

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRESERVATION

Renew and Recycle: Developing Sustainable Preservation Strategies

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27 Shared Print Networks (USA)
119 Archive Facilities
239 Participant Institutions
1 *de facto* National Library

As research libraries rely on shared print networks, the Library of Congress needs to develop a sustainable preservation strategy for the items it keeps available as a “library of last resort” and share effective preservation administration practices to other archive builders.

Assumptions: Shared Print

Shared print will continue to grow as a major factor in how research libraries operate

Formal, sustainable relationships take significant time to develop in our policy environment

As that time passes, we need to preserve opportunities and options for how to use and provide access to the collections

Recycle

Existing programs provide building blocks (e.g. ILL, Service Academies MOU)

Renew

Participation in Committees and Working Groups develop mutual understanding and collective knowledge

Assumptions: Preservation

Preservation does not need to justify itself in terms of mission: Libraries exist to preserve.

But, preservation can be seen as an inevitable and perpetual cost: not an area of growth, change, or innovation

Archive builders are wary of recurring, perpetual costs by making retention commitments

The preservation intent of print archives can be at odds with the efficiency goals of shared print

Renew

Preservation efforts need a clear business model to show relevance to current organizational goals

Recycle

Many preservation services do not need to change-- they're well-optimized and necessary-- but do need to be positioned within a meaningful strategy

Intro: Framework for Sustainability

Goal is to determine if the preservation programs are **healthy**: **efficient, flexible, and suited to needs and resources of the library**

Muybridge, Eadweard, photographer. Athletes. Back summersault. California Palo Alto, ca. 1881. [San Francisco: Muybridge] Photograph.
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2009630520/>.



Developing Sustainable Preservation Models

How we reorganized for sustainability

How we developed a business model that could adapt and change

Case study of storage: a fundamental cost key to shared print

Starting Point: 2017

New Librarian of Congress

- New Strategic Plan and Vision
- Updated Mission Statement

New in Preservation

- Director (first in 2 years)
- Collections Management Division

Recycle

Each part of PRES was independently effective, producing at high quantity and high quality

Renew

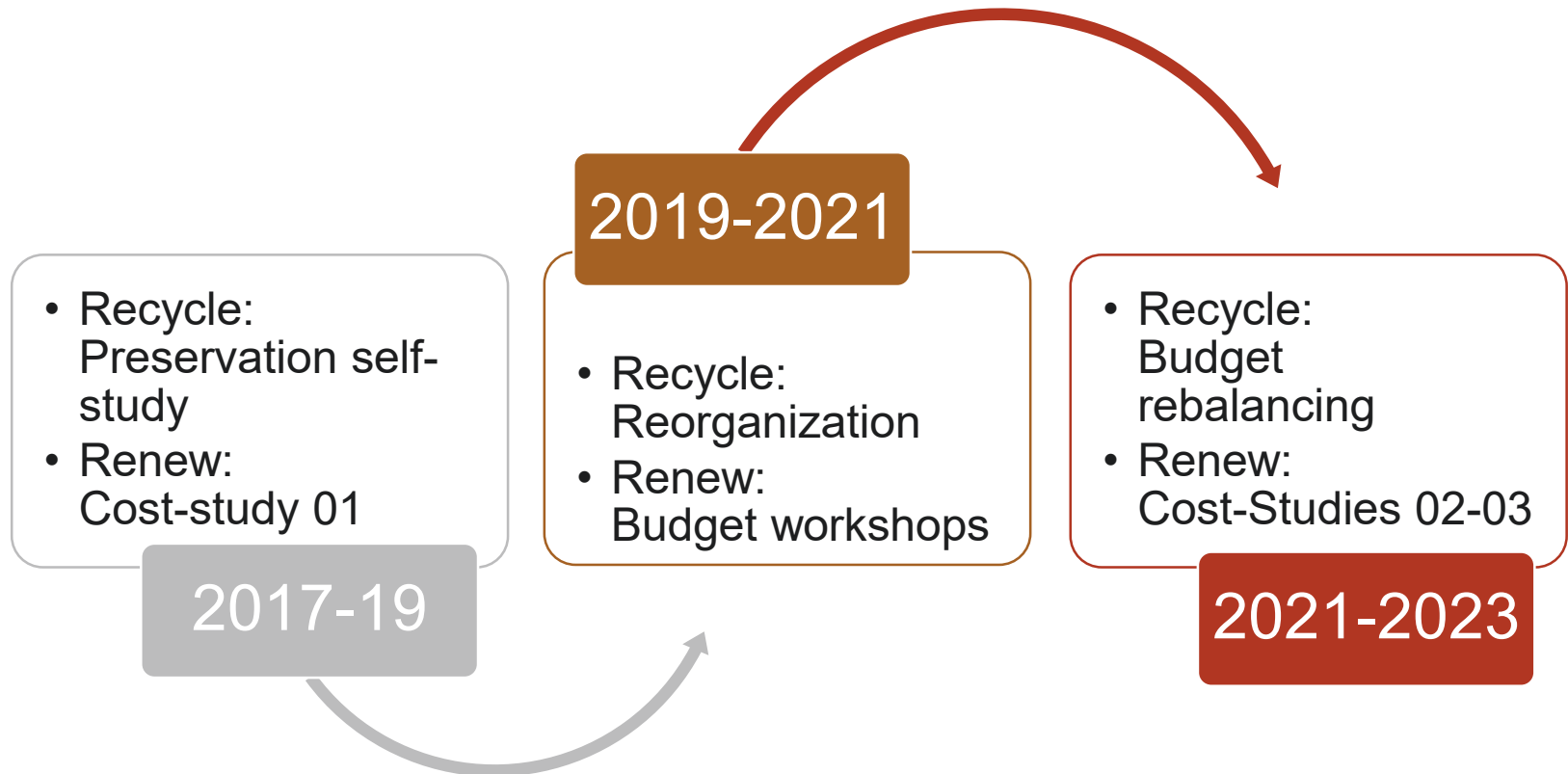
Facing significant change and new vision, had to make sure that preservation effort was integral to the Library's emerging direction

