

Storage of Heirloom Textiles 5/6

## **Rolled Textile Storage**

Hello and welcome to the Textile Conservation Lab of the Minnesota Historical Society. We have created a series of podcasts to assist you in the storage of heirloom textiles. In this podcast we'll be discussing how to roll a textile for storage.

Rolled storage is a great way to store flat textiles, quilts, and rugs. Rolling prevents creasing which is especially important when working with large or thick textiles. Textiles suitable for rolled storage are flat and single layered like rugs, tapestries, coverlets, and shawls. Do not roll items that are very dimensional or constructed with several layers. Rolling these items will often create creases on the inside layer and stretch the outer layer. Interestingly, quilts, are an exception to the multi layer rule. Quilts are suitable for rolled storage since their construction closely marries all the layers together preventing any creasing or stretching.

When choosing a tube, one made with acid-free paper materials is considered best. However, acid-free tubes are extremely expensive. Another option is to use a regular paper tube and cover it with a barrier paper protecting the textile from acidic off gassing which will be emitted from the paper tube. Marvelseal, a foil backed polyethylene product, is a barrier product we spoke about in the first Materials Podcast. If using Marvelseal, apply it matt side down to the surface of the tube and secure in place with an iron set on low. Another barrier choice is the polyester film Melinex, but this is slippery and can easily rip. Finally, never use a PVC or Poly Vinyl Chloride tubes. PVC tubes are dangerous and will harm your textiles as they emit harmful gasses.

## **Preparing the tube**

A textile must easily wrap around a tube making contact all around. Diameter of tube. Always choose a tube side with a diameter large enough to support your textile. Next measure the width of your textile at its widest point then add at least 3.5" to either side or 7." overall. This extra space will allow you to handle the tube on either end and not the textile while transporting.

Next, we will need to wrap around the tube a header of muslin or acid-free tissue. A header is simply a sheet of fabric that will assist in rolling the textile onto the tube without excessive handling. Cut the header slightly larger than the textile and wrap it around the tube. Your header should extend into the textile for 12"to18". Please note that no textile should ever be rolled on a tube without a header.

## **Ready to roll.**

Position you prepared tube on a table surface with the header extend. Next lay your textile onto of the header next to the tube. Square up you textile against the tube as best you can. This means that the textiles sides must be perpendicular to the tube. Finally begin to advance the tube rolling up you textiles.

Now it may take several tries to get this right so be prepared to roll your textile more than once. No textile is ever square. That being said it is important when you are rolling to make sure the textiles does not telescope out in one direction creating an unsupported edge that will flex and stress while in storage. If this happens, realign the top edge so that the sides are perpendicular to the tube.

## **Covering your rolled textile.**

Once rolled you will now wrap a protective barrier cover around the textile. Position the rolled textile on one end of table with the last 6"-8" inches extended out front. Position a length of un-dyed muslin or acid-free paper long enough to cover the tube entirely and wide enough to wrap around the

textile. Roll the tube forward wrapping the barrier around the rolled textile. Secure the rolled textile with ties. Take care not to pull the ties too tight and create creases in the rolled textile. Finally attach a label noting what's on roll.

Now that your textile is rolled try to handle it at the ends where the tube is free. Do not squish or grip the textile in the middle. Instead try and support the rolled textile with a hand underneath. You may need more than one person to move a rolled textile so be prepared.

### **Storing the Rolled Textile.**

It's important not to place a rolled textile on a shelf without some type of support. When a rolled textile sits on a shelf all the pressure is placed on one strip creating stress and possible deterioration of those fibers in the future. So if a rolled textile must rest on a self or in a box without a support create a padded surface with spun bonded polyester batting. Small tubes are good examples of rolled textiles that can fit in a box on a layer of batting.

If your textile is too large for a box it is strongly recommended that you create a cradle for your tube to rest on. A cradle can be made out of corrugated board .

Rolling textiles for storage is costly and time consuming process. However, in the end it is a great way to protect flat textiles while in storage. Please refer to the conservation page of the Minnesota Historical Society's website for more information on preservation.

**Minnesota Historical Society**

**[www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org)**

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## **Podcast Series**

Rolled Textile Storage

## **Material list**

Acid-free and Non-acid-free paper materials

Buffered Tubes, Acid-free

Buffered Tissue, Acid-free

Unbuffered Tissue, Acid-free

## **Fabric materials**

Un-dyed Muslin, Washed in either cotton or cotton polyester blend

**Un-dyed Ribbon either cotton or polyester.**

## **Conservation Suppliers**

University Products 1-800-628-1912

[www.universityproducts.com](http://www.universityproducts.com)

Gaylord 1-800-448-6160

[www.Gaylord.com](http://www.Gaylord.com)

Talas 1-212-219-0770

[www.talasonline.com](http://www.talasonline.com)

Light Impressions 1 800-828-6216

[www.LightImpressionsDirct.com](http://www.LightImpressionsDirct.com)