



2025 Annual Conference & Exposition

OCTOBER 12th - 15th, 2025



Preserving Paradise

DAYTONA BEACH | FLORIDA



Growing Pains: Decluttering the Past to Preserve our Future

Rethinking your Collections Plan
to Manage Overcrowded Storage



Championing and Empowering Florida Museums

Meet the Speaker



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Icebreaker: Introduce yourself!

- Name, position/title, museum

- Briefly describe the type of collection you work with and its state of overcrowdedness

- Do you have a Collections Plan and/or Collections Management Policy?

- Tell us your most interesting proposed donation or collections story!



Overcrowded Collections

Overcrowded museum collections are a pressing issue that threaten the integrity and accessibility of our missions. Understanding the definitions, trends, impacts, and solutions is essential for fostering sustainable collecting practices.



How did we get here?



- Early collecting habits
- Limited space
- Increased donations
- Lack of deaccessioning
- Old loans & FIC
- Curatorial ambitions
- Demanding exhibit schedules
- Staff/leadership turnover

Collecting Habit Trends

Past:

- Legacy collections
- Quantity over quality
- Growth focused

Present:

- Representation
- Access
- Ethics & sustainability
- Community collaboration
- Deaccessioning

Future:

- How will collections be utilized?
- How to prevent more overcrowded storage?
- Baby Boomer legacy gifts are coming!
- What happens when Millennials and Gen Z enter donor landscape?

Do any of these trends relate to your collection?



Impact on Collection & Staff

- Preservation risks
- Loss of items
- Fewer exhibits
- Growth recession
- Increased stress
- Reduced efficiency
- Safety hazards
- Decreased sustainability & access



Is there a real solution?

Ideal Scenario:

- Renovate/reorganize collection spaces
- Reduce objects in storage
- Rent temporary storage space

Reality:

- Budget restraints
- Dynamic exhibit schedules
- Lack of resources
- Short on time!





It's all about the process!

Policy Planning

Effective policy planning addresses the current state of the collection while creating sustainable strategies for future acquisitions. By developing robust policies, museums can take the first step towards managing their collections proactively and responsibly, ensuring long-term viability.

Policy Planning 101

- Serves as a framework for museums to establish clear guidelines
- Encompass long-term strategies
- First step in preventing overcrowding and resource misallocation

