



CURATOR AS A JOURNALIST: DOCUMENTING CONTEMPORARY EPIDEMICS

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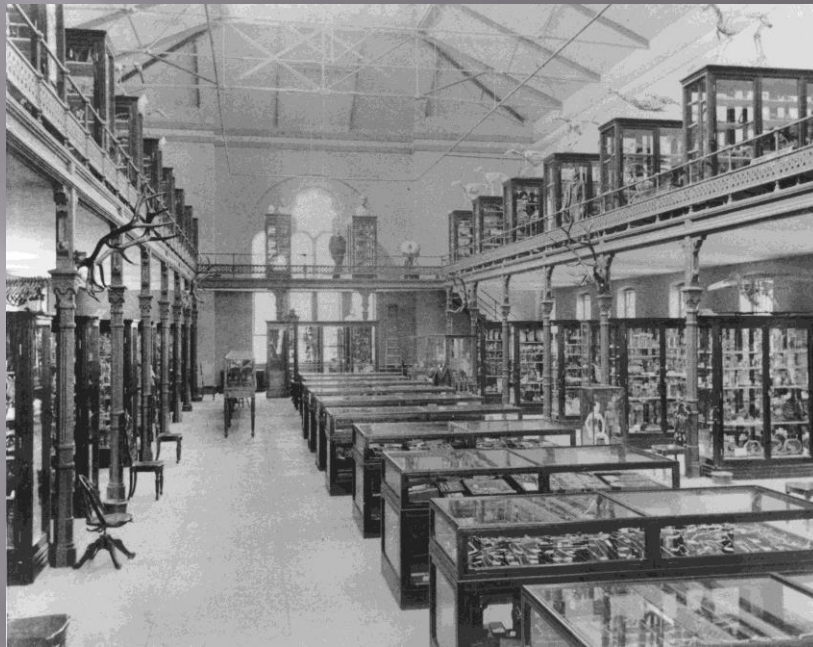
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Administrative Announcements

- ▣ The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and are not necessarily representative of the U.S. Army Medical and Materiel Command, the Department of Defense, or the military services.

- ▣ Conflicts of Interest
 - None to declare



Army Medical Museum, ca. 1890. AMM 00153.

- ▣ “The study of past events, particularly in human affairs:”
 - Oxford English Dictionary definition of ‘History’

- ▣ “On one side plastic, Formica, gadgets, nothingness; on the other beauty and culture mummified in a museum.”
 - Bernard Marrey, *Les Grands Magasins* 1979.

- ▣ “Journalism is history in a hurry”
 - James Michener



<http://www.md-health.com/Ebola-Virus-Disease-Pictures.html>

How does what you are collecting fulfill your museum's mission

Museums are collecting Occupy Wall Street artifacts

Major museums want to preserve materials produced by the Occupy movement
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
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REUTERS/MATTHEW WALSH

Jean Ashkin, left, library director at the New-York Historical Society, and Matthew Murphy, the library's head of cataloging, display part of a growing collection of Occupy Wall Street items, in New York.

NEW YORK — Occupy Wall Street may still be working to shake the notion it represents a passing outburst of rage, but some establishment institutions have already decided the movement's artifacts are worthy of historic preservation. More than a half-dozen major museums and organizations from the Smithsonian Institution to the New-York Historical Society have been avidly

“It looks like it’s taxpayer-funded hoarding, as opposed to rigorous historical collecting.”

Tom Fitton, president of Judicial Watch, 2011

“The Museum collects from contemporary events because many of these materials are ephemeral and if not collected immediately, are lost to the historical record.”

Statement from Smithsonian Institution, 2011.

(<http://americanhistory.si.edu/press/releases/statement-occupy-wall-street-protests-collecting>)

The question to be answered...



Plasmoquin, Japan, World War II (M-660.00090)

If a curator would do an exhibit on the history of Ebola a century from now, what artifacts would they have wanted you to collect for them?

How do you ensure that they will have what they need?

"There is a certain big-city newspaper encased in bullet-proof glass that has a reputation for weakness in street reporting. One day I passed the windowed office of a columnist there and saw him inside, interviewing two men. It was symbolic of what was wrong with the paper; the reporters were bringing pieces of the world into the city room by appointment instead of venturing beyond their plastic hive to meet it on its own terms."

- William Ruehlmann, Stalking the Feature Story (1977): 99-100.



Sharps container, M-728.10018

"As a writer, you are an observer by occupation; that means you are always on the job. ...You must concentrate on what is going on around you as a matter of habit. -- and paying this kind of attention can be hard work. If you are a writer, however, you will warm to the game."

