GAINING CONTROL OF COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT

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WELCOME & OVERVIEW

COLL Module Instructors

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Welcome back!

GROUND RULES

▪ Responsible for your own learning
▪ Respect confidentiality of the room
▪ Honor other people when they are speaking by giving your attention
▪ Honor time limits
▪ Return from breaks & lunch on time
▪ Cell phones – be cool

Overview

Module RECAP

Month 1: July 29, 2019
Workshop | Stewardship of Collections: An Introduction

Month 2: August 26, 2019
Skills Lab | Collections Care: When to Call a Conservator

Month 3: September 2019
Mentor Site Visits & Work on Your Individual Projects

Month 4: October 28, 2019
Workshop | Getting (& Keeping) Control of Your Collections

TODAY’S Goals & Activities

Gaining physical & intellectual control of your collections (& keeping it!) with procedures and active management
▪ Review homework & projects
▪ Basic collections management documentation techniques
▪ Approaches to data management
▪ Determining ownership and dealing with unknown objects
▪ What deaccessioning is and why it is important
HOMEWORK REVIEW

REMEMBER YOUR ASSIGNMENT?
1) Play Monopoly game with your museum team (and any other relevant stakeholders)
2) Create a Significance Assessment for 2 important objects from your collection
3) Draft a Scope of Collections statement for your museum (or revisit existing scope statement)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION
- Tell us about playing Monopoly! Did your team experience any ‘A-ha’ moments?
- Please share with us one of your significance assessments.
- Successes & challenges in drafting a collections scope?

COLL STANDARDS: What We’re Zooming In On Today
COLL Standard 2
The institution legally, ethically, & effectively manages, documents, cares for, & uses the collections.

g. Can staff locate artifact and archives items in the collections?
   
   Basic:
   - The majority of the time, staff or volunteers can physically locate randomly chosen artifacts and archival items.
   
   Good:
   - The institution records the movement and location of artifacts and archives materials.
   - The institution immediately investigates missing artifacts and archives items.
   
   Better:
   - The institution has written inventory procedures and conducts an inventory every three to five years.

COLL Standard 2
The institution legally, ethically, & effectively manages, documents, cares for, & uses the collections.

h. Is there a filing system for collections records?
   
   Basic:
   - The institution maintains a file containing source information for each acquisition.
   - Collection staff and volunteers systematically place forms and other documentation in the acquisition files.
   - Acquisition files are maintained permanently.
   
   Good:
   - There are paper or electronic back-up copies of collections records.
   
   Better:
   - Back-up copies of collections records are updated regularly and are stored securely offsite.
   - There are written procedures for organizing and preserving collections records.

COLL Standard 2
The institution legally, ethically, & effectively manages, documents, cares for, & uses the collections.

i. Are there written procedures for acquiring, borrowing, and lending collection items?
   
   Basic:
   - The institution uses a written donor form for artifacts and archival items accepted into its collections.
   - The institution uses a written loan agreement for each incoming and outgoing loan transaction that involves collection items.
   - All loans are for a specified time period.
   
   Good:
   - There are written procedures for acquiring, borrowing, and lending artifacts and archival items included in the collections policy.
   
   Better:
   - The institution reviews and updates its procedures on a regular basis.
   - The institution requires condition reports for all incoming / outgoing loans.
**COLL Standard 2**
The institution legally, ethically, & effectively manages, documents, cares for, & uses the collections.

**Are there written procedures for deaccession and disposal of collection items?**

**Basic:**
- The institution keeps records relating to the deaccession and disposal of artifacts and archival collection items.

**Good:**
- The institution has written procedures for deaccessioning and disposing of artifacts and archival items included in the collections policy.

**Better:**
- Procedures include a formal review process and transactions are documented in writing.

**COLL Standard 2**
The institution legally, ethically, & effectively manages, documents, cares for, & uses the collections.

**Is there a formal recorded system for numbering & describing artifacts & archival collections?**

**Basic:**
- Has a system for numbering and describing artifact and archival collections.
  - Artifact and archives collections items are physically numbered using appropriate techniques.

