist, museum curator, museum specialist), and contractors, who can provide planning assistance.

Define your specific needs. Space must meet the primary criteria indicated above.

2. *What can I do if I am forced to reduce space in a new building, and I must combine research space with other functions?*

Select compatible functions, such as curatorial work space, curatorial staff offices or library reading room that are or can be set up with adequate work surfaces and occupied by staff who can monitor the researcher.

K. Upgrading Your Facility for Research Space

1. *How do I plan for research space in an existing facility?*

Work with park, support office, regional, other central office staff (architect, archivist, museum curator, museum specialist), and contractors, who can examine your particular situation and provide guidance and planning assistance.

Be sure space meets the primary criteria indicated above.

2. *What if I can't meet some or all of the primary criteria?*

Identify any deficiencies in the Resources Management Plan and NPS Museum Collections Management Checklist (see *MH-I*, Appendix F, Collections Management Checklists) and secure funding to correct those deficiencies. See *MH-I*, Chapter 12, Programming, Funding, and Staffing, for guidance on appropriate procedures, documents, and funding sources.

Correct deficiencies in stages if many deficiencies need correction or if costs to correct deficiencies are more than amounts funded annually.

3. *What low-cost immediate improvements can I make if I don't have enough space to make separate research, office, curatorial workroom, and collection storage spaces?*

Consider creating a separate workstation or research space in the curatorial office or workspace.

Consider sharing research space with related non-museum activities, such as a library reading room, provided the non-museum space is convenient to the museum storage space.

Consider placing research activities in collection storage space as a last resort if no other space is available and a risk assessment determines the impact on object preservation and security is minimal or can be minimized.

4. *If research does occur in the storage room or if some objects are stored in the research room, how can I protect the objects?*

Store the collection in locked museum cabinets or in sealed containers on shelving to provide a buffered microenvironment and reduced security risk.

Create a separate workstation or research space in the storage room, if space allows, by using lumber and wire fencing to form a cage or wire wall to separate the researcher from the collections.

> ***Continuously monitor all research work conducted in the collection storage space.***

5. *What if we have limited staff with curatorial responsibilities and limited resources to supervise researchers?*

Have research conducted in spaces constantly occupied by available park staff. Establish procedures and train staff to give attention to the activities of the researcher.

Allow research only when staff is available. Arrange research appointments at a time when the researcher can be adequately monitored.

You must allow regular access to collections by the public. Some materials within park collections may be restricted by law or management policies. See *MH-III*, Chapter 1, Evaluating, and Documenting Museum Collections, for further Guidance.

L. Using the Research Space

1. *How do I control research space use?*

Develop policies that guide how the research space operates. These policies should consider:

- staffing levels

- security controls

- the number of research requests you typically receive

- the types of collections that you have

When a researcher first approaches the park, either directly by walking in the door, or by writing, fax, e-mail, or the phone, the researcher should be told the hours and policies of the park for access and use of collections. The researcher should sign and date a form indicating his or her willingness to comply with the policy. (See *MH-II*, Appendix D, Museum Archives and Manuscript Collections, Figure D.13a, Access Policies and Rules Governing Use for a sample of this form.)

Once the researcher appears at the museum or archives to work, he or she should register by filling out a researcher registration form. See *MH-II,* Appendix D, Museum Archives and Manuscript Collections, Figure D.16 for a sample Researcher Registration Form. *Note:* Supervisory research space staff should record identification numbers from picture identification, such as drivers licenses and work cards on the researcher registration form and should also check to ensure that the address and phone number listed on the form matches any given on the identification card.

The researcher should be escorted to the research space, stopping in the staging area to store coats, purses, bags, or briefcases or other containers, which should not be brought into the research space. Then proceed to the research space where the research space supervisor explains

- access policies

- handling policies (For more information, see *MH-I*, Chapter 6, Handling, Packing and Shipping, and *Conserve O Grams* 8/2, Storing and Handling Plaster Objects; 14/4, Caring for Photographs: General Guidelines; 19/3, Use and Handling of Rare Books; and 19/17, Handling Archival and Paper-based Materials.)

- duplication policies (See *MH-II*, Appendix D, Museum Archives and Manuscript Collections, Figures D.14 and D.15.)

Remember to only allow copying of material that is in the public domain. (See *MH-III*, Chapter 2, Legal Issues.)

Note: See *MH-II,* Appendix D, Museum Archives and Manuscript Collections, Section U, for guidance on implementing access and usage

policies.

When a researcher first enters the research space, you should acquaint him or her with available equipment and reference materials including the park guide, finding aids, and ANCS+ for research purposes. If appropriate, provide cotton gloves and pencils for researcher use. Once a researcher requests specific objects from the museum collection or boxes of an archival collection for viewing the park staff should:

- Record all collections requested or used by the researcher on the registration form.

- Record all reproductions requested on the duplication form. See *MH-II,* Appendix D, Museum Archives and Manuscript Collections, Figure D.14, Researcher Duplication Form. The researcher must also read, sign and date the copyright and privacy restrictions form. See *MH-II*, Appendix D, Museum Archives and Manuscript Collections, Figure D.15 for a sample form.

Once an item is provided to a researcher for viewing, you should record the museum object catalog number or archival box number on the researcher registration form. Once viewed, you should remove the materials from the research room.

2. *How should I monitor the research space?*

Seat the researcher facing you. Don't allow an obstruction to occur between you and the researcher, such as internal columns, furniture, or piled boxes of research materials. If necessary install convex security mirrors, so that you can see around any potential obstructions. Don't pile boxes on the worktable; place the objects or boxes of records to be viewed on a cart alongside.

While the installation of convex security mirrors and wall-mounted video security cameras can help deter theft and vandalism by some, ***only careful research space monitoring can stop theft, vandalism, and mishandling as it occurs***. By watching researchers you can avoid serious damage to your collections.

When monitoring the research space, be aware of sounds, as well as sights. Check researchers regularly to see if they are handling materials correctly or seem to be having problems. Tactfully show researchers who are handling materials improperly a better method. Remind researcher not to rearrange archival items within the storage box or folders.

A thief can cut plates from a rare book in a few seconds and secret them in a notepad to transfer them into a briefcase. Unbound archival materials and small objects, such as jewelry or tools, are even easier to steal. They fit easily into a pocket or in a sack under a loose jacket. If you have a very busy research space, you may have to give it your full and continuous attention, moving your eyes throughout all areas where people are working to see if anything looks out of place or improper. You don't have to watch a single researcher by staring at him or her continuously. Instead, you should focus on determining what a researcher is doing every 30 seconds or so. Don't just look up and down quickly; ***pay attention***. Try not to be predictable in your monitoring pattern.

Remember that there is a significant market for museum and archival materials. Another common problem is scholars or family members who feel strongly about the image of their ancestor or subject. Some individuals have edited, marked up, ripped, torn, or destroyed documents to which they objected. Be alert to any sign that may indicate missing, damaged, or vandalized materials—such as stubs of cut-off pages. For instructions on dealing with research space theft, see *MH-III*, Chapter 1, Evaluating and Documenting Museum Collections Use, Section G, Preservation and Protection.

If you must leave the research space, get someone trained in monitoring researchers to replace you. This may mean you must have several people on hand to provide back-up support. If you find yourself totally distracted by one researcher, call another staff member to help you monitor the room or ask the distracting individual to talk with you about his or her topic at another, less busy time.

> *If no staff is available for research space monitoring, the research space should be closed and locked and all materials returned to storage.*