



Wagner Free Institute of Science Building Assessment

Philadelphia, PA

CLIENT:

Wagner Free Institute of Science

The Wagner Free Institute of Science building is a National Historic Landmark. The institute's Landmark collection is housed in the original soaring three-story nineteenth century exhibit hall and includes an extraordinary collection of natural history specimens including mounted birds and mammals, fossils, rocks and minerals, insects, shells, dinosaur bones, and the first American saber-toothed tiger, discovered on a museum-sponsored expedition to Florida in 1886. The collections are displayed in cherry-wood and glass cabinets dating from the 1880s and maintain their original "systematic" scheme, providing a rare view of a Victorian science museum.

The Wagner has developed a preservation philosophy, particular to its mission, and to the relationship of the original building and collection. Interventions at the building must be made with the sensitivity, respectful of the authenticity of both the building and the intact and undisturbed collection.

KSK performed an assessment for the building in 2010, sponsored by the National Institute for Conservation. KSK evaluated every aspect of the building and provided a list of prioritized recommendations. At the time a separate, complicated structural problem had arisen. KSK assisted the institute in evaluating the conflicting recommendations offered by several structural engineers accomplished in historic preservation. Based upon the strong working relationship that developed during the building assessment, the Institute engaged KSK to oversee the team assembled to plan the upgrade of lighting throughout the building.