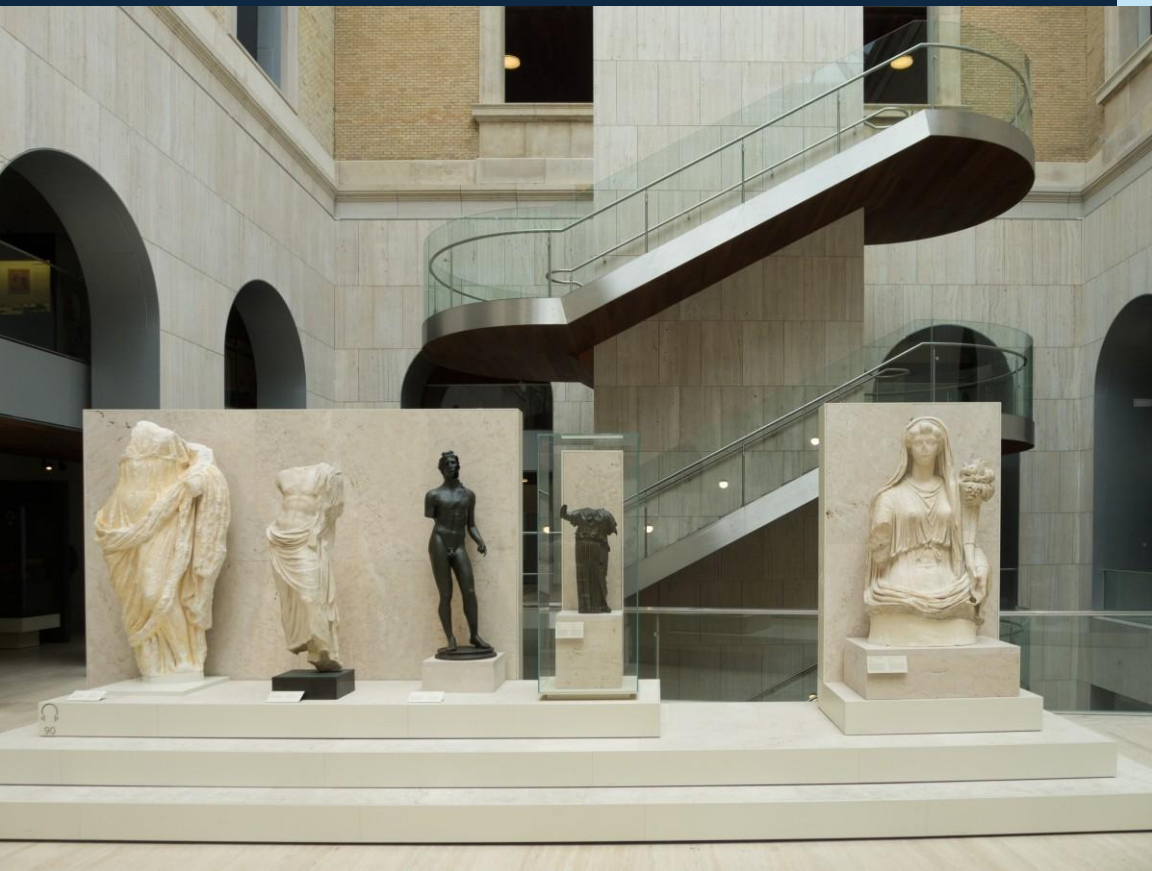


Spark the right conversation!

As stakeholder evolve, so should your policies!

Sustainability Tip: Engage Stakeholders in Policy Development

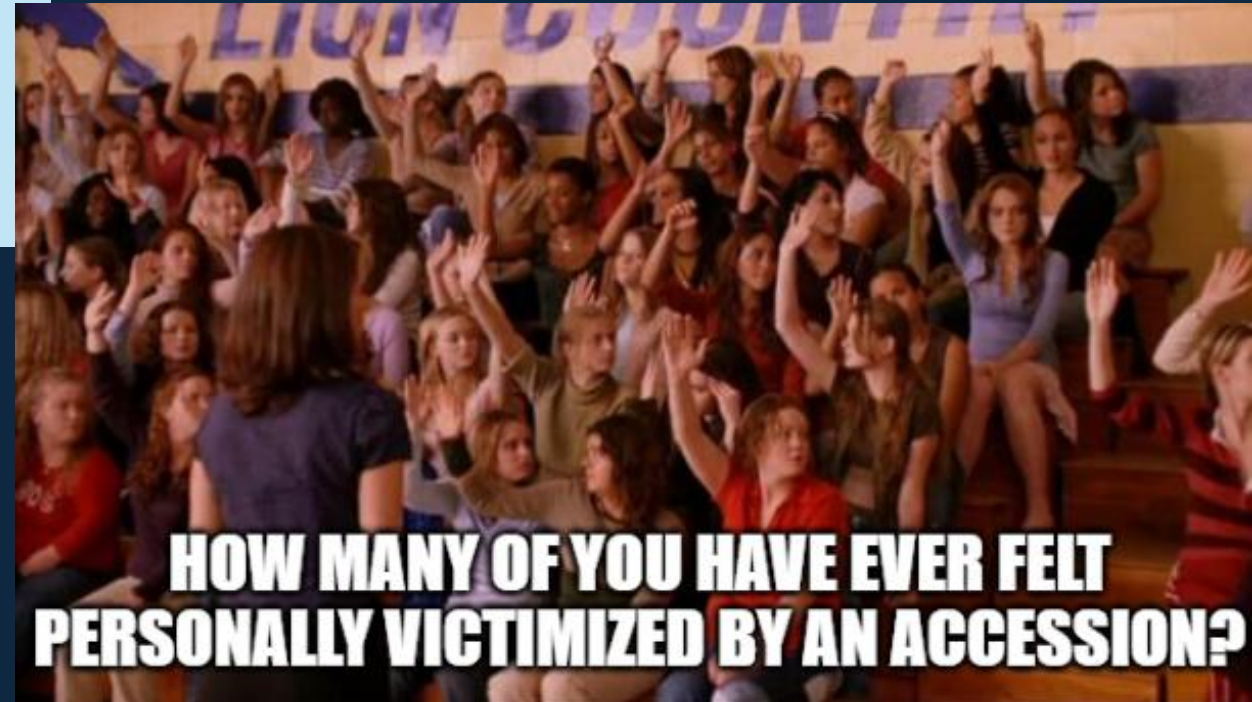
- Critical in crafting effective policies
- Enhances policy relevance
- Promotes shared ownership of museum practices