Planning for Sustainability

Where have we been?

Where are we?

Where are we going?



Internal Self-Studies

2017-19

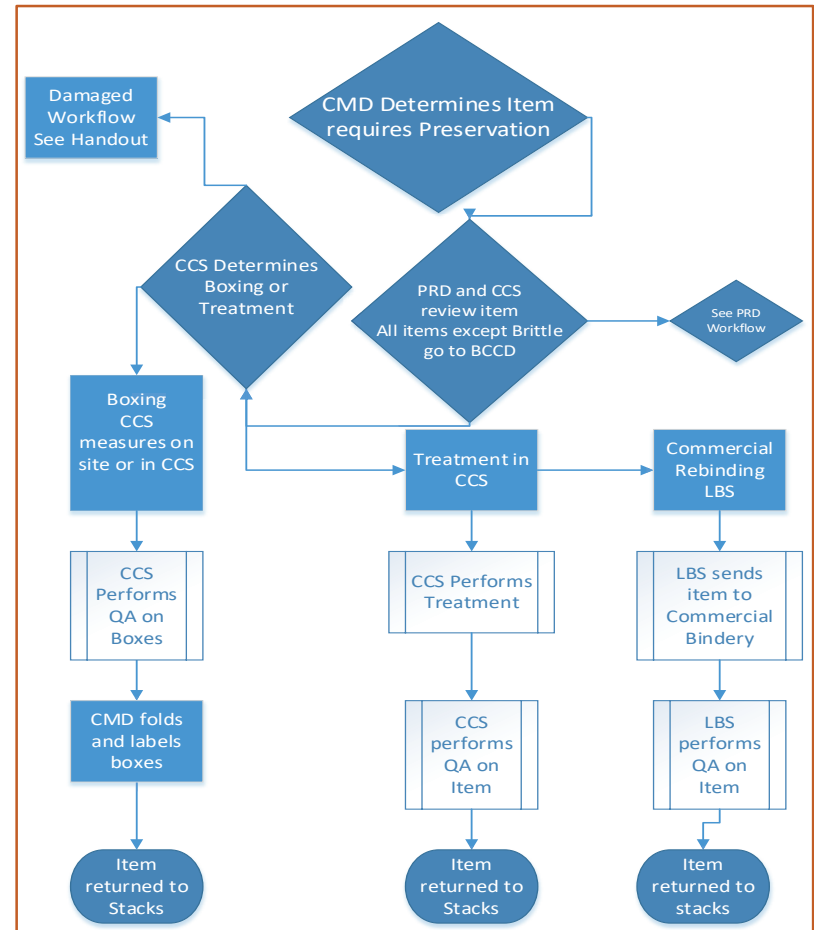
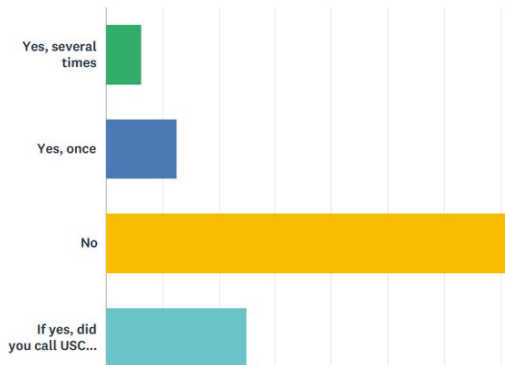
Where have we been?