**Good:**
- There are written procedures for accessioning and cataloging collections.
  - The institution strives to record all known information about each item.
  - There is a numbering or labelling system for identifying items in other collections (e.g., hands-on-collection).

**Better:**
- Reviews and updates accessioning and cataloging procedures regularly.
  - Systematically records all known information for each item.

**TAKING CONTROL OF COLLECTIONS:**
Basic Documentation Techniques
“Collections management is an integrated approach to developing, caring for, documenting, and using collections.”

- Collections Trust, UK
  https://collectionstrust.org.uk/collections-management/

Object Records

Key items to include in your object records:

- **Accession Record** (acquisition paperwork, including deeds of gift, receipts, appraisals, etc.)
- **Basic Catalog Information** (dimensions, description, etc.)
- **More Detailed Catalog Information**
  - Provenance/history/significance assessment
  - Donor/vendor/maker correspondence or instructions
  - Any other legal paperwork
  - Photographs of the object
  - Rights and reproductions information
- **Condition Information**
  - Initial report & documentation of changes over time

Common Forms for Object Records

1. Accession form
2. Deed of gift
3. Incoming object receipt
4. Reproductions & use
5. Condition report
6. Certificate of insurance
7. Loan agreement
8. Incident report
9. Deaccession form

To see examples of various forms and policies (free), visit:
https://www.collectionstewardship.org/form-swap
Accession Record

Accession records document the legal transaction that establishes ownership (title) and custody of museum objects. Must contain:

- Signed donation form (deed of gift), or deed of sale
- Permits, licenses, etc.
- All correspondence
- Temporary receipt, or written proof of receipt of the object by the museum
- Written acceptance of the gift by the proper museum authority

Accessioning

- How is this similar to or different from what you use or need?
- Restrictions section thoughts?
- Accessioning vs. Cataloging


Deed of Gift

- Transfers legal ownership, rights, and custody of an object
- Provides proof of ownership
- In some cases, allows donors to pursue a tax deduction with the IRS
- Legal document – may be wise to consult with a lawyer regarding this form
Incoming Object Receipt

Temporary custody form should record:

- Name and contact information of owner.
- Date the object was left and the expected duration of the object’s time at the institution.

WHY MIGHT THIS INFORMATION BE CRITICAL?

Provenance – What’s the Story?

Acquisition & Accession Process is Your Opportunity to Document

1. Who first owned this item?
2. When and where did he/she live?
3. About when was the object made or bought?
4. Where was it made?
5. Who made it?
6. Was the object used for a particular purpose?
7. What was occupation of the owner? That of owner’s parents or spouse?
8. How did you get this object?
9. Is this object part of a set? If so, describe it.
10. Do you have any photographs of the object being used?
11. Do you have any other documents about the object? (letters, plans, receipts, instructions)
12. Do you have any other information that might be useful for us to know?
Creating a Numbering System

- Accession numbers establish a unique identifier for each object in collection.
- This number is attached to the object and becomes the link between the object and the information about the object.
- Different types of collections can be uniquely identified through the organization’s numbering system.
- Common trinomial system indicates the year an object was accessioned, the grouping that the object came in, and the item number within the accession group.

Trinomial System Example

Example: [UMFA][1990].[001].[001]

- [Organization][Year of accession][First group of objects from a single source accessioned that year][First item of the group]
- You can add additional numbers or letters to indicate other important aspects of the object

HOW DO YOU NUMBER YOUR OBJECTS?

Differentiate Collection Types

Numbering systems can be used to differentiate between types of collections:

- **UMFAL2019.001.001**
  The ‘L’ in the number indicates that this is an incoming loan, and not an object from our permanent collection.

- **UMFAED1995.008.005**
  The ‘ED’ in the number indicates that this is part of the education collection.

- **UMFAX.009**
  What does the ‘X’ mean?
Inconsistent Numbering Systems

Museums may have been collecting over a period of many years. What happens when you have inconsistent numbering systems?

