

## CHAPTER 35

### Museum Facilities\*

#### A NATURE AND COMPOSITION

##### 1. DESCRIPTION OF FACILITIES

###### (a) *Physical Characteristics*

A museum institution is a permanent establishment created to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret objects and specimens of cultural value, including artistic, historical, scientific, and technological collections.

At the present time museum facilities in the United States are undergoing rapid change and expansion to meet the growing public demand for their services, and to incorporate recent technological advances in environmental control which will aid in preserving the collections for use by future generations. The collections in American museums have been accumulated over the past 150 years; it is in the housing, and display of these objects and specimens that tremendous advances have been made in the last two decades.

Those buildings constructed in the last 20 years to serve the specific functions of a museum provide space not only for effective exhibition of the collections, but also for research and study related to the institution's field of specialization, and for educational and cultural activities. About 40 percent of the floor space is allocated to exhibit areas, 40 percent to *live* or readily accessible storage, and 20 percent to office and work space. Work areas include administrative offices, laboratories, classrooms, reference libraries, and studios for photographers, artisans, restorers, and preparators.

Permanent installations include extensive and flexible lighting arrangements and systems to provide complete temperature and humidity control of the interior environment to aid in the preservation of the collections. Equipment includes exhibit cases, which may be wall or table cases, or built-in recessed cases; exhibition screens and panels; picture racks; storage shelving; and laboratory equipment varying in kind as the type of museum varies.

The museum buildings described above, those designed and built within the last 20 years, have set the standard for the proper physical plant in which to exhibit and care for museum collections. Those museum institutions which are housed in older buildings, and those whose physical plant was originally designed for another use have been faced with the need to do extensive remodeling in both the mechanical plant and the visitor areas of the building, or to plan for new construction which will meet these new standards. In the major-

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