

IMLS

IMLS Launches Connecting to Collections Initiative, Summit

Collections held in museums, libraries, and archives are the foundation of the American story, yet their future is at risk. To underscore the perils these collections face and to promote solutions for saving them, IMLS has launched the two-year Connecting to Collections initiative.

The initiative begins with the Connecting to Collections summit June 27–28, 2007 in Washington, DC, at the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture of the Smithsonian Institution. Dr. Anne-Imelda Radice, director of IMLS, is convening the summit to encourage institutions and individuals to protect America's heritage and to raise public awareness of the dangers collections face. IMLS is hosting the summit in cooperation with Heritage Preservation and with support from NEA, NEH, and the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

The 350 participants in the summit will include over 200 representatives from small and medium-sized museums and libraries from every state. At the summit, they will be joined by national leaders in conservation, government officials, and leaders in private sector support for conservation. Participation in the summit is by invitation only.

The summit will feature keynote addresses by Allen Weinstein, archivist of the United States, and Francie Alexander, senior vice president of scholastic education and chief academic officer of Scholastic Inc.

In addition to the summit, the initiative includes:

- Four forums to take place in cities across the nation from January 2008 to June 2009.
- A conservation bookshelf that will comprise books, bibliographies, a guide to online resources, DVDs, or other high-quality materials. The bookshelf will be made available through a streamlined application process.
- Planning grants to each state, commonwealth, and territory for

the purpose of creating conservation plans to address the recommendations of the Heritage Health Index.

For more information about the Connecting to Collections initiative, visit www.imls.gov.

HERITAGE PRESERVATION

“Lessons Applied” Projects Coming This Summer

In October 2006, the Heritage Emergency National Task Force launched a “Lessons Applied” initiative to help develop and implement projects to address issues that Katrina and other major storms have brought to light: incentives for preparedness, relations with emergency responders, planning for region-wide events, funding for stabilization and recovery, and coordination of cultural heritage efforts. The goal is to convert analysis to action.

Five panels composed of task force members—elected advisers from states that experienced Katrina and Rita, and experts from outside the cultural field—will be prepared to implement at least one new initiative to address these issues by June 2007. They also expect to present proposals for long-term projects. Ideas run the gamut from new products, such as a guide to applying for FEMA and SBA disaster funding and a tip sheet on working with emergency responders, to public information campaigns.

With grant support, Heritage Preservation is providing administrative help to the panels, but the initiative is moving forward thanks to dedicated volunteers. Comments or questions are welcomed at taskforce@heritagepreservation.org.

Conservation Assessment Program Update

The Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) received 212 applications for the 2007 program. Heritage Preservation anticipates that 104 museums will participate in CAP this year. Check www.heritagepreservation.org/cap/ in early May for the official participant announcement.

The 2008 CAP application will be mailed on October 5, 2007.

Applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until the postmark deadline of December 1, 2007. If you know of an institution that could benefit from a CAP or if you have ideas about how to reach institutions in your area, please contact cap@heritagepreservation.org or (202) 223-0800.

Health and Safety

by AIC's Health and Safety Committee

Your Workstation: is it Working for You?

These days, our lives sometimes seem as if they've been entirely computerized and digitalized. Even conservators, who theoretically signed up to spend the majority of their time at the bench, find themselves increasingly tied to a computer as they manage digital images, create endless documents, and try to keep up with emails and administrative chores. Computer work now takes up much of the work day, but the health and safety aspects of this activity are easily neglected during a consideration of studio ergonomic protocols.

Repetitive Stress/Strain Injury (RSI) is a blanket term used to describe the various soft tissue injuries, including carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis, among many others, which are usually caused by a combination of bad ergonomics, poor posture, stress, and repetitive motion. RSI has become such a prevalent phenomenon that in 1999, an International RSI Awareness Day was created. Despite such awareness efforts, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that data-entry workers missed an average of five days of work due to repetitive strain injury in 2002. Given that these numbers are five years old and examine only a small subset of the computer-using workforce, it is likely that many more workers are affected by RSI today than ever before.

If you spend more than a few cumulative hours at your computer on a daily basis, you are at risk for developing RSI. Symptoms can include:

- Pain, stiffness, swelling, numbness, or tingling in the hands, wrists,

- elbows, shoulders, back, or neck
- Discomfort which occurs when performing a particular task, or the morning after
- Discomfort which starts in one area, such as the neck and back, and then spreads to other parts of the body

It is crucial to remember that this is a cumulative injury, and that it might take years of improper workstation setup for the symptoms to manifest themselves in potentially crippling ways. If caught before the damage becomes permanent (and it can!) RSI is treatable in a variety of ways. However, prevention is the best policy. Employers are responsible for providing safe working environments for their employees; this should extend to workstation safety!