- Changes in recording/numbering systems
- What do you do when you have many systems?
  - Record all numbers on the object, continue to use original numbers.
  - Chronicle the different systems. Create a finding aid if needed, explanation and timeline.
  - If collections are large – not possible to renumber all the objects.

Marking Objects with their Number

- Object number is the link between your objects and your records so must be attached directly to the object.
- Many approaches to numbering. Most objects can have number applied directly to surface (backed up with a connected tag for easy access)
- General Principles – non-harmful, reversible, unobtrusive

HANDOUT | Labelling Museum Objects
2. Oklahoma Museums Association Technical Bulletins #42 and #43

Condition Reporting

- Record state of an object prior to and/or after accessioning, exhibition, or loans.
- Help staff determine stability of an object.
- Show condition of an object over time to determine the rate of deterioration.
- Set priorities for conservation and treatment.
- Inform object handlers of seen and unseen problems.

UMNH Anthropology Catalog Numbers:
- OMAR Serial Numbering: 1-200,000+ (catalog and accession number)
- Archaeology Field System: 42WN420FS18.2
- Donation system: AR, ET, ART, H
- ARGUS ID number: UMNH.AR.5000
- CM#: 19876
Documenting Change over Time

Stuff happens – exhibitions, incidents, and loans ....oh my!

What information is relevant to keep in your object record?
**Documentation Characteristics**

**BAD**
- Loss of context caused by incomplete documentation
- Reliance on institutional memory instead of written documentation
- Inconsistency within records
- Bad handwriting

**GOOD**
- Records are dated
- Complete in all aspects
- Easily understood, uses standard terminology, is clear and precise
- Includes good descriptions and photographs
- Includes history of the records, when new information is added and by whom
- Legible handwriting

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**General Facilities Report**

- Record of building’s physical specifications, collection storage & exhibition areas, and staff practices.
- Exchange of info needed by lenders and insurers.
- Architects and designers use as checklist for construction and engineering.
- Useful self-assessment tool for the building and its protection systems.

**WILL TALK MORE IN HSL MODULE**

- American Alliance of Museums General Facilities Report
  - [https://ww2.aam-us.org/ProductCatalog/Product?ID=891](https://ww2.aam-us.org/ProductCatalog/Product?ID=891)

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**MORNING BREAK – 15 minutes**
HANDS-ON ACTIVITY #1
ACCESSIONING OBJECTS
1) Break into 5 groups and consider your group of objects (5 minutes).
2) Review sample museum mission and scope of collections and decide whether or not to accept these objects into your collection (10 minutes).
3) Complete attached ACCESSION form, CATALOG sheet, and incoming CONDITION report for each object selected for acquisition (20 minutes).
4) Reconvene larger group and discuss what came up (20 minutes).

ACTIVITY #1 – Discussion Questions
ACCESSIONING OBJECTS
1) What reasons did your group have for accepting or rejecting these objects?
   ✓ Resources needed to keep it
   ✓ Hazards – nitrate film
   ✓ Size – fire engine
   ✓ Material – fur and feathers
   ✓ Condition – too poor to display (could still be used for research), mold
   ✓ Ownership at issue – only some of the kids want to give mom’s hat
   ✓ Duplication
   ✓ Collections policy
   ✓ Using a collections committee
   ✓ Ethics
   ✓ Public trust (tax-deductible issues)
2) What challenges did your group have in making decisions?

LUNCH BREAK – 60 minutes
GROUND RULES

- Responsible for your own learning
- Respect confidentiality of the room
- Honor other people when they are speaking by giving your attention
- Honor time limits
- Return from breaks & lunch on time
- Cell phones – be cool

MAINTAINING CONTROL OF COLLECTIONS: Approaches to Data Management

Collections Management Systems (CMS)

Documenting & Using Your Collection

- Computer database software that helps track and store all information related to collection objects
- Wide range of commercial products available in a variety of price points (including free!)

http://www.musarch.com/
Why Use a CMS (Database)?