2-year series of self-study efforts:

- User Satisfaction Survey
- xDiv Teams
- “POP” Workshops

Q1 Have you seen water in the stacks or had other collections emergencies occur in the past year?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 0



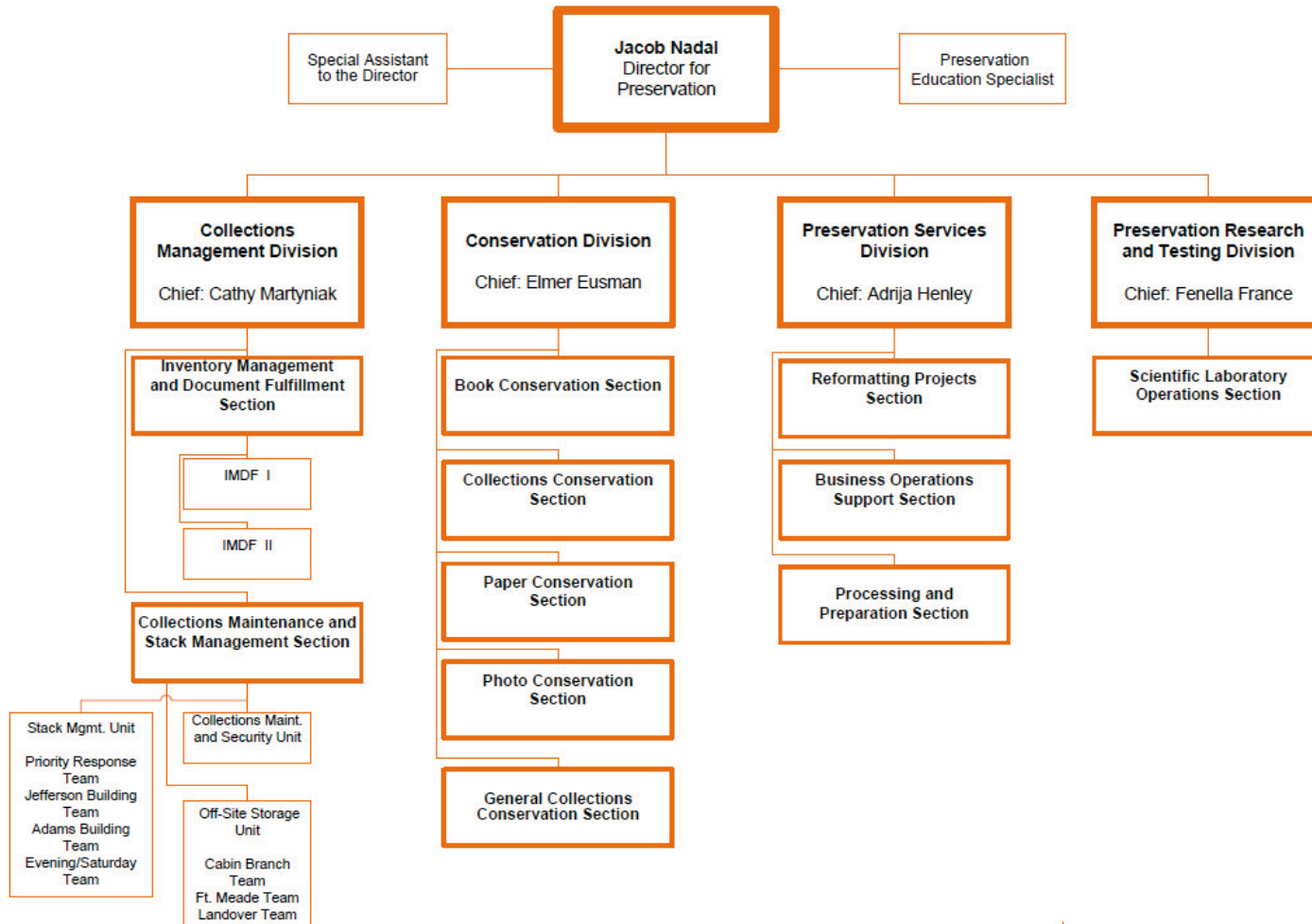
Reorganization

2019-2021

Where are we?