- William Ruehlmann, Stalking the Feature Story (1977): 7.



Armor-Touch Metal Mesh Autopsy Gloves [M-001.10003]



Condom [Maryland Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene] M-194.10049



Condom [Health Education Resource Organization] M-194.10014.



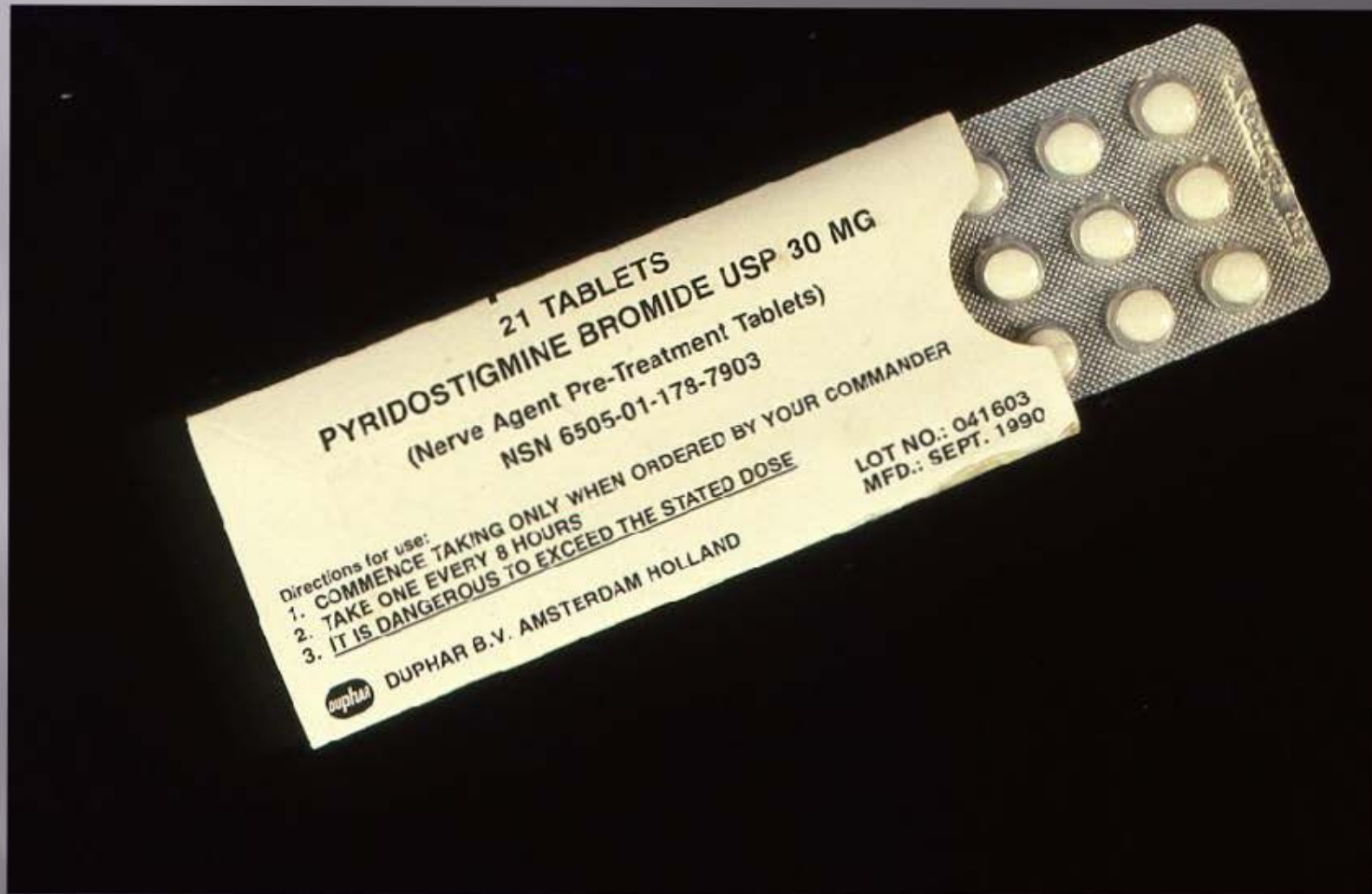
Condom [Health Education Resource Organization] M-194.10100.



Condom [Inner City AIDS Network] M-194.10127.

“Don’t preconceive a story; if you go in expecting a certain slant, you may insist on it when it isn’t there. And always struggle with the certainty that you haven’t got the whole story.”

- William Ruehlmann, Stalking the Feature Story (1977): 15-16.