- Provides back-up to hard copy files
- Maximizes efficiency when searching for information about your objects
- Increases collections’ accessibility

https://labs.cooperhewitt.org/

Range of Choices

- KE-EMu and Vernon, PastPerfect, TMS and Embark, Re:Discovery, Argus, and so many more...
- One size does not fit all – it’s possible to have too much database

How Do I Choose a CMS?

The right collections management system for you is the one you will actually use!

- HANDOUT | AASLH, Choosing a Collections Management System, Technical Leaflet #286, 2019 (plus appendix)

WHAT’S YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH DATABASES?
What is Metadata?

Information that goes into your database

- Unique item identifier (accession number)
- Object name, maker, date of object, date of accession, materials/medium, region of origin, dimensions, number of pieces, condition
- Acquisition (or loan) information
- Description
- Conservation information
- Location (in your museum)
- Credit line, copyright info
- Exhibition history

Data Standards

- Databases are most useful when information is entered in a consistent manner using standardized terminologies and measurement systems.
- Decide ahead of time what your standards will be.
- Some CMS software programs are preset with specific data standards and lexicons.
- Parks Canada has a great free lexicon for museums: https://www.nomenclature.info/apropos-about.app?lang=en

- Are you going to say ‘Greek’ or ‘Greece’ for the Origin of the Object?
- Will you use inches or centimeters?
- Do you enter dimensions L X W X H?
Database in Action

Let’s take a look at MusArch

http://musarch.com/

AFTERNOON BREAK – 15 minutes

REINING IN COLLECTIONS
Emergency Preparedness Plan

- Risk Management & mitigation
- Continuity of operations team & timeline & communications
- Re-establish critical systems and/or relocation plans
- Collections & documentation preservation and/or recovery

REMEMBER HANDOUTS FROM MGMT MONTH 4
- Utah Division of State History Emergency Response Booklet
- Template for Pocket Response Plan (PReP)
- Utah Division of Risk Management Self-Inspection Survey
- Template for D-Plan (Online Disaster-Planning Tool for Cultural and Civic Institutions) at https://www.dplan.org/

Risk Management

Identifying Potential Hazards & Mitigation Planning

“The application of available resources in a way that minimizes overall risk.”

- Risk assessment to collections
- Risk management is the “proper planning” needed to ensure that accidents “don’t happen.”
- When risks are identified, procedures are put into place to minimize the risks.
- Decision to transfer this risk to someone else through INSURANCE.

Why Do I Need Insurance?

- Insurance is financial protection, insulating the museum against catastrophic loss
- Not to replace the irreplaceable, but to help mitigate the damage
- Collections are your most VALUABLE ASSET
- Cost of Insurance: insurance will have a limit:
  - Loss limit: blanket amount allocated as needed
  - Scheduled: based on a list submitted periodically to insurer
Insurance Policies: What Do I Insure?

- What property do you have, and what will be insured:
  - Permanent collections
  - Loan collections on-site
  - Exhibition objects (may be in transit)

- Valuation:
  - "Fair market value" at time of collection or at time of loss or damage
  - Value assigned when policy underwritten

- Lost in Inventory: unexplained or mysterious disappearance.

What Do I Have? and Where Is It?

Primary responsibility of a museum is the preservation and care of objects in the museum’s collection.

- **Accountability** for object and its care
  - Preventative conservation environments
  - Handling and care of objects
  - Maintaining records (title, condition, etc.)
  - Locating objects when required

- **Inventory**
  - Know where objects are located
  - Ensure records are accurate
  - Update or assess condition of objects
  - Annual is ideal, but more important to establish procedure for "regular" inventory

Inventory Form Can Be This Simple

**WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH INVENTORIES?**
Types of Inventory

- **Wall-to-wall**
  complete inventory of the entire museum collection

- **Section-by-section**
  limited by area or type of collection inventoried

- **Spot**
  checks state of records, locates a small percentage of the collection

- **Random or Special**
  may be required by a legal action, or insurance purposes, loans, exhibit objects, curated collections

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For How Much Do I Insure?