Sustainability Tip: Rethinking Existing Policies

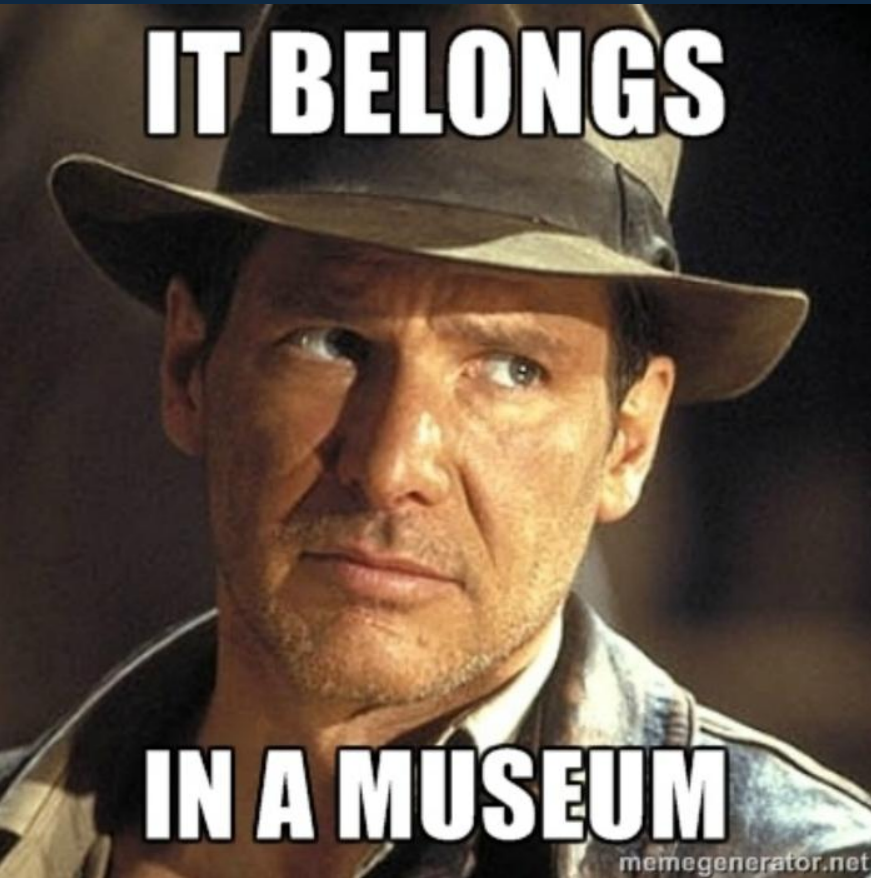
This includes reviewing donation criteria, setting limits on new acquisitions, and ensuring that collecting strategies aligns with community needs and sustainability goals.

Key takeaway: this process preps you for fundraising!



**HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE EVER FELT
PERSONALLY VICTIMIZED BY AN ACCESSION?**

Don't be afraid to say "No!"



But does it??

Implementing Sustainable Collecting Strategies

To address acquisitions, consider:

- Resource allocations (\$\$)
- Physical space
- Mission, vision, values
- Ethics and best practices
- Quality over quantity
- Provenance
- Environmental impact
- Educational benefits
- Community engagement