Library of Congress Preservation Directorate

November 8, 2021



Budget Workshops Series

2021-2023

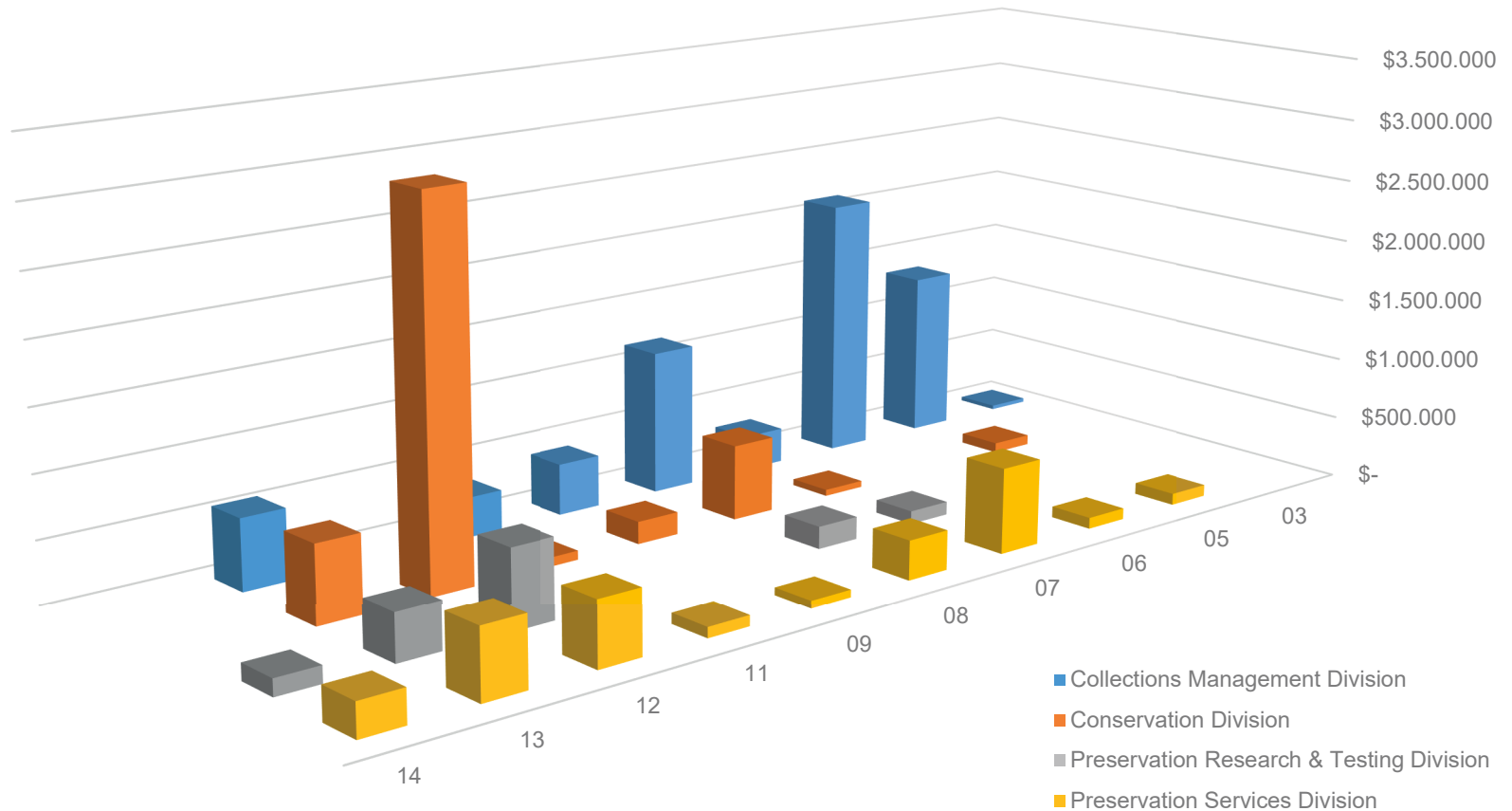
Where are we going?