**Valuation: “an estimation of something’s worth...”**

- **Purpose**
  ✓ Determine a loss in the case of damage or theft
  ✓ Create or update an inventory
  ✓ Set a value on an outgoing loan
  ✓ Confirm a purchase price of a new acquisition
  ✓ Document a proposed deaccession or support grant request

- Valuations can be used in legal matters

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Insurance for Loans

- **Borrowers:** cover insurance for objects
- **Lender:** determine value, set requirements
- **What to look for:**
  ✓ Limits of coverage
  ✓ Exclusions
  ✓ Deductibles
- **Coverage:** should be “all risk” and “wall to wall”

**HANDOUT | M&GNSW Loans Fact Sheet & Form Template**
Found in Collections (FIC)

“Found-in-collection objects are undocumented objects that remain after all attempts to reconcile them to existing records of permanent collection and loan objects fail.”

- Objects similar to collections, no numbers, no information, no connecting documentation
- So common that it has an acronym!

The New Museum Registration Methods, Buck & Gilmore, 1998, p. 115

FIC = Mystery Objects

Where do they come from?
- Staff personal property left behind
- Exhibit props
- Drop offs
- Pending gifts not completely documented
- Education items
- Field collections

DO YOU HAVE AN FIC PROBLEM?

Why Does This Matter?

It is important for museums to demonstrate ownership of collections items because:
- Lack of ownership (or confusion about ownership) can lead to damaging PR, issues with heirs who arrive to claim an artifact (was it really on loan?), and erosion of public trust.
- Museums are now held to a higher standard of accountability for the organization and documentation of their collections.
- COST: time and resources caring for objects for which you do not have clear title.
What Do I Do With This?

1) Get Started! Do an inventory to identify all FIC or undocumented objects.
2) Create a tracking number or regular catalog number – starts the clock on claiming title.
3) Note any marks, collector numbers or other characteristics that can help differentiate or make the object unique.
4) Talk to other staff and record information about the object.
5) Search all records for a possible identification.

Results of Research

You have a match!
- Label it
- Give it location
- Pat yourself on the back

No records or identifying info!
- Significance assessment
- Accession the object
  - Catalog number
  - Location
  - Start claim of ownership
- Dispose of the object
  - Need clear title to deaccession
  - Create a file, put in information, then dispose of the object

Be methodical, cautious, and unrushed with disposal.
Why do you think this might be?

Claiming Your FIC

- State laws that would apply to your collections
  - Museum specific legislation for “old loans”
  - Abandoned property laws
  - Utah Statute of Limitations
  - Utah Preserve Our Heritage Act
- Collections Management Policy
  - Should have a clause that identifies how the museum will handle FIC, drop-offs, old loans
  - Procedure to follow to establish title
Utah Abandoned Property Law

FOR MUSEUMS

Allows museums to begin a process of claiming title and ownership to:

- objects left unclaimed
- clean up "old loans"
- FIC if required

HANDOUT | ARCS Resources & Utah Code for Abandoned Property

Deaccessioning

Process by which an object is permanently removed from a museum’s collection.

May happen if object:

- No longer fits within museum’s mission or scope of collection
- Has deteriorated such that museum can no longer care for it
- Will be destroyed during research

Object must be accessioned with clear title to be deaccessioned

Deaccessioning Procedure

1) Identify acceptable conditions for deaccessioning object
2) Look for an appropriate home if possible (if not, determine disposal method)
3) Create a written report
4) Present to the deaccessioning committee for decision
5) Confirm deaccession in records
   - When it was deaccessioned
   - Who authorized deaccession
   - Disposal details
   - Was it a complete destruction?
**Disposal After Deaccessioning**

What happens to the object after it is deaccessioned?

- Transfer to Education Collections within museum
- Transfer to another non-profit to keep property in the public domain (best if it’s another museum or educational institution)
- Sale
- Destruction

**Deaccessioning & Disposal Ethics**

- Under what circumstances is this okay?
- What about “the public trust”?
- How does this impact power of governing authority to make decisions about institution’s financial assets?
- What are appropriate uses for the proceeds of sale?

