



CASE STUDY:
RETHINKING COLLECTIONS
CARE AT A COUNTY MUSEUM

Dunn Museum, Libertyville, IL



New Location, New Approach

Prior to closing in fall 2016 and relocating to Libertyville, Illinois, the Dunn Museum was known as the Lake County Discovery Museum and operated for 40 years out of converted farm buildings at Lakewood Forest Preserve in rural Wauconda. Aging infrastructure and significant deferred maintenance costs escalated the need for more suitable conditions to preserve and display the collections held in public trust.

“We were at a point in our organizational history where we had to make a decision,” said Andrew Osborne, Superintendent of Educational Facilities for the Lake County Forest Preserves. “Either we could continue to invest — and we were looking at significant investments — or we could look at this as an opportunity to relocate and rebrand the museum. That’s the route we chose.”



The museum secured space in a large office building in Libertyville, and the relocation offered the opportunity to design a purpose-built collections care and storage facility. After a thorough needs assessment and extensive design consultations, the museum chose Spacesaver to provide collections care equipment throughout the new facility. The museum was renamed the Bess Bower Dunn Museum of Lake County, and it opened its doors in early 2018.



Optimal Preservation for Archives

The new archives area is designed to simplify workflows and create an optimal preservation environment, while also maximizing space. For instance, flat-file cabinets do double duty: the cabinets provide protection for large maps and other paper items that should be stored flat, while also supporting a countertop that serves as a convenient workspace. Further space savings were achieved by installing shelving for books and archival boxes on a compact mobile system.

“We have a significantly improved collections care and storage facility that is much better for staff to work in, much better for the artifacts, and that will enable us to do more and better work.”

-Andrew Osborne,
Superintendent of Educational Facilities





Easy Access to Framed Art and Textiles

Framed art and textiles had previously been stored in various areas around the museum, and they took up a lot of space. The new collections area features a series of art racks and textile racks on compactors, providing efficient storage for hanging art as well as rolled textiles like flags and blankets. The textile racks are fully configurable, with various tube lengths and adjustable arms, which means that every square inch of space can be used.

“The art racks are one of my favorite things, because of their capacity. We sketched out how we thought it would work, and it was amazing to see it all come together and see how much they could really hold.”

- Heather Johnson,
Dunn Museum Curator

Protecting Artifacts of All Sizes

In order to minimize handling and disturbance, museum staff wanted to be able to access and view artifacts without moving them, and without needing to move other objects out of the way.

Closed cabinets and open (doorless) cabinets provided the ideal solution for smaller objects: the trays slide out to provide full visibility and can be configured to maximize space.

Other cabinets were installed along the length of the collections area. Some of the cabinets were custom designed and manufactured specifically for the Dunn Museum, including a cabinet with a pull-out gun rack.

To make the most of limited space, wide-span shelving and cabinets were fitted onto compactors.





A Creative Solution

Museum staff wanted to maintain an ideal preservation for historic weapons, but they also wanted to provide full visibility for researchers. Spacesaver's engineering team designed a mount and mechanism that fits into a closed cabinet and pulls out smoothly, allowing researchers to view the weapons without disturbing them.

Enduring solutions for museums

At Spacesaver, we know that planning for new construction or renovation can be a daunting experience. Our Wisconsin-based teams of in-house engineers, project managers, and manufacturing craftspeople are ready to work with your local Spacesaver consultant to design, build, and install effective storage solutions that will stand the test of time.

As you think about designing a new or renovated collections space, contact Spacesaver to request a free space assessment. You'll learn how to optimize your space and you'll also gain insight and inspiration from our experience with other clients.

Ready to learn more? Contact us for a free, no obligation consultation.

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