Museum Collections Plan

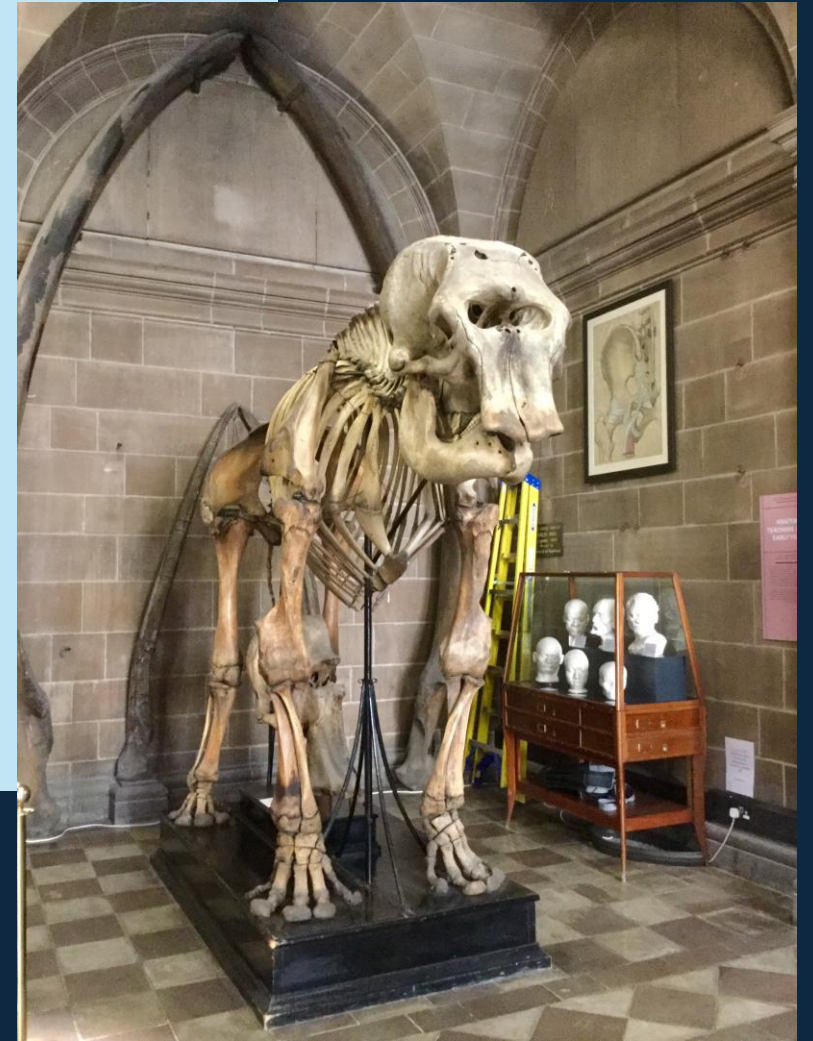
A well-structured collections plan guides museums in making informed decisions about acquisitions, ensuring they align with the institution's mission. A sustainable approach not only addresses storage challenges but encourages mindful collecting habits.

Collections Plan vs Collection Management Policy

The Collections Plan (CP) is a strategic, action-based document that outlines the vision and future direction of a museum's collections. Plans are time-limited and identify specific goals.

A Collections Management Policy (CMP) is a practical guide that governs the daily operations and management practices in accordance with professional standards.

CPs establish intellectual control of the collection!



CPs at a glance:

Like a strategic plan but for Collections!

Key Players:

- Curators
- Registrars
- Collection Managers & Staff
- Directors/Leadership
- Educators
- Conservators
- Researchers
- Legal Advisors
- Fundraisers/Dev. Team

Content:

- Includes the current state of collections, acquisition strategies, deaccessioning practices, and preservation plans.
- Addresses community engagement, public access, and educational initiatives.
- May outline specific projects or initiatives planned for the future.

Timeframe: Typically looks at a longer-term horizon (3-5 years or more) for the museum's collecting strategies and goals.

Audience: Primarily intended for museum staff, board members, and stakeholders involved in strategic planning.

Key Components:

1. Intro
2. Collection Overview
3. Goals & Objectives
4. Acquisition Strategy
5. Deaccessioning Policy
6. Care & Preservation
7. Documentation/Recordkeeping
8. Access & Use
9. Evaluation & Review
10. Implementation Timeline
11. Appendices

Do your research!

- Check out AAM's resource guides & books
- Google search has several examples



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Hands-on Activity

Look under your chair!

1. Under your chair is an activity kit with prompt.
2. Join the policy planning committee for your museum and complete the beginning stages of your Collections Plan, then address your proposed acquisitions.
3. Present your Collections Plan and acquisition decisions to the group.



1. The Everglow Museum of Halloween Traditions

Backstory:

Established in the suburbs of Orlando in 2001, the Everglow Museum celebrates Halloween through the lens of Florida's warm climate and local traditions. The museum highlights everything from historical customs to contemporary events like theme park celebrations and haunted house attractions, while also drawing connections to Hispanic and Caribbean influences that shape Halloween in the region.

