

A. Registration

1. A History of the Collection Records

The section of the collections manual detailing collections procedures shall include a history of the collections records, updated regularly to include known past as well as current practices, changes, dates of changes, and reasons for changes.

2. Acquisition

Acquisitions involve all transactions by which title to incoming items is transferred to the Museum. Acquisitions can occur through donation, purchase, bequest, or exchange.

Acceptance of donations which do not fall into any of the collections categories is at the discretion of the Curator. It might be decided to keep something for trade or placement with another museum. If at all possible, the Curator should refer a prospective donor to an institution where acceptance is more likely.

Some items which might not be suitable for the collections might still be very useful in the educational programs of the Museum. If these items fall into the categories of active collecting, they may go through the formal acquisition process and then become part of the teaching collection. If they do not fall into areas of active collecting, they should be recorded as non-collections donations.

Because the Curator has the best idea of what the Museum already owns or is capable of caring for, she/he should make the final decision based on the following considerations.

a. Acceptance of Objects for the Museum's Collections: The decision on whether or not to accept a donation or make a purchase is based on a number of things. Is the object relevant to the Museum's stated purpose? Does the item fall into existing collections? Can the object be used in the exhibits program? Is the object redundant? Is there adequate storage of the proper kind? Can the object be properly cared for? Such things as the security, temperature, and humidity conditions in the historical

buildings, and any necessary repairs or maintenance should also be taken into consideration. Badly damaged objects should be taken into collections only if they can be used for parts to repair similar items.

b. Laws Governing Acquisitions:

Reasonable effort will be made to ensure that archaeological items and natural history specimens offered to the Museum are acquired only if they were lawfully collected. The Curator may accept items in any of these collection categories, subject to the following restrictions.

1. If it is archaeological material, it must be from a properly supervised, scientifically excavated site, and have proper documentation. The Museum cannot be in the position of appearing to encourage wanton "pot hunting." (see **Appendix E** for Federal regulations and other documents related to protection of cultural materials.)
2. If it is natural history material, such as a mounted bird, or shell collection, it should include data on the collection of each item or appropriate group of items. At the very least, this data should include the source of the material and the date on which it was collected. The collector should have proper collection permits when necessary. The Museum will not accept any endangered species material unlawfully obtained. (See **Appendix F** for Federal regulations and other documents related to protection of endangered species; **Appendix G** for permits.)

c. Conditions of Acceptance: With very few exceptions all acquisitions are unconditional. Legal title to all objects in a donation should be obtained free and clear when the donor signs the certificate of gift. The donor should make no restrictions as to the use or future disposition of an object once it is owned by the Museum. A prospective donor should be given some idea of what the donation will be used for. If the items fall into the teaching collection category, for example, it should be made clear that objects will be handled.

Restrictions to be avoided include:

1. Permanent display: Because our exhibit space is so limited, we are unable to promise to keep any donation on permanent display.
2. Credit to the donor each time a donation is displayed: We will acknowledge donations in the newsletter, and may in exhibits of new accessions, but we are unable to give credit for a donation every time it is displayed. Such credit lines often interfere with the story line of the interpretive exhibits.
3. Storage or display separate from other objects or collections of the same type: Storage space is too limited to permit this, and it also restricts exhibit flexibility.
4. Loan back to the donor.
5. Permanent ownership by the Museum: a museum must have the right to deaccession and dispose of an object according to accepted procedures should the item no longer meet its needs.

To avoid future misunderstanding, it is best if potential donors know these things from the start.

d. Acceptance of Loans: The Museum accepts loans only for a specific purpose and for a specified length of time.

e. Appraisals: The Museum does not appraise objects for possible donation or loan. Obtaining such appraisals, from a qualified third party, is the responsibility of the donor or lender. Doing otherwise could leave the Museum open to questions of conflict of interest.

When the Museum requires insurance on any loans that it makes to another party, it will furnish information on the value of the loaned items for use by the borrower's insurance company.

3. Examination of Possible Donations

If the Curator is unable to make an immediate decision on whether or not to accept a donation which has been brought in, or if an object is brought in while the Curator is out, the owner may leave the item for examination. Items left for examination are left at the owner's risk. It is the Curator's responsibility to decide on the status of the object and to let the owner know of the decision as soon as possible.

4. Accessioning Collections Items

The Curator is responsible for all paperwork and permanent records on accessioned objects. She/he may delegate this to another staff member, but should check to see that all the appropriate records including donor recognition are completed promptly and properly.

Gifts should be unconditional with clear title transferred to the Museum through the use of the Museum's gift form. The gift form should include a description of the donated objects and the signatures of the Curator or Assistant Curator and the donor(s). One copy is given to the donor; the original is kept by the Museum. An additional copy is made at the time of cataloging as a backup record. The gift form and any correspondence documenting the object are maintained as part of the permanent collections records. The donor is acknowledged by mail.

The following records are created, in the order given: entry in numbers register (used to keep track of all numbers as they are assigned to accessions; once a number is assigned, the object should be tagged or marked immediately with its unique number); worksheet (describing the object and cataloging it); source card; computer register entry (register entries are made from worksheet); catalog card (cards are printed from the computer register). All of these records become part of the permanent collections of the Museum and are maintained by the Collections Department staff. Accessions are reported to the Board in the department's monthly report.