

Welcome!

Museum Skills Lab
Collections Management Policy

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While we are waiting for everyone to join, please reply to the following question in the chat:

What's motivating you or your museum to think about Collections Management Policies?

Museum Skills Lab

— Collections Management Policy —

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Introductions

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Overview

- Collections Stewardship
- Why Have a CMP?
- What is a CMP?
- How to Write a CMP
- Process
- Takeaways
- Continue the Conversation

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Collections Stewardship

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Thinking big picture

Museums are expected to:

- plan strategically and act ethically with respect to collections stewardship
- legally, ethically, and responsibly acquire, manage and dispose of collection items as well as know what collections are in their custody, where they came from, why they have them, and their current condition and location
- provide regular and reasonable access to, and use of, the collections in their custody

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Thinking big picture (more simply put)

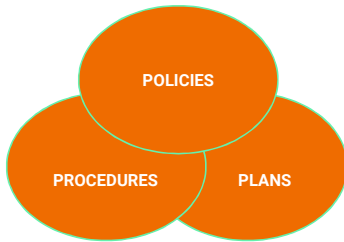
- Know what stuff you have
- Know what stuff you need
- Know where it is
- Take good care of it
- Make sure someone gets some good out of it
- Especially people you care about
- And your neighbors



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Policies, plans, procedures



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Policies, plans, procedures

POLICIES

- **Standards**
- Framework for decision-making
- Delegate decision-making
- Define responsibility
- Not time-limited
- Approved by governing authority

PLANS

- **Vision**
- Compare existing collection to vision
- Map out specific goals and action steps
- Time-limited
- Approved by governing authority

PROCEDURES

- **Instructions**
- Operational guides, manuals, handbooks
- Developed at staff level

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Policies, plans, and procedures should be consistent with one another

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What is a CMP?

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CMP defined by AAM

"A collections management policy addresses various aspects of the museum's collections stewardship **responsibilities**.

This policy defines the **scope** of a museum's collection and how the museum **cares for** its collections and makes them **available** to the public.

A collections management policy also explains the **roles** of the parties responsible for managing and caring for the museum's collections."



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CMP defined (more simply put)

A bunch of related policies that address issues and problems **specific** to the collection



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CMPs define areas of responsibility and delegate decision-making authority

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Why Have a CMP?

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Reasons for creating a CMP

- Demonstrate a commitment to national standards
- Enable the governing authority to meet its legal and ethical obligations
- Minimize risk to the collections
- Help staff make sound decisions
- Ensure consistent operation and growth
- AAM accreditation

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Enacting and enforcing a good CMP helps the museum achieve its mission

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How to Write a CMP

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AAM Reference Guide: Developing a CMP



- There is no one perfect template
- Also consider MRM and MAP templates



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Each museum's CMP should be influenced by its unique history, community, collections, and governance

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AAM Reference Guide: Required elements of a CMP

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Mission, Vision and History | 10. Loans |
| 2. Statement of Authority | 11. Conservation/Care |
| 3. Legal and Ethical Issues | 12. Access |
| 4. Scope of Collections | 13. Insurance and Risk Management |
| 5. Categories of Collections | 14. Appraisals |
| 6. Documentation and Records | 15. Intellectual Property |
| 7. Acquisitions and Accessioning | 16. Review/Revision |
| 8. Objects in Custody | 17. Glossary |
| 9. Deaccessioning/Disposal | |

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Mission, Vision and History

- Begin the policy with your mission
- Clarify the role of the mission in collections stewardship
- Include other introductory material: vision and a brief history of the museum and its collections



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Statement of Authority

- Summarizes roles and responsibilities
- Who is responsible for legal and fiduciary matters?



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Legal and Ethical Issues

- Address laws regarding the ownership and protection of cultural and natural resources
- State compliance with local, state, and federal laws
- Section could include or reference Institutional Code of Ethics



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What if...

The Collections Manager at the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology is contacted by a federally recognized tribe. They ask for the return of a funerary object attributed to their tribe in the museum's collection. Who has the authority to make a decision about the repatriation of this object?



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Please take 5 minutes to read pages 5-12 of the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology CMP

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Scope of Collection

- Broad description of the collections
- Explanation of how and what the museum collects
- Brief history of the collections (*if not already covered*)
- Review of the collection's strengths and weaknesses
- Sets guidelines for growing and developing the collection, which can then be used in collections planning.
 - Check out UA&M resources for Collections Planning!

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Categories of Collections

Common collections categories include:

- permanent
- education
- archives
- library
- exhibition
- research
- collections held under a repository or management agreement



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Documentation and Records

- Without documentation, an object has no identity or provenance
- Include:
 - types of records created (e.g., accession, catalog, condition)
 - what information is contained in each record
 - the parties responsible for maintaining and documenting the records
 - back-up systems.
- Section may also include information on how inventories are conducted and how objects and records are reconciled

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What if...

The Education and Interpretation Department at the Maine Historical Society are including a dozen objects from the Teaching Collection in their upcoming program. During the program participants will be encouraged to touch and handle these objects. Is this OK?



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Please take 5 minutes to read pages 6-12 of the Maine Historical Society CMP

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Acquisitions and Accessioning

- Acquisition vs. Accessioning
- Make sure you can properly care for, store, and use the object
- Outline criteria and decision-making process
- Outline roles of relevant parties
- Address legal or ethical obligations or restrictions around acquisitions: appraisals, gifts, exchanges
- Repository agreements

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Objects in Custody

- Objects in custody = found in collections, abandoned, or unclaimed
- Address how to handle objects with unclear title
- Include your state's law: <https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title9/Chapter8/9-8-5805.html>



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What if....

