

# Preservation Practices



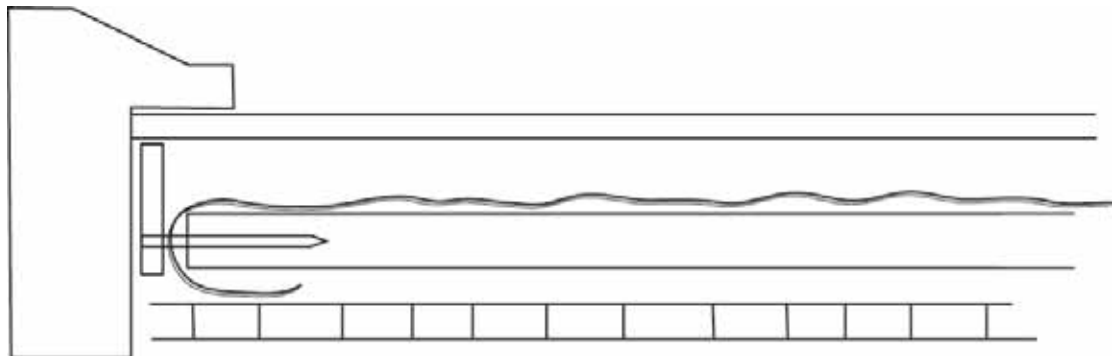
by Hugh Phibbs

## *More on Spacers for Needlework*

**E**ditor's note: In the March issue of *PFM*, Hugh Phibbs described several framing techniques and materials that can be used to mitigate the effects of pollution on framed items. Here we present a more expanded explanation of the spacer he proposed for use when framing needleart.

from the glazing (see Diagram). The advantage of adding the strip to the edge comes from the fact that it means the spacer need not be placed on the fibers, so none are flattened.

Since needlework projects are frequently pinned to support boards, strips of conservation-quality board can



*A spacer can be created with conservation-quality board being attached to the sides of the main support, rather than on top of it. See above the vertical spacer located just inside the moulding.*

The final element required for making such a frame as effective [when protecting against pollution] as possible is the use of proper spacing materials to keep the framed item away from the glazing. One simple means of holding a needlework project away from its glazing comes from a technique that has been used with installation of paintings on canvas in frames: a spacing element is fixed to the sides of the support which extends in front of the framed item and keeps it back

be secured to the edges of the support board with added pins. Pushing pins through the board will be difficult, so the holes through which the pins will pass should be started in the board strips with an awl, then tapped with a hammer.

This spacer requires that the frame be made with slightly larger than usual rabbet dimensions, so be sure to increase the frame allowance when sizing your frame. In addition, keep in mind the

additional rabbit depth many needleart pieces require.

Some years back, some textile conservators favored framing that permitted air circulation through the framed textile. When air that was infusing the textile was the filtered, washed, and conditioned air of a museum, that strategy could work well. But even the best air conditioning system in a home or office cannot be expected to remove enough of the pollution from our air to find benefit in this approach.

As I stated in last month's column, until we stop burning

fossil fuels, running machines that emit ozone, and using polymers that emit pollution, keeping delicate works of art and artifacts are safest in closed storage units or glazed, enclosing frames. And, an owner who wants to see his or her item framed without glazing should be informed of the consequences that such framing entails. This will allow them to make that decision, mindful of hazards that exposure to urban, industrial air represents. ■

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*To read more about spacers and preservation, read these past "Preservation Practices" columns on the PFM website at [www.pictureframingmagazine.com](http://www.pictureframingmagazine.com): "Stable Foam Spacers," February 1998; and, "Cushion Spacers," September 1996.*