Goals:

- Enable creative thinking and problem solving to the question of sustainable preservation services
- Make progress regardless of the overall budget picture (flat budget, CR, late budget)
- Connect to opportunities that range from annual special funding requests to major Library development efforts

Workshop: Reframing Pay Budget

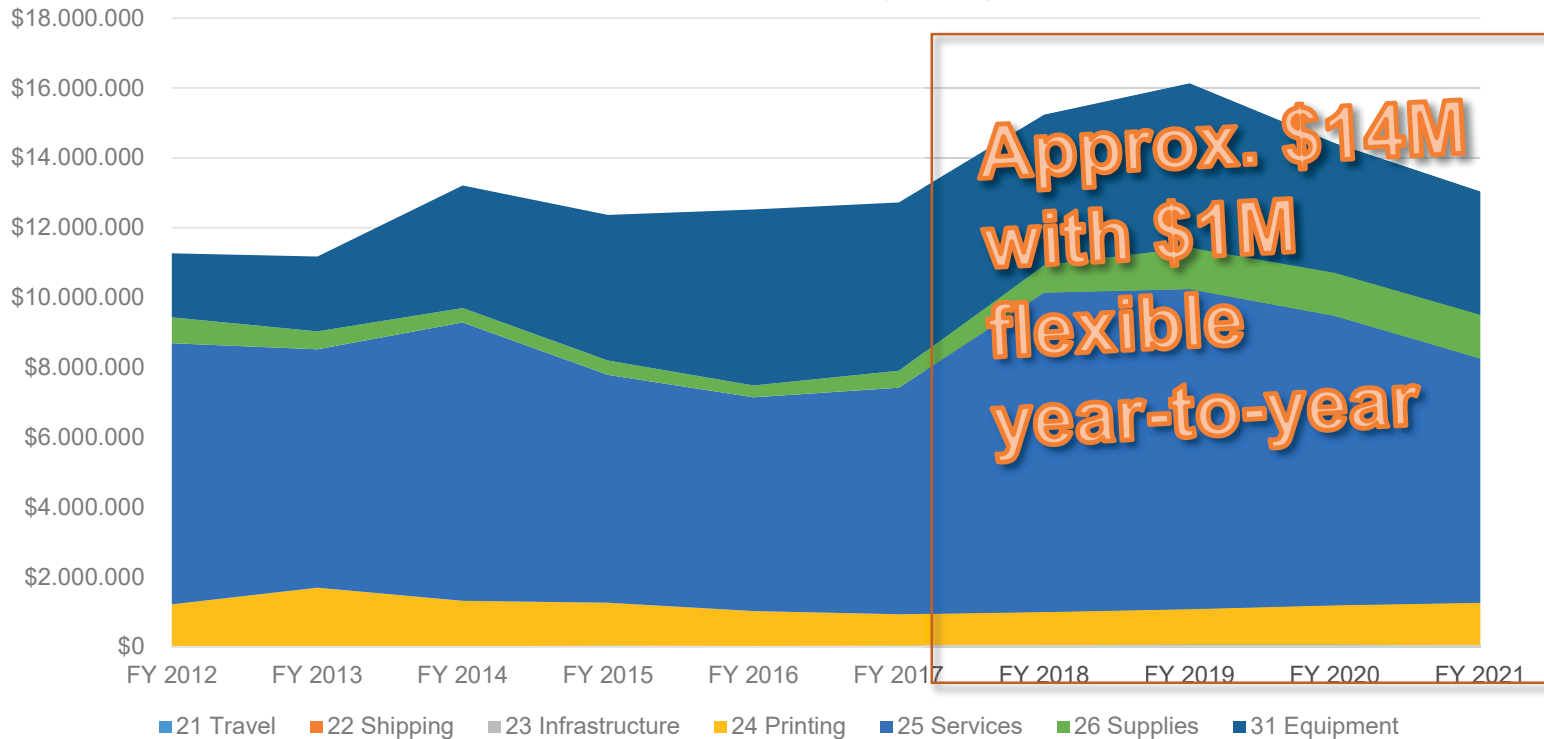
2021-2023



Workshop: Non-Pay Budget

2021-2023

PRES Directorate Non-pay Budget



Budget Looking Forward

Results

In recent years and into FY23

Rebalanced approx. \$5 million across PRES programs

- For each division: between \$.5M - \$1.2M in spending opportunities, in different years
- New objects conservator
- New scientific instruments
- Expedited transfers to preservation faculties (closing LCA)
- Funded supporting infrastructure in DCM and OCIO
- Funded annual line item for Cost-Study Program

Program Areas

Shared print and storage costs bear on all items, all the time

A crucial aspect of our fiscal strategy is both decreasing storage cost and increasing the preservation outcomes from storage itself

But need to take in to account a holistic view of entire preservation program

Natural Experiment

Library has an overall storage deficit

- Operating an interim facility (Cabin Branch) while new modules are built at our preservation repository site (Fort Meade)

Both facilities use the same high-density shelving model, however...

