

# Storage

FOR MUSEUMS

## CUSTOMIZED SOLUTIONS SOLVE STORAGE CHALLENGES AT NATION'S FIRST ARAB-AMERICAN MUSEUM

Dearborn, Mich., is the cultural hub of the nation's Arab-American community and home to the Arab American National Museum, which opened in May 2005. The new ethnic museum is the first of its kind to showcase the culture of one of the largest Middle-Eastern populations in the country.

In designing the 38,500 square-foot building, it was the exhibits, educational classrooms and public programming space that took precedence. "The visible areas are always the easiest to support," said Curator of Exhibits & Collections Sarah Blannett. "It's much harder to get people excited about funding storage space, so only a limited amount of space was allotted for collection storage."

Charged with choosing the storage system for the collections, Blannett began the task by asking a couple of other local museums what companies they had considered when recently building or remodeling.

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— Ronny Seyler, The Casper Corporation

"Spacesaver and The Casper Corporation, Spacesaver's Area Contractor, came up twice at different sites," she said.

Blannett's biggest challenge was how to accommodate the diverse variety of artifacts, art and papers that tell the Arab-American story, including an extensive collection of textiles, paper, jewelry, ethnographic materials, and everyday artifacts of life, ranging from ancient cuneiform tablets to Golden Globe statuettes.

"We were in a great position because we were starting the collection fresh," she explained. "However, I also had to create storage areas for artifacts that we didn't yet have and try to allocate space for what I thought we might be getting in the future."

After sitting down with Casper Corporation's storage expert Ronny Seyler to analyze the museum's needs, as well as the many available storage products, the two designed a system to fit the museum's unique specifications.



A powered mobile system essentially doubled the museum's space for artifact storage, while providing flexibility for the future.

# Solved



Blannett chose a **powered high-density mobile storage system** by Spacesaver to maximize capacity of the small space and had it customized with hanging rods for clothing such as robes that have been passed down from one generation to the next, drawers for smaller items, and adjustable shelving for a diversity of artifacts collected from all 50 states and 22 different Arab countries worldwide. "The Spacesaver units eliminated the space between the aisles, essentially doubling the space we have available to us," Blannett said.

"The museum chose a Spacesaver powered system because it is state-of-the-art, and there is a lot of pride in being the first museum of its kind in the USA," said Seyler. "They wanted the best."

In another area, drawers by Delta Designs Ltd. now house and preserve an extensive collection of movie posters, scripts and media memorabilia, along with oversized and odd-shaped photos, which had previously been rolled and stored in attics or basements. There is also an entire wall for rolled textiles with art racks on each end.

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The storage system, which is located on the lowest level of the museum, was designed to accommodate two-and-a-half to three years of collection growth, with the flexibility to move or add shelves or drawers as needs change. Although not accessible to the public, people on public tours and those who have donated funds to the museum can view the collection storage area through a window.

"The best thing about The Casper Corporation's solutions was the conservation of space," Blannett said. "Being able to double our capacity by using the Spacesaver system has been invaluable to us."

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Customized solutions include a hanging section in the powered mobile system (top), Delta Design drawers for flat storage (center), and a wall for rolled textiles and artwork (bottom).