INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
COLLECTIONSADVISOR
A RESOURCE FROM IHS LOCAL HISTORY SERVICES

Issue 165 | July 2025

Using Pool Noodles in Collections Storage

By Tamara Hemmerlein, Director, Local History Services

It's summer. Pools and lakes are beckoning to swimmers and beach goers. Along with them come flotation devices – unicorn-shaped floaties, multi-person rafts, and, best of all, POOL NOODLES!

Children in a Swimming Pool at the Recorder Picnic (Indianapolis Recorder Collection, Indiana Historical Society)

Pool noodles can be a great, cost-effective addition to your collections storage tool kit. The chemical composition of the material is similar to ethafoam, and the color is applied in a closed cell process making them suitable to use in some collections storage.

Be sure to purchase new, clean pool noodles. White is the preferred color, but any color except red/pink will work. (With pool noodles, as with most other things, red pigments continue to bedevil us.)

- Always employ a buffer such as unbleached muslin or white cotton between the noodles and collections objects.
- Support large, rolled photographs while boxed (like panoramic photos).
- Support rolled and boxed textiles.
- Use pool noodles as a base for creating padded hat supports. They are easy to cut to the correct height. Just wrap the noodles first in polyester or cotton batting and second in unbleached cotton.
- Hollow-core pool noodles work well as shelf lips/bumpers. Slide split noodles along the edges of your shelves to keep objects from falling off.
- Use noodles to bumper doors and obstacles when moving collection items. Slice hollow core noodles and slide them over door frames and counter edges.
- Cut and use as spacers in manuscript boxes that are not full.
- Use hollow-core noodles to cover the tension rods that can be used to separate artwork in large bins.
- Store delicate items like the ends of fishing poles to protect against breakage. (Just be careful not to force the object if it is larger than the hollow core!)
- Cut and use as spacers in boxes, such as corner spacers in a stack of blue board housing needlework.
- Cut and use as corner protectors on large pieces of framed artwork stored standing up.

Be sure to share any creative pool noodle uses with your museum friends and colleagues. It may even be a fantastic way to liven up your next museum gathering!

Resources

- Conservator Hack (Museums Manitoba)
- Preservation Penny Pinching with Pool Noodles (North Carolina Connecting to Collections)

Further Resources

- Collections Advisors (Indiana Historical Society)
- Timely Tips (Indiana Historical Society)

Collection Trainings

NAGPRA Steps to Disposition
July 18 (National Park Service)

Contained Curiosities: Managing of Solids and Liquids in Collections
July 29 (Connecting to Collections Care)

Lost, Found, and Everything in Between: Surviving Inventory Surprises
July 30 (Conservation Center for Art and Historical Artifacts)

Recorded Webinars

- Indiana Historical Society
- Texas Historical Commission

This is a free publication. Anyone may subscribe.
Read past issues of Collections Advisor here.

Local History Services
(317) 232-1882 | localhistoryservices@indianahistory.org