- Cabin Branch is leased commercial space, built out to Library minimum standards using **commodity systems and materials**
- Fort Meade is owned by the Library, and **purpose-built to preservations standards** by the Architect of the Capitol

Allowed us to determine a unit cost of storage and a differential cost for gaining preservation benefits from storage

Off-Site Storage Costs

Cabin Branch:

~USD \$13 per item

Leased by the Library

High density storage

Moderate environment:

- TWPI: ~60
- Requires additional preservation actions and costs to compensate

Fort Meade:

~USD \$21 per item

Owned by the Library

High density storage

Environmentally optimized:

- TWPI: 200+
- Reduces scale and scope of additional preservation actions

Present Value Cost of Preservation

Natural Experiment with Two Facilities

~USD \$8 present-day provided a preservation environment forever (Projections incl. 40, 200, 200+ years)

Most of the differential costs in capital cost for the building

Operations & maintenance very small in relation

- Operations costs also provide real-time value
- Operations costs can also change over time as needs change
- Maintenance provides near-term value but often with year-to-year flexibility (just don't wait too long)

There is a base level of capital investment required to achieve benefits: important for benchmarking, budgeting, and fundraising

Present Value Cost of Preservation

Natural Experiment with Two Facilities

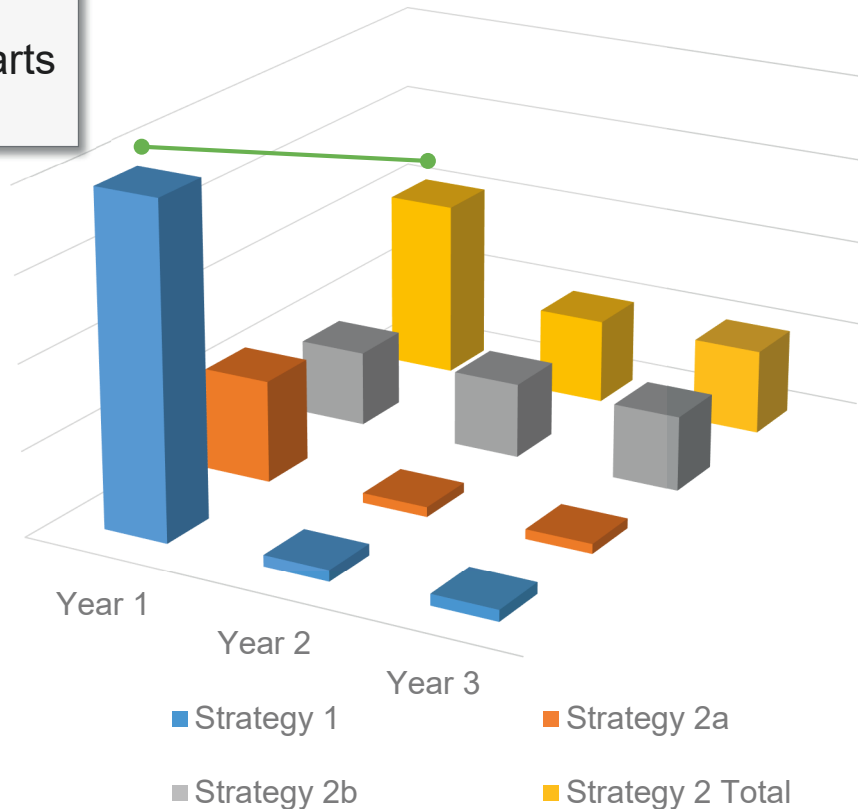
Gives us a benchmark: anything over the differential cost may not be worthwhile unless...

