



Costume Society of America

Promote Education. Share Research. **Further Preservation.** Inspire Design.

Costume Society of America Award Spotlight: 2016 College and University Collection Care Grant Awardee Middlebury College, Department of Theatre and Dance

The College and University Collection Care Grant, funded by the CSA Endowment, is intended to assist the costume and textiles collection of a college or university that receives little or no financial support from its institution. Funding may be used to support the care, conservation, and/or instructional mission of a collection of historic, period, or otherwise informative costume and textiles that are intended for preservation and are used for study by an institution that has a degree program in apparel, textiles, or theatre.

Mira Veikley, Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre at Middlebury College in Middlebury, VT, tells us how winning the award in 2016 has helped her institution:

“In 2015 the Middlebury College Antique Clothing Collection (MCACC) was too fragile and conditions too unstable to allow students access; the collection was in a state of deterioration and risk. Environmental conditions were not suitable; the relative humidity of the room fostered growth of mildew and mold, accelerating deterioration and creating unsafe conditions for students, staff, and faculty viewers. Dresses were hung on plastic hangers that did not support their weight evenly, causing shoulders to be damaged. Clothing was unprotected and subject to deterioration from dust, mildew, and light. Racks were overcrowded, and items were at risk of being torn on hangers and adjacent items.



Items in the MCACC in 2015. Items were stored in a small closet, approximately 80 items packed to each rack. Racks were so crowded that it was impossible to tell what was there.

“After the discovery of mildew on clothing, we were able to make a case to have dehumidifiers installed by college facilities. This decreased risk of accelerated deterioration from mold and mildew for the entire collection, and made it possible for us to spend more of our CSA grant money on improving storage conditions. Though we did not originally think it would be possible to address all hanging storage with our grant money, we were able to find a cheaper solution to hanging by making our own padded hangers using batting and cotton stockinette. This reduced our costs dramatically, and we are thrilled to report we have managed to put all items in the MCACC either in acid free box storage, or on padded hangers! These padded hangers take up much more room on each garment rack, so

we have reorganized our available space and expanded the collection items into two rooms. Items are now organized roughly by time period, and it is much easier to access the collection for research and classroom learning.



*Left: Middlebury College students Sofia Donovan-Lafuente and Roxy Adviento make padded hangers for the collection.
Right: Once items were transferred to padded hangers Mira Veikley, Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre, was able to sort items roughly by date.*



*Left: An item too fragile for hanging storage is prepared for box storage.
Top Right: Danielle Weindling, Research Assistant for the MCACC, prepares a dress to be photographed.
Bottom Right: Advanced Costume Design students sketch items from the collection.*

“After using our CSA Grant money to address the most urgent preservation needs of the collection we are moving on to photographing and research. Renewed enthusiasm for the collection has made it possible for us to install a photography backdrop and better lighting. We have also had a mannequin donated, so we are looking forward to getting beautiful photographs of our pieces and making those photographs available to anyone who has interest in learning about the past through antique clothing. **We would like to thank the Costume Society of America’s College and University Collection Care Grant for giving Middlebury College the opportunity to preserve our unique collection for future generations of costume historians!**”

The 2017 College and University Collection Care Grant winner will be announced soon. You can find more information about the award at

costumesocietyamerica.com/resources/grants-awards-and-honors/csa-collection-grant/.