

Department of Textiles, Clothing & Design
Masters Program in Textile History/Quilt Studies
STUDY QUESTIONS FOR ORAL EXAMINATION

1. Imagine that you have been hired as a curator of collections for—a state historical society, a county historical society, a small history museum or a historic home with a sizable collection of historic textiles and clothing:

- a) Describe four of the collection management issues and challenges you are likely to face;
- b) Describe four of the conservation challenges you would likely face.

2. How would the challenges and issues differ for a collections manager for a small county historical society versus a large state historical society? Or would they? Why or why not?

3. As a curator of your county historical society and museum, you have been approached by a prominent citizen of the community who wishes to donate to the museum a quilt purportedly made in _____state in a given decade during the 19th century (or some similar scenario). Describe how you would corroborate/authenticate the estimated date of the quilt and what factors would lead you to accept or reject this donation offer.

4. Describe and discuss the issues pertaining to the book *Hidden in Plain View* by J. Tobin and R. Dobard. How would you respond to a K-12 teacher's inquiry about whether or not it is fact or fiction? Recommended reading: Marsha MacDowell. "Quilts and Their Stories: Revealing a Hidden History." In *Uncoverings 2000*, ed. Virginia Gunn, 155-166. Lincoln, NE: American Quilt Study Group. Also, podcast by Laurel Horton on IQSC website at <http://quiltstudy.org>.

5. As a new curator or director of a small museum, you have been approached by a prominent citizen of the community, who wishes to donate to the museum their personal collection of quilts, a significant collection, as well as an endowment to care for it. They have only one stipulation--the entire collection must be on permanent display. Would you accept the gift? Why or why not? How would you make this decision?

6. Museums always need additional funding to operate. Name three state or federal agencies that provide funding for museums. What type of projects does each support?

7. Based upon your coursework, reading and other experiences, how would you evaluate the museum or cultural institution in which you did your internship? What recommendations would you make to improve their operations?

8. Museum collections must be protected against all kinds of hazards in storage, on exhibition and in transit. Discuss these hazards including light, environmental conditions, fire, and staff. What are the feasible measures to be taken against the hazards?

9. What is the recommended level of lighting for textiles on exhibition in museums? For paintings?

10. Discuss the pros and cons of the use of Velcro (hook and loop material) for mounting textiles in an exhibition. If you were the collections manager or curator of exhibitions for an institution, would you permit its use? Why or why not?
11. Name three categories of artifacts (either textiles or clothing, eg. pieced cotton quilts, wool comforters, shoes, hats, etc.) that would pose the greatest challenge to a curator or collections manager. Explain why in terms of storage and exhibition.
12. If confronted by an emergency such as an exhibition gallery ceiling leak during a torrential rain that resulted in rain and rain-soaked debris falling on a quilt and soiling it, describe how you would deal with the quilt and the situation, in general.
13. Name the five sources that you regard as most essential to have on hand for ready reference regarding the history of quilts.
14. If you could afford to join only two professional organizations during your first year on the job, which of the following organizations (AAM, AQSG, AASLH, AIC, SAQA) would you join? Explain why. (Be prepared to explain what the acronyms stand for.)
15. Be prepared to discuss a quilt from the collection of the International Quilt Study Center & Museum by 1) describing it, 2) interpreting it and 3) judging it. You will not be expected to know factual details of the work (i.e., maker, provenance, etc.), but you will be expected to bring the breadth of your knowledge acquired during the program to a 'cold' assessment of a work. Reviewing the text entitled *Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary* by Terry Barrett would be a good way to prepare for this question.
16. Be prepared to estimate the probable date of creation and location for a quilt from the collection of the International Quilt Study Center & Museum and to describe the clues that led to your determination.
17. Drawing upon your background in History of Quilts in the Western World and History of Textiles. Be prepared to estimate the probable location and date of creation for a quilt or quilts from the collection of the IQSCM.
18. Be prepared to describe your approach to exhibitions (especially in terms of interpretation and labels).
19. Be prepared to describe your approach or philosophy pertaining to collections, collections care and access to collections.