- Environmental control is not a viable alternative
e.g. torn paper
- The treatment (re)enables use
e.g. prepare for users and exhibition
- The treatment provides additional options for use
e.g. prepare for digitization

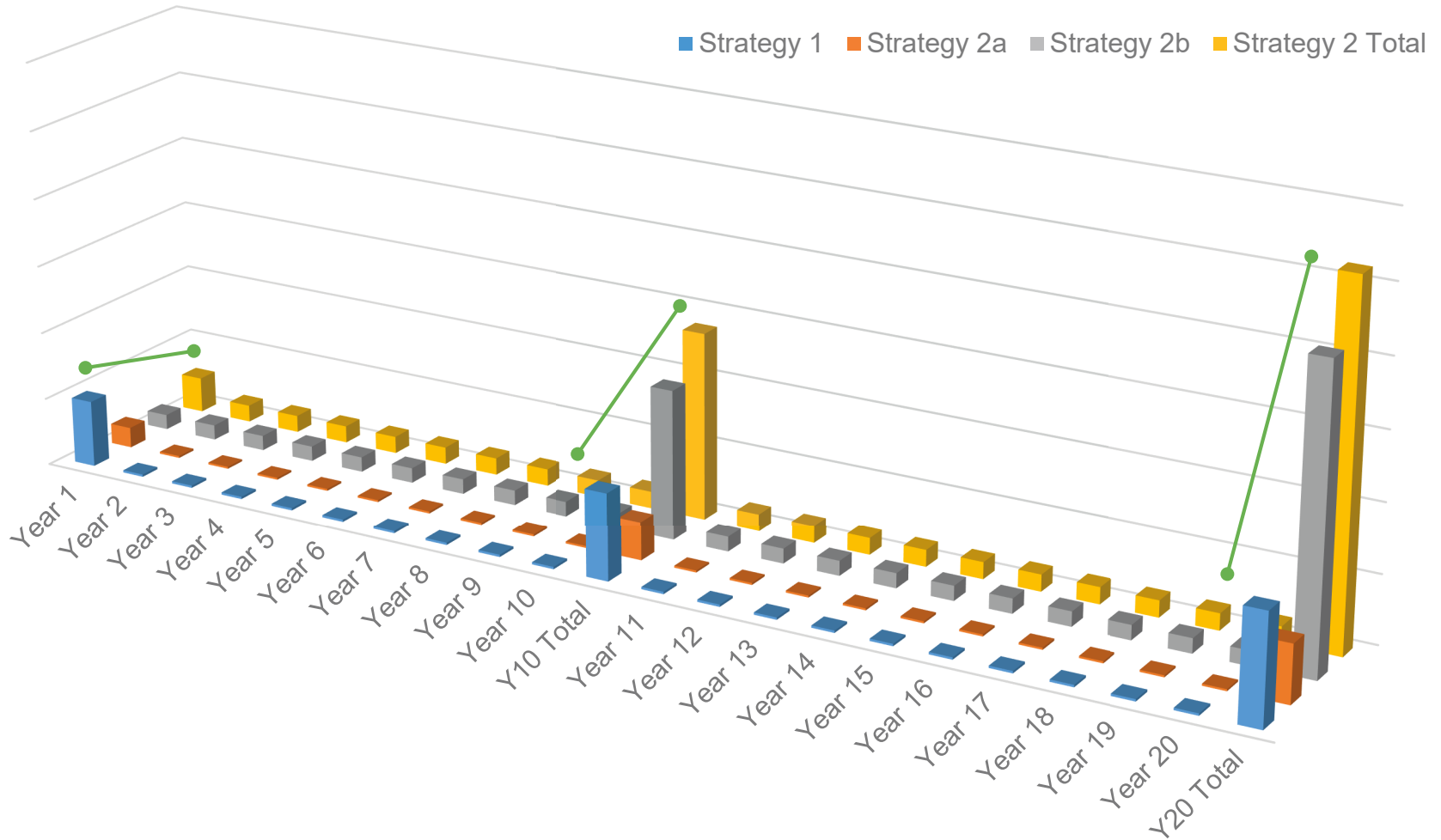
Guided the Library to a strong case for environmental measures: high ROI, reliable and flexible, and applicable to wide range of collections

