

our preservation kits, which show a discount from the regular prices of the archival enclosures if purchased separately. Or order archival supplies as you need them.⁴

11: Should We Bury the Time Capsule?

While the majority of time capsules placed today are buried, whether to do so or not should be properly decided. We feel that burial is fine for most of the stainless steel capsules that we make. Advantages to burial include a stable temperature, a dark environment, longevity of area (a building will only last about 50 years) and less chance of vandalism. We encourage using a physical enclosure for the time capsule for its future physical & mechanical protection, as well as ease of placement and retrieval. However, do NOT use a plastic bag around the capsule or anything that will hold water against the metal and invite corrosion (even stainless steel will corrode over time).

Circumstances vary, such as the length of time interred, or whether burial is above or below sea level. Extend the life of metal by using epoxy primer and paint, or a bituminous coating such as coal tar epoxy (very messy). Alternative ideas to burial include placement into a building's cornerstone along with a marker, into an inner niche of a building (again, the area outside is marked with a plaque to assure discovery), placement at the base of a sculpture, and archival storage or display within a local museum. It's safer, especially if you are using a low-end capsule, to plan for indoor storage. Consider using the capsule in a display or as part of furniture in a lobby, library, or meeting area.

12: Will Our Time Capsule Get Lost?

Not if you take proper steps to prevent it! Consider an identification plate, such as a cast metal plaque, if the capsule is buried or otherwise hidden. Another way is to make use of the International Time Capsule Registry, (contact Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia for more information). Be very specific about where the time capsule is located and when it is supposed to be opened (and by whom).³

¹ See *A Sampling of Time Capsule Contents*, for more detailed information and many more ideas.

² See *Your Time Capsule: Brainstorming Container & Ceremony*, for ideas and information.

³ Ask for our free sales leaflet on Cast and Etched Plaques for more information and ideas.

⁴ Ask for our free archival supplies catalog, "Archivally Speaking."

⁵ See our free leaflet, *Time Capsule Preservation Tips*.

⁶ See our leaflet, *Preserving Newspapers*.

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12 Tips

to Planning a Successful Time Capsule Project

By Janet E. Reinhold

1: What's a Time Capsule?

A Time Capsule is a container that holds records or objects which show today's culture. People seal the time capsule and deposit it in a special place, such as in a building's cornerstone or walls, in a vault underground, or simply on a shelf in the attic. Those who place time capsules plan someday for either themselves or someone else to open it once again to remember and to ponder the contents. This could be any set time period but is usually 10, 25, 50, or 100 years or more in the future. Sesquicentennial celebrants often choose 150 to match the year of celebration, or 50 to be opened at their bicentennial. Essentially, the time capsule is a snapshot of today, which is also a gift for the future. The phrase *Time Capsule* was first used for the 1939 New York World's Fair Time Capsule.¹

2: How Do We Determine Size?

It's easiest if you know what you'll be putting into it! Estimate the largest (or longest) item you expect to have. For a sports group, consider the golf club or a baseball bat; for others, think of a signature scroll or special banner. Measure the length and use this (plus an allowance) for the planned height (or you could figure the length on the diagonal once you've estimated the width and depth). Estimate at least 4-6" (at most 16-18") in each of 2 other dimensions. Allow room for any photos, documents, and artifacts (along with their proper enclosures). Modify a cardboard box to use as a mockup. Add about two inches to one dimension and one inch in the other two dimensions to allow room for enclosures and for ease of closing and opening the time capsule.²

3: How Do We Start a Time Capsule Project?

Large groups form a Time Capsule committee which consists of 3 to 10 people. The committee chooses a chairman to lead the committee. The committee sends press releases to local media, makes posters and sends letters of solicitation to community groups. The committee establishes a deadline for receiving items and designates an address to which people send things. The committee gathers items as they come in. Decide on who has authority to give the final "yes" or "no" to donated items. Be clear on who is making the final decisions from the beginning of the project so that everyone knows. The decision-maker may be the Mayor, the City Clerk, the local historian or President of the Historical Society, or it could be your committee chairman. To get ideas for items, visit your local museum. What has lasted longest in maintaining interest over the years? Envision yourself in a museum of the future. What sort of every-day activities do we have which might be thought-provoking?²

4: How Do We Choose Items for the Time Capsule?

Start with a working list, with items by donor. Next to each entry, note the importance of including this particular item or group of items. Often, an item is submitted to you



Future Packaging & Preservation

544 E. Edna Place
Covina CA 91723

Phone: 1.800.786.6627, 1.626.966.1955

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“because of” something. At the beginning of your time capsule project, don't limit items solicited for donation (such as by size or by ‘no’ this or that). What is an issue now may not be one later in the gathering. To ease the gathering and organizing process, use large white envelopes, acid free folders, or even poly zip bags. Later, they can be replaced with permanent enclosures.

