

snapshot

SNAPSHOT

Visible collections help visitors connect at Arizona State Museum



The Arizona State Museum, located on the University of Arizona campus in Tucson, is the nation's largest state-run archeological repository. An affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, the museum is home to renowned pottery and basketry collections that reflect cultures of the southwestern U.S. and northern Mexico. Thanks to an innovative concept that combines storage and display, those collections can be viewed not only by scholars but also by any museum visitor who wants to learn more about the artifacts.



Arizona State Museum staff worked with the nearby Spacesaver distributor to design an innovative storage system to save space, improve access, and allow visibility into the collections from gallery spaces. Special end panels allow pieces to be viewed from the galleries.

Dr. Nancy Odegaard, head of the museum's preservation division, explained that preserving the collection has been and continues to be of utmost concern. When she left Harvard's Peabody Museum to begin conserving the Arizona State Museum's collections over 30 years ago, she was concerned that the lack of climate-controlled storage conditions would accelerate the artifacts' deterioration.

A "Save America's Treasures" grant awarded in 2000 laid the foundation for the transformation of the pottery collection's storage and display space, as well as its conservation work areas. The pottery collection had been stored in various areas in two old buildings on campus, and the conservation work areas were cramped and outdated.

"Helping people understand the breadth and depth of a collection is inspiring. The fact that we could get all of it in here is just awesome."

— Nancy Odegaard, PhD, FAIC, FIIC
Head of the preservation division
Arizona State Museum





Spacesaver compactors with display end panels offer museum visitors a new way to understand the collections.

The grant, along with generous contributions to the museum, allowed for the construction of a new state-of-the-art conservation lab, a stunning gallery space, and a unique vault that allows museum visitors to view the collection.

The pottery vault and conservation laboratory were completed in 2007, and soon afterward the museum began applying for grants for a similar storage area for the basketry collection. Throughout the process, the museum worked in close collaboration with the Southwest Native Nations Advisory Board, which acted as a liaison to help the museum understand and appreciate the materials, but also to help make the museum's collection available to native communities and help them revitalize technologies that were in danger of being lost.

The end result is an innovative way to encourage museum visitors to understand and interact with the collections, and to create enduring connections between the museum and the community it serves.

To learn more about Spacesaver Storage Solutions and how a Spacesaver Storage Specialist can help design interactive storage solutions, please visit www.spacesaver.com or call 1-800-492-3434.



Spacesaver Corporation
1450 Janesville Avenue
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538-2798
1-800-492-3434
www.spacesaver.com



KI
1330 Bellevue Street
P.O. Box 8100
Green Bay, WI 54302-8100
1-800-424-2432
www.ki.com

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