

Conservator Hack

with Jane Dalley, CSP Conservator

[Email](#)

The nice weather had us all thinking about opening up our museums again. As the snow begins to melt, puddles of snowmelt around your museum buildings could cause water infiltration and damage. Check to make sure that eavestroughs (if any) are clear and that downspouts are extended away from the building. Make sure melting snow and ice has a clear path away from the foundation.

Once inside, check your basement for water infiltration. If it appears dry but the space feels damp, use duct-tape to adhere a square of poly onto the floor. Leave it for a day or two and then look for condensation forming on the underside. No condensation = no moisture infiltration, at least at that spot. You can repeat this test in several locations, especially near walls and in corners.

If the basement is damp, make sure that artifacts are moved elsewhere or at least raised off the floor on pallets. Run fans and a heater and/or a dehumidifier until the space is dry enough not to cause mold (below 65% RH). The AMM has monitoring equipment that can be borrowed to monitor or spot-check the temperature and relative humidity inside your building. Just give us a call, we'd be happy to arrange it!

Remember to check sticky pest traps to see if anything moved in over the winter, and contact the AMM if you think something has.

If it is time for some spring cleaning, keep an eye out for any changes in the condition of your artifacts and handle them gently. Organic artifacts such as textiles, paper and books may still be stiff or brittle if they have overwintered in a building.

Before picking up that duster for spring cleaning, check out the [Housekeeping for Historic Sites](#) series of free videos that provide a guide to housekeeping in heritage sites.

If you feel overwhelmed by the task of cleaning, then watch as conservators at the [Hall of Steel at the Royal Armouries](#) in Leeds clean 2,500 artifacts in a week.



Are you planning to re-arrange your exhibits? The staff at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York rotate large carpets and textiles on display every 1-4 years. A time-lapse video of the rotation of Islamic carpets can be viewed [HERE](#).