American Alliance of Museums

Questions & Answers about Selling Objects from the Collection

**HANDS-ON ACTIVITY #2**

**DEACCESSIONING OBJECTS**

1. Reconvene your morning groups and consider your same group of objects & documentation (5 min).
2. Review Deaccession & Disposal procedure and detailed guidelines (5 minutes).
3. Complete DEACCESSION report template (15 minutes).
4. Reconvene larger group and let’s discuss what came up (20 min).
ACTIVITY #2 – Discussion Questions

DEACCESSIONING OBJECTS

1) What reasons did you have for deaccessioning these objects?
2) What challenges did your group have in making decisions?

The best defense against deaccessioning is careful accessioning.

AFTERNOON BREAK – 15 minutes

WRAPPING IT UP!
Quick Recap | TODAY

- Collections management procedures help you establish control over your collection.
- Object records are essential for collections care.
- Techniques and systems available at all levels and price points to organize your collection information.
- Establishing legal ownership of your objects is critical and there are procedures to help when you aren’t sure if an object is yours.
- Deaccessioning is an important tool to create a strong collection.

Quick Recap | COLL Module

This Module Covered:

- Building a Meaningful Collection
  - Scope of Collections
  - Significance Assessment
  - Emphasis on Policies
- Collections Care
  - Preventive Conservation
- Managing Collection
  - Documentation of all kinds
  - Emphasis on procedures & proactive management

COLL Recommended Resources

- American Alliance for Museums, General Facility Report. [https://www2.aam-us.org/ProductCatalog/Product?ID=831](https://www2.aam-us.org/ProductCatalog/Product?ID=831)
- AAGH and Parks Canada, Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging. [https://www.nomenclature.info/index.app](https://www.nomenclature.info/index.app)
- Association for Registrars and Collections Specialist (ARCS) [http://www.arcsinfo.org/](http://www.arcsinfo.org/)
HSL Module Forecast

HISTORIC STRUCTURES & LANDSCAPES Module Covers:

- Policies
- Management
- Preservation
- Research & documentation
- Public access
- Public safety
- Advocacy

COLL & HSL Self-Assessments

- Self-assessment tool in your Google spreadsheet
  - Separate tab for each of the six modules
  - A column for filling out your status pre- and post-module
  - Space at bottom of each tab to indicate what projects undertaken for each module and date completed
- Individual links – you have your own spreadsheet
  - Jennifer has sent your link to you and your mentor
  - Ask for help if needed please

DUE DATE: HSL pre-module completed by November 4
DUE DATE: COLL post-module completed by Nov 17

HINT: Filling out your self-assessment is cool!
HSL Module Checklist

- COLL post-module assessment done by 11/17
- HSL pre-module assessment done by 11/4
- HSL project identified and recorded in assessment spreadsheet by 12/16
- Month 3 January Mentor Site Visit (date & time) scheduled by 12/16

Getting Your StEPs Certificates

- Remember your institutional commitment
- Apply for Bronze but shoot for beyond
- Applications in your StEPs Workbook (at end of each module section)
  - Fill it out using your post-module self-assessment
  - Send to AASLH
  - If you are unsure of your organization’s institutional member number, Jennifer can help connect you to AASLH
- When you get the certificate, take a picture and send it to us!

Project Funding

Congratulations on these upcoming projects!

- **Alf Engen Museum** | Development of quantitative and qualitative audience and exhibit assessment tool
- **Cache DUP Museum** | New signage and navigational aids
- **Fort Douglas Military Museum** | Data analysis (geographic & demographic) on visitation statistics & refined exit survey
- **Hyrum City Museum** | Security camera upgrade and new directional signage
- **Uintah County Heritage Museum** | Development of a marketing plan for the museum
COLL | Evaluation of the Module

Who doesn’t love a survey!

Wrap-Up

- STEPs-UT is a partnership between the Utah Division of Arts & Museums, Utah Humanities, and Utah Division of State History, and is supported by funding from the Utah Department of Heritage & Arts, the State of Utah, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.
- Thanks to AASLH, AAM, Indiana Local History Services for resources.
- Questions? Anything else? Nametags to the basket please.
- Mentor & Mentee Break-out Groups until 5pm.

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