Guide to Proper Workstation Setup from the Victoria and Albert Museum

The goal of these guidelines is to create an environment that avoids putting stress on the body. All angles and positions should minimize potentially harmful tension or pressure. Remember that your ideal workstation will work only for you. If you share computers, take the time when you first sit down to make the necessary adjustments. It will be worth it in the long run!

General User Position: You should always be 'squared up' to your desk and work. Odd angles should be avoided. When using the screen only, make sure it is directly in front of you. Similarly, when working from a document, make sure it is directly in front of you.

Chair/Desk height: These should

be adjusted so that when you are sitting properly, your elbows are level with the desk, enabling the wrists to be positioned in a relaxed, neutral position. You should always sit square to the desk. Armrests should not prevent the chair from approaching the desk or obstruct elbows while typing.

Foot/Leg position: Your feet should rest in a flat, natural position which avoids placing pressure on your bottom or thighs. Your knees should be approximately square, with your thighs resting comfortably on the seat, but not pressing into it. Use a footstool if necessary, and avoid clutter underneath the desk which may impede proper positioning.

Back position: You should be sitting straight—but not ramrod straight—and all the way into your seat, with your lower back supported. Slouching or arching both compress the spine and can eventually lead to back problems.

Keyboard: Your elbows should be square when in typing position, with your forearms and wrists resting naturally in a horizontal line. The keyboard should be parallel to the front of the desk (and thus parallel to your torso), and at the appropriate distance to create right-angled elbows. Maintain a clear area in front of the keyboard to rest your hands and wrists when not typing.

Mouse: The mouse should be close enough so that you are not forced to overstretch in order to reach it. The area in front of the mouse should be clear, so that your hand and forearm are not obstructed, but can maintain a straight line. Do not grip the mouse tightly, and make sure to

rest fingers lightly on the buttons.

Monitor: The viewing distance and screen height should ensure a slightly downward viewing angle. Aim in general for the top of the screen to be at eye-level and the screen itself to be at arm's length.

Screen: Position the monitor relative to light sources so that glare and reflections (and therefore eye strain) are avoided. Position the monitor so that it does not directly face windows or bright lights, or use blinds. The screen should remain perpendicular to your line of sight: avoid over-tilting it rather than adjusting lighting. Adjust brightness and contrast to suit the room conditions. The screen should neither flicker nor be dirty. Choose text options that allow you to read without strain.

Documents: These should be placed into a document holder when possible. Ideally, the documents should be positioned at the same viewing distance as the screen. Otherwise, try placing the document between the screen and keyboard.

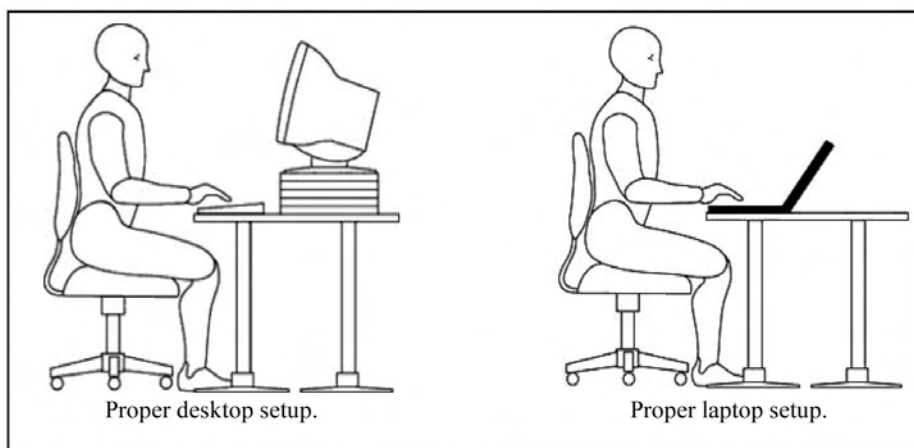
Other Equipment: You should not have to stretch to reach other frequently-used items, such as telephones. Position them in a convenient location while maintaining a clear working area. Printers, however, should not be positioned close to users.

Breaks: Take regular short breaks away from the screen, whether it be to make coffee, do some filing, or use the restroom. Do not stay in the same position for too long, but make sure to stretch your body and rest your eyes.

More information, including useful links and publications, is available at www.osha.gov; www.ctdrn.org; and www.oiweb.com.

Thanks to the Victoria and Albert Museum for sharing its own workstation safety protocol.

—Catherine Coueignoux
WUDPAC Fellow



From www.oiweb.com/ergo/workstation-setup.html