To encourage public participation, send media press releases asking for donations. Contact local service organizations, schools and churches and ask them to announce it in their newsletters and meetings. Have a contest and advertise it in the local media or in local schools. Businesses who help sponsor the time capsule project might also sponsor prizes for kids, whose essays/drawings could be included in the time capsule. Think of possible themes, such as “A Day in the Life of a Typical Cedar St. School Student,” or “What the city will look like in 2099.”

Consider including newspapers and magazines in a time capsule, along with other things that explain today's events—such as a charter or the report on a special law or funding.⁶ Hand-written essays, journals, or signature scrolls are special ways to commemorate an event, as is a special scrapbook made for the purpose. Identify and date all photographs. If you choose to use digital data, use archival media that is long-lasting for any digital formats you might want to try. It is recommended to place the most important messages on paper media as well as digital storage, in case there are problems with reading the media in the future.¹

5: What is a Dedication Ceremony?

One should always consider marking the time capsule event with a ritual. A very significant part of every time capsule placement, the Dedication Ceremony often includes short speeches by local dignitaries and/or clergy. It may include mentioning of time capsule items if they think them especially meaningful, and sometimes a mock placement of items at the event is fun, if you dedicate a capsule before it is actually sealed.² You can then use a Signature Scroll™ at the ceremony to involve attendees with a message to the future, and include the scroll in the time capsule to be sealed later. You might also consider a release of butterflies, or children's handwritten and school-addressed stamped postcards tied to balloons, or pre-made business cards with the placement and opening date on them. Many groups dedicate a special cast bronze or aluminum plaque at the same time.³

6: How Public Should the Ceremony Be?

Things don't always turn out the way you plan them. It's not Groundhog Day, in which Punxsutawny Phil always gets coverage no matter what kind of weather they get in western Pennsylvania. Your time capsule ceremony may be the most important news happening on that day, and get great coverage, but it may also be overshadowed by a crisis or just about anything else newsworthy. Madison, Wisconsin, had great coverage over a period of many months for their Sesquicentennial Time Capsule, because the local news channel had one of their own correspondents follow the time capsule contents from place to place. The event received a good community response, too, because it was fun to think about it and to suggest ideas. Advertise your event on the local city

websites, the radio and television, and certainly the local newspapers. On the other hand, you may not want your time capsule event to be public. In the case of a company's anniversary, you may prefer to send out special invitations to a select few employees and friends. News coverage can come during or after the event.²

7: Do We Display Items at the Dedication?

People enjoy looking at time capsule items. But unless you have a dark, protected place, avoid showing original items. Consider other effective ways of displaying things. Consider having a photo display of items for the time capsule. Duplicate items could be shown on a table or in a display case.²

8: Why Be Concerned with The Time Capsule Container?

Real time capsules are not toys, but rather, have a lofty purpose of being a receptacle made of a lasting material and sealed well enough to protect the time capsule contents over time. For various reasons, we have determined stainless steel to be the best, most practical material for most purposes.⁵ Special attention should be paid to how the container is sealed. A welded closure will last indefinitely. If the welded closure is done properly, if the items are kept beyond 2 inches of the weld, and if the material is stainless steel, you need not be concerned with any heat migration damage to contents inside. On site welding is not recommended for the same reasons as a solar eclipse cannot be watched with the naked eye. The best all-around time capsule and closure design is our bolted style 3000, whose closure is made easily on site. The time capsule's design uses a properly fitted O-ring (and groove) as well as secure blind bolts. The most important part of any time capsule survival plan is the use of a high quality container. If your container leaks or cracks (as ALL plastics do) or corrodes (base metal and aluminum risk this), the contents will be ruined.²

9: Why Do Items Need Preservation?

Inherent Vice is a fancy term that applies to certain items being made of materials that will change over time and may thereby harm something next to it. Polyvinyl sheet protectors may be the most obvious example (if you've ever placed a document inside and pulled it out months later only to see the print lifted off of the paper, you know what we mean). But many items, even the most interesting, will have some special circumstances surrounding its care.⁵ There are problems with almost any items people put in time capsules.⁶ But you shouldn't let that limit your imagination at the beginning. See our free *Time Capsule Preservation Tips* leaflet for more specific information about items and how to prepare them for storage. Also, our preservation kits include instructions for use of the materials contained within.

10: Can We Preserve Items Ourselves?

Certainly you can preserve most common time capsule items yourself. You need to have the correct archival materials (for instance, digital prints vary as to longevity, so pay attention to the ink and paper you use for the project from the beginning).⁵ Use the better quality storage enclosures for this long term project. Also, use common sense along with basic how-to instructions for accomplishing your task. You could purchase

