



STORAGE FOR MUSEUMS

American Museum of Natural History adds more Spacesaver mobile systems to house whale bones

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When the American Museum of Natural History, in New York City, remodeled to add a planetarium and other visitor spaces, it needed to relocate several mammalogy specimen storage areas. It utilized mobile systems to fit all of its collection into existing storage rooms.

The mammalogy collection occupied the third floor, primarily housing large land mammal bones, and the lower level, where mainly whale bones were stored. When the department was required to vacate the third floor, collections management staff had to determine a way to safely preserve both collections in the lower level.

“When we went to using compact storage we began using our space more efficiently and actually gained storage space despite the fact that we actually lost a lot of floor space,” explained Darrin Lunde, collections manager, Department of Mammalogy. “The remodel actually gave us the opportunity to design a purpose-built facility specifically to house whale bones and skins. From a conservation standpoint, the mobile system keeps items organized and out of harm’s way.”

Prior to having the compact storage, bone specimens were stored on open metal racks and on the floor. Because they were difficult to access, it sometimes took half of a day to move items to locate a particular specimen. Now, sealed cabinets house small bones and large wide span shelving is used to store large bones, both on the compact shelving.

“With the compact system and adjustable shelving, we are able to store items in a way that we can get to them easily. We are now able to curate the specimens and organize them by category,” he said.



Above: The museum’s Mammalogy Department compacts its bone and skin collection using Spacesaver.

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director of
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archives

Lunde explained that drawers house large skins such as those from the giraffe and buffalo that were previously hung from hooks. “The drawers help us to preserve our collection because they won’t stretch from hanging and we don’t have to even handle the skins in order to observe them. All we have to do is roll open a drawer.”

Anthropology

Several years earlier, mobile systems were installed in the Anthropology Division for the Asian ethology collection for storing rare artifacts. Paul Beelitz, director of collections and archives, Division of Anthropology, explained that the mobile system has solved both space problems and preservation problems. “We needed to use mobile systems to maximize our real estate. The systems have also improved conditions to help aid the preservation of the existing collection. Things were dusty and inaccessible and now things are kept clean and easy to find.”

The Spacesaver mobile system was designed with open shelving for large objects and drawers to house smaller objects in the Asian collection. A silicone gasket, which encompasses the entire perimeter of the aisle opening and seals when the aisle is closed, provides a protective storage environment that minimizes artifact exposure from insects and particulates. •



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Top: Environmentally controlled cabinets on the mobile system provide ideal storage conditions for smaller items.

Bottom: The Asian ethology collection is stored on a Spacesaver system installed several years earlier.