On the way to work, the Registrar at the Utah Museum of Natural History finds a box of colorful minerals: fluorite, diopside and azurite in a box. The box has been left on the front steps of the museum and has a note that these objects are a gift to the museum. What should the Registrar do?



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What if....

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Please take 5 minutes to read pages 9-12 of the Utah Museum of Natural History CMP

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Deaccessioning/Disposal

- Opposite of accessioning: removal objects from the collection
- Typical part of collections stewardship, allows museums to refine collections
- Important to be transparent and accountable to the public
- Include
 - criteria for removing an object
 - methods of disposal
 - decision-making and approval process
 - statement about the acceptable uses of proceeds: limited to new acquisitions and/or direct care of collections

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What if....

The Director of the Danish American Museum has identified a permanent collection object that needs to be deaccessioned. He asks the Curator of Collections to arrange for the object to be shipped to Sotheby's and sold. Does your Director have this authority?



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What if....

The Director of the Danish American Museum has identified a permanent collection object that needs to be deaccessioned. He asks the Curator of Collections to arrange for the object to be shipped to Sotheby's and sold. Does your Director have this authority?

Please take 5 minutes to read pages 12-14 of the Danish American Museum CMP

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Loans

- Loans help museums share information
- This section includes:
 - Conditions covering the temporary transfer of collection objects
 - Information about loan approval and acceptance, loan fees, documentation, insurance, and monitoring
 - Physical requirements and security protocols
 - Criteria for deciding whether to require a courier
- Separate policies/sections for outgoing and incoming loans

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What if....

A researcher affiliated with an educational institution has submitted a loan request to borrow a California Indian basket. The loan request is for research only. The researcher would like to borrow the basket in three months and has not provided a facilities report. You don't feel comfortable with this loan. How can your CMP help you?



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What if....

A researcher affiliated with an educational institution has submitted a loan request to borrow a California Indian basket. The loan request is for research only. The researcher would like to borrow the basket in three months and has not provided a facilities report. You don't feel comfortable with this loan. How can your CMP help you?

Please take 5 minutes to read pages 17-20 of the Phoebe A. Hearst Anthropology Museum CMP

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Conservation/Care

- This section can include:
 - Storage
 - Temperature & relative humidity
 - Pest control
 - Conservation
 - Handling of objects
 - Disaster planning
 - Inventory
 - Long-range conservation plan



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What if....

The Danish American Museum's upcoming exhibition: "Tradition and Change: Weddings in Danish America," will feature several wedding photographs from the early 1900s. One of the central photos has a large tear. The Curator encourages the Collections Manager to repair the photograph. What should the Collections Manager do?



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What if....

The Danish American Museum's upcoming exhibition: "Tradition and Change: Weddings in Danish America," will feature several wedding photographs from the early 1900s. One of the central photos has a large tear. The Curator encourages the Collections Manager to repair the photograph herself. What should the Collections Manager do?

Please take 5 minutes to read pages 20-22 of the Danish American Museum CMP

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Access

- Museums must give the public reasonable access to collections and records
- Who has access to what and why?
- Assess staff capacity, physical facilities, preservation, and awareness of legal issues when shaping these policies.



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What if...

The Development department at the Maine Historical Society is proposing to use the Wadsworth-Longfellow House (Maine's first house museum!) for the annual gala. In past years, the gala has had up to 100 guests! What information in your CMP will the Development department need to know?



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What if...

The Development department at the Maine Historical Society is proposing to use the Wadsworth-Longfellow House (Maine's first house museum!) for the annual gala. In past years, the gala has had up to 100 guests! What information in your CMP will the Development department need to know?

Please take 5 minutes to read pages 13-16 of the Maine Historical Society CMP

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Don't forget to include

- Insurance and Risk Management
- Appraisals
 - Museum staff are discouraged from conducting an appraisal or authenticating an object for a member of the public
- Intellectual Property
- Review/Revision
 - Typically once every 3-5 years or when there is evidence of policy failure
- Glossary

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A CMP is a living document

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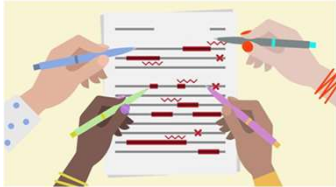
Process

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Process: Who writes a CMP

- Collections staff may take the lead
- Essential to engage and incorporate the perspectives of other relevant participants
- A successful CMP must be accepted and understood by everyone at the museum



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The process is just as important as the document

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Process: How to develop a CMP

- Assemble the team
- Review standards and resources
- Develop the policy
- Get feedback
- Get governance endorsement
- Develop procedures (and a plan!)
- Implement
- Review and revise periodically



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Takeaways

- Policies, plans, and procedures should be consistent with one another
- CMPs define areas of responsibility and delegate decision-making authority
- Enacting and enforcing a good CMP helps the museum achieve its mission
- Each museum's CMP should be influenced by its unique history, community, collections, and governance
- A CMP is a living document
- The process is just as important as the document

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Continue the Conversation

- Handouts + Resource Sheet
- UA&M staff are here for you! Please reach out.
 - emilyjohnson@utah.gov
- If you can, stick around for Q&A

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