

## Pennywise: Mobile Art Storage

The problem: A lot of framed artworks, certificates, photographs, prints, and anything else that can be framed and not enough storage space.

Anyone who has managed or helped manage a collection has faced this problem and the most common solution shared by everyone is a hanging rack system. They look nice and are an ideal solution to your collection and space needs. But the cost! How can a small organization with a small or no budget that may or may not have a paid employee and mostly operated by volunteers afford something like it? From small to large organizations, everyone is interested in cost efficient solutions that give them the best bang for their buck. Here is one solution that I used and hope you will find useful the next time you are evaluating your collection needs.

The situation: Framed objects were in bubble wrap and stacked against the wall on the floor. We needed the floor space for other collection items and the framed objects storage method was not up to professional standards. We also had to conserve our budget for large expenses that we knew were coming soon.

Our solution: We were fortunate in that we had a set of compact mobile shelving units already in-place. We decided to adapt them to our situation by creating our own “homemade” hanging system by removing all the shelving which left a sturdy frame.



What you will need: A visit to your local DIY store for rolls of **clean** chain-link fencing, a couple of canisters of zip-ties, and a few boxes of “s” hooks. Strong wire cutters, sturdy work gloves, and possibly a couple of willing volunteers complete your list.

Budget impact: \$200-\$300 or less ( 1 roll of chain-link fencing at Home Depot is about \$55 dollars: <http://www.homedepot.com/p/YARDGARD-4-ft-x-50-ft-11-5-Gauge-Galvanized-Steel-Chain-Link-Fabric-308704A/202024333>.) How many rows you install will determine your final cost. This is also a great grant project if funding is needed or it can be your one major project and expense for that year. If you have a good volunteer base, it would be a great opportunity to have them

actively involved and see the kind of impact they can have.

Make sure to wear good protective gloves when installing the fencing as you will do a lot of tugging and pulling to make sure you get a tight stretch on the chain-link. It does not work well if it is loose and sags when you go to hang your framed objects. We stretched the fence sections across our cleared mobile shelving frame and used zip-ties to attach the fencing to the frame posts. (Start by attaching one end of fencing to the first post and stretch to the next post, attach with zip ties and continue till you reach the end.) Trim the excess zip tie tail with wire cutters and if the fencing goes past the length of your frame, cut the extra length of fencing off. (Use enough zip-ties to securely hold the fencing **and** the weight of framed objects. A dozen or so can quickly add up!) Check the zip ties every year to make sure they don't get brittle and fall off. If one looks or feels loose – put a new zip-tie on and remove the old one. Repeat for the other side so you have two usable sides. Use the “S” hooks to hang the framed items to the fencing. It is much easier to hang if they have picture wire on their backs. For those who do not have a mobile



shelving unit– see if you have an experienced craftsman or contractor amongst your volunteers who is willing to donate materials and their skills for this project or include the cost of wood framing and screws in your grant application. Construct a wood frame to fit your space with interior stringers about 4 feet apart. Attach two sides to your storage structure. Make sure the frame is appropriately installed for a secure and stable open “wall” to hang your fencing and framed objects on. Leave enough row space for an average sized person to walk between and move framed objects in and out of the space. If you only need two, that makes 4 usable sides to hang your framed objects. The numbers of rows of hanging racks are determined by your collection and space.

Next time: Affordable shelving

Contributing writer: Michelle Wallace, High Desert Curation, Curator, [michellerwallace2018@gmail.com](mailto:michellerwallace2018@gmail.com)