Mission Statement: To explore and celebrate the diverse traditions, cultural influences, and regional adaptations of Halloween, with a special focus on Florida and the broader Southeastern United States.

Items for Debate: A collection of 4 photo albums and 5 personal journals documenting 15 years of a family's annual Halloween celebration in the Orlando suburbs from 1985 to 2000.

Background & Provenance:

A family moved from Puerto Rico to a suburb of Orlando, Florida in 1984. John, Marie, and their three children embraced the local Halloween culture, blending it with traditions from their heritage. Marie felt this would benefit the museum as it showcases local diversity and Caribbean influences.



2. The Space Coast Exploration Center

Backstory:

Founded in 1989 near Cape Canaveral, this museum chronicles Florida's role in space exploration. From the early days of the space race to the modern age of commercial spaceflight, the museum houses artifacts from key moments in NASA's history.

Mission Statement: To preserve and promote Florida's unique role in space exploration, educating visitors about the past, present, and future of human spaceflight and fostering an interest in science and technology.



Proposed Acquisition: The original space suit props (costumes) which were worn in the Sci-Fi movie "2001: A Space Odyssey" by the character Dave Bowman played by Keir Dullea.

Background & Provenance: A friend of someone on the Board bought these suits through auction a couple years back and they've been stored in his garage ever since. This movie is one of the donor's favorites and thinks this will attract tourists to the museum.

3. The National Sandwich Hall of Fame

Backstory:

Located in a town famous for its annual sandwich festival, the National Sandwich Hall of Fame was established in 2010 to honor the culinary legacy of sandwiches. From the first sandwich created by the Earl of Sandwich to the modern panini, this museum is a delicious tribute to everyone's favorite handheld meal.

Mission Statement: To celebrate the history, artistry, and cultural significance of the sandwich in all its forms, from its humble beginnings to its status as a global culinary icon.

Item for Debate: A sculpture of a colossal hot dog made for a long-standing local diner as a promotion for their annual hot dog eating contest. An artifact from a renowned local diner in the town famous for its annual sandwich festival sounds interesting, it begs the age-old question: is a hot dog a sandwich?

Background & Provenance: Established in 1948, the diner hosted its first annual hot dog eating contest in 1982 to help raise funds for the volunteer fire department. The colossal hotdog was commissioned to help promote the contest to residents. It is constructed of resin, is approximately 60" L x 18" W and weighs 35 pounds.



4. The Florida Sandcastle Museum

Backstory: Opened in 2002 by a group of passionate sandcastle builders, this tiny museum on a Florida beach celebrates the art and fleeting beauty of sandcastles. It features exhibits on the history of sand sculpting, competitions, and even tools of the trade. The volunteer-run museum itself is located in a former lifeguard station on the beach and has approximately 100 square feet of exhibit space.

Mission Statement: To preserve the artistry and creativity of sandcastle building, sharing the history, techniques, and joy of this beloved activity.

Proposed Acquisition: A collection of 47 trophies and awards earned by a renowned sandcastle artist from the West Coast.

Background & Provenance: Prevalent throughout the 1970s and 80s, this artist won first place in several competitions and art shows for his hyper-realistic sand sculptures of celebrities. The collection was passed down through the artist's family and now resides with his grandson (the prospective donor). One of the trophies is from a Florida sand sculpting competition in 1985. The artist won first place for his sculpture of Jim Morrison, a Florida-born musician.



5. The Sandy Oaks Public Park & Outdoor Museum

Backstory: Established in 1982, Sandy Oaks Park is a small, donation-driven public park that doubles as an outdoor museum, featuring sculptures, interactive environmental exhibits, and educational signage about local ecology and history. It seeks to blend art, nature, and history to create a reflective space for visitors.

Mission Statement: To connect people with the natural environment through art, history, and education, fostering a deep appreciation for the beauty and significance of the land.

Item for Debate: A local artist who designs whimsical windchimes wants to donate her latest series “On the Wings of Fairies” for display.

Background & Provenance: The artist is known for creating works that interact with the natural elements as a representation of nature’s influence on the arts. This series features 8 fairy-inspired windchimes that represent a “Day” and “Night” version of the four elements. The Day versions include charms and crystals that refract sunlight, while the Night versions incorporate LED fairy lights so they can be seen in the dark.





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Questions?



THANK YOU!



Stephanie Shaw



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