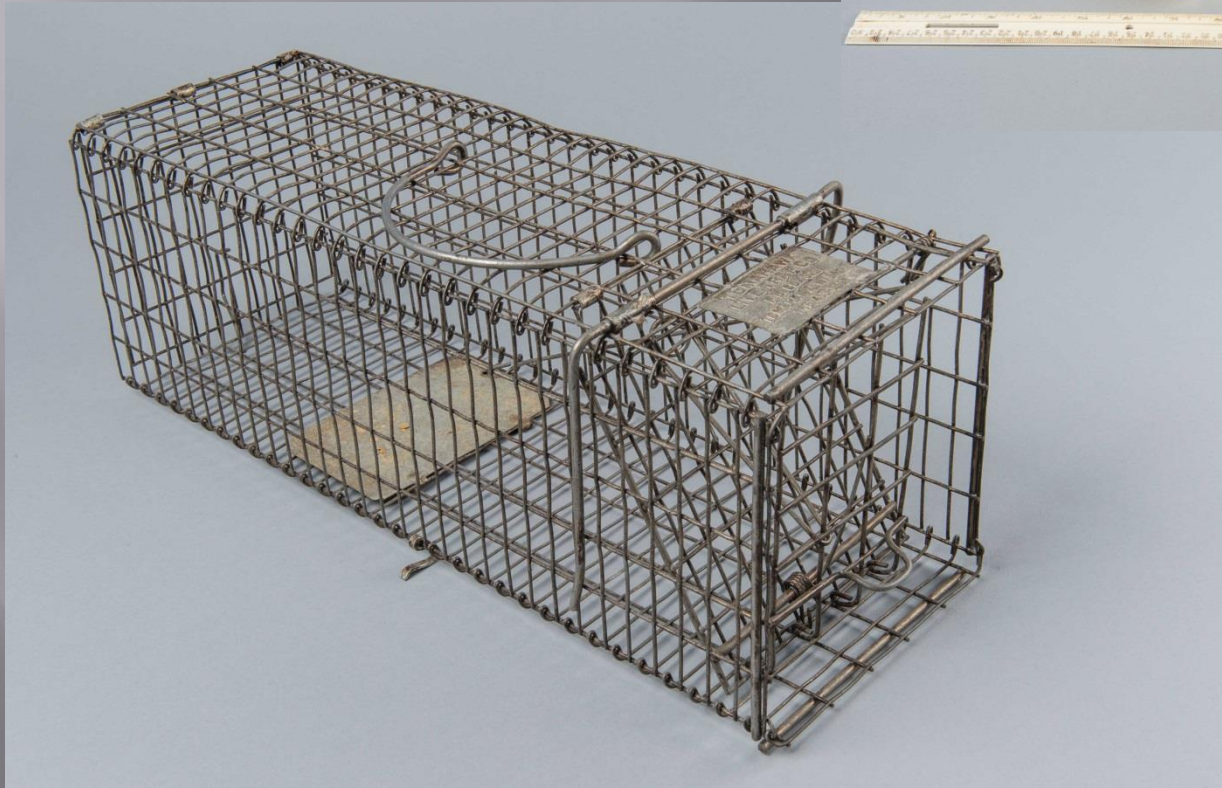
Pyridostigmine Bromide (Nerve agent pretreatment) M-660.10702

"Just as Houdini required a key to exotic obstacle, so too the writer -- a literary conjurer -- requires one for revealing events and occasions to his readers. It's as simple to get a hold of as Houdini's metal pick, but requires just as much imagination in the use. The key is legwork, and its adhering hook is the informed source."

- William Ruehlmann, Stalking the Feature Story (1977): 183-184.



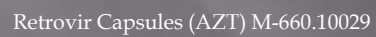
Contents of an Animal Sampling kit used by CDC epidemiological survey team sent to Kikwit, Zaire (1995) M-013.10286.



Animal trap used by CDC epidemiological survey team sent to Kikwit, Zaire (1995) M-762.10249

"Go to the source. See the your subject directly – at his home, office, health club or holding cell. It's harder to hang up on you when you appear in person. If that isn't possible, try the telephone. When that doesn't work, then and only then, resort to the (Public Relations) route. In each case, identify yourself."

- William Ruehlmann, Stalking the Feature Story (1977): 145.





Army Combat Helmet (ACH) with Blast Sensors, M-350.10297

Lessons Learned

- ▣ Get outside of the museum.
- ▣ Observe what is going on around you.
- ▣ Accept that you don't know the whole story.
- ▣ Legwork, Legwork, Legwork.
- ▣ Go to the source.



Questions?



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