Multifactor Comparison Over Time

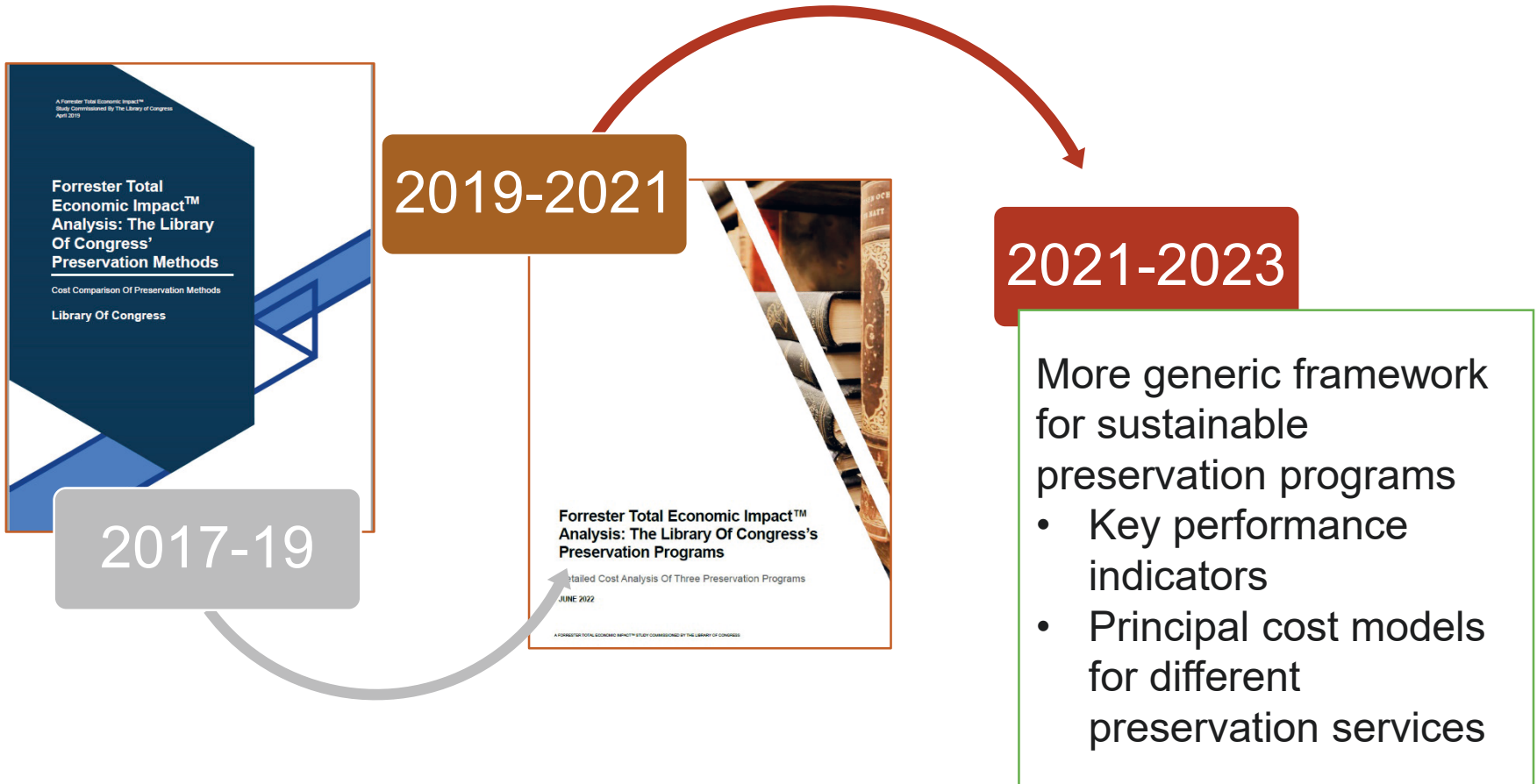
The possibility of costs over time is hidden in year one, and only starts to emerge over time



Multifactor Comparison Over Time



Rebalancing Strategy: Cost Studies



Solutions

Deferrable preservation goals can sound like...

“Preservation ensures that future generations will have access to collections.”

“In a [distant, ambiguous time] collections will still exist for [unspecified people] and we don't know what they will do with those collections.”

Solutions

Deferrable preservation goals sound like...

“Preservation ensures that future generations will have access to collections.”

“In a [distant, ambiguous time] collections will still exist for [unspecified people] and we don’t know what they will do with those collections.”

Sustainable preservation goals sound more like...

“In a [meaningful time] we will have **similar or improved options for use** of this resource, **compared to the present.**”

- “improve usability of items...” (treatment)
- “develop new options for use...” (research)

Continuous Process

Preservation has to solve problems
across decades or centuries

Libraries operate in annual funding
cycles and five-year strategic cycles

Sustainability requires...
... developing activities that can
continue into eternity
while regularly showing benefits in the
present

Thank you - questions welcome!

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Questions – Ask a Librarian: Preservation
<https://ask.loc.gov/preservation/>

Blog – Guardians of Memory: Preserving the National
Collection
<http://blogs.loc.gov/preservation/>

Online Resources – Preservation Directorate Website
<https://www.loc.gov/preservation/>