

DOI Museum Property Directives

Title: Required Standards for Documenting Museum Property

Directive Number: 3

Originating Office: Office of Acquisition and Property Management, Department of the Interior (DOI)

Approved By: Debra E. Sonderman /s/ Debra E. Sonderman

Official Title: Director, Office of Acquisition and Property Management

Effective Date: September 21, 2012

Expiration Date: This Directive will remain in effect until superseded.

- 1.1 Purpose.** To identify the required standards pertaining to documenting museum property (museum collections) presented in Part 411 of the Departmental Manual (DM), Chapter 1.9 and detailed in the DOI Museum Property Directives.
- 1.2 Scope.** This policy applies to all bureaus and offices responsible for managing museum collections.
- 1.3 Definitions.** See Section 1.12 of this Directive.
- 1.4 Responsibilities.** The required standards described in Sections 1.5-1.11 of this Directive are the obligation of bureaus and offices responsible for managing museum collections as presented in 411 DM 1.6. Heads of Bureaus and Offices, the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs, and the bureau or office National/Chief Curator, as applicable, are responsible for ensuring these required standards are implemented in the bureau/office museum program. Curatorial staff, museum property management staff, Accountable Officers, Custodial Officers, and other designated authorities, as established in bureau/office policy, are responsible for implementing these required standards.
- 1.5 Standards to Document Museum Property.** The standards for documenting DOI museum collections are based on DOI policy, including 411 DM, and professional museum and archival standards. The DOI-required standards must be applied to museum collections in bureau/office and non-bureau facilities. Other directives provide procedural details for the required standards included in this Directive. Bureaus/offices may develop specific policy with regard to documenting museum collections. General requirements for bureaus/offices responsible for managing museum collections are to:
 - A. Document all museum collections in the Interior Collection Management System (ICMS) for the activities described in Sections 1.6-1.9 and 1.11 of this Directive using DOI's mandatory data standards. Supplement mandatory data with additional data, appropriate to the discipline type. If a non-bureau facility does not use ICMS to manage bureau/office museum collections, the information

management system used must contain data compatible with all DOI mandatory data so that bureaus/office can import the data into ICMS.

- B. Retain all museum records used to manage museum collections.
- C. Appraise museum records for inclusion in each bureau/office's records disposition schedule, and, as necessary, certify the museum records to the Archivist of the United States as needed for current business.
- D. Restrict access to sensitive data, especially specific locality and provenience information, to aid in protecting the resource and privacy.

1.6 Accessioning Standards. Accessioning is the formal, documented process to legally add an object or group of objects to a museum collection. A single accession transaction occurs when one or more objects are acquired in the same manner, from one source, and at one time.

- A. Acquisition of an object or group of objects must occur before being accessioned into museum collections. Approved methods of acquiring museum collections are:
 - (1) Donation. A change of ownership of property by gift or bequest. The property being donated must be owned by the donor. Title to the property must be transferred to the bureau/office. All eligible copyrights must be transferred to the bureau/office to the extent possible. Donation includes:
 - (a) Gift - a voluntary transfer of property without compensation.
 - (b) Bequest - the act of giving property through a will.
 - (2) Purchase. Objects that are specifically bought with appropriated funds for inclusion in the museum collection. All eligible copyrights must be transferred to the bureau/office to the extent possible.
 - (3) Transfer. A change of ownership of objects within a bureau/office. Transfers may also occur between DOI bureaus/offices or between a DOI bureau/office and another Federal agency if legally authorized.
 - (4) Field collection. Objects and/or specimens that are collected during planned and authorized surveys, excavations, or other projects primarily on Federal lands or in Federal waters by bureau/office staff or by non-bureau permittees, and all associated records created during the project. This may include objects collected without authorization.
 - (5) Exchange. Depending on bureau/office-specific authority, a change of ownership of objects and/or specimens that are outside the unit's Scope of

Collection Statement (SOCS) for other objects and/or specimens of equivalent value within a unit's SOCS. Bureau/office objects are deaccessioned from the unit's museum collection before the exchange. The acquired objects and/or specimens may be from another bureau/office unit, another DOI bureau/office, another Federal agency, a not-for-profit institution, or another organizational entity.

- B. The bureau/office designated authority must review and approve all accession actions to ensure:
- (1) The bureau/office intending to accession an object or group of objects has evidence of title (ownership), receipt for property, and/or custody document signed by all authorized parties.
 - (2) The proposed accession meets the requirements of the unit SOCS.
 - (3) Restrictions on the use of accessions are avoided to the greatest extent possible. If a designated authority approves an exception, it must be documented fully in writing.
 - (4) All copyrights are transferred to the extent possible.
 - (5) Mandatory data for each accession is recorded by completing the following documents using archival quality materials:
 - (a) Transfer of title (ownership), receipt for property, and/or custody document, as per bureau policy, signed by the authorized parties.
 - (b) Bound accession book.
 - (c) Accession form, accession receiving report, or equivalent.
 - (d) Accession folder, including the locations of any mandatory data that is not entered in the accession book.
- C. Record the following mandatory accession data:
- (1) Accession number.
 - (2) Source of accession (individual), or source of accession (institution) and responsible official.
 - (3) Complete address of source of accession.
 - (4) Telephone number of source of accession.

- (5) Date received.
- (6) Date of accession.
- (7) Type of accession.
- (8) Description.
- (9) Project name, as appropriate.
- (10) Item total by discipline type:
 - (a) Actual.
 - (b) Estimate.
 - (c) Bulk count.
- (11) Catalog status.
- (12) Catalog number(s) within the accession, as available.

1.7 Cataloging Standards. Cataloging provides a record of collection management, research, and discipline-specific information about an object based on information from accession records and interpretive and scientific research. General requirements are to:

- A. Catalog museum collections using the appropriate discipline type.
- B. Record the physical description of the object; its associations with people, resources, or events; interpretive and scientific research data; and collections management data such as current location and item count.
- C. Complete all data fields for which information is available.
- D. Assign a unique identifying catalog number to an object or group of objects, and label as appropriate to the discipline.
- E. Record the following mandatory catalog data for all museum collections:
 - (1) Accession number.
 - (2) Catalog number.
 - (3) Discipline type and classification.
 - (4) Object or scientific name.

- (5) Unit acronym and/or identifier.
 - (6) Controlled property status.
 - (7) Item count or quantity:
 - (a) Item count.
 - (b) Lot.
 - (c) Bulk.
 - (d) Linear feet (archives only).
 - (8) Current location.
 - (9) Description.
 - (10) Condition.
 - (11) Date cataloged.
 - (12) Cataloger.
- F. Record the following mandatory catalog data for site location and/or provenience of archeology objects:
- (1) State site number.
 - (2) Field site number.
 - (3) Site name and/or place name.
 - (4) Within-site provenience, including collection/excavation unit.
 - (5) UTM coordinates, latitude and longitude, or township/range/section.
 - (6) County.
 - (7) State.
 - (8) Country (if other than the United States).
- G. Record the following mandatory catalog data for biology, geology, and paleontology specimens:

- (1) Type specimen (if designated and appropriate to the discipline type).
- (2) Identifier(s).
- (3) Collecting locality:
 - (a) Collecting locality name and/or place name.
 - (b) UTM coordinates, latitude and longitude, or township/range/section.
 - (c) Collection unit.
 - (d) County.
 - (e) State.
 - (f) Country (if other than the United States).
 - (g) Formation (geology and paleontology only).
 - (h) Period/system (geology and paleontology only).
- (4) Collector(s).
- (5) Collector's number.
- (6) Collection date.
- (7) Preservative and/or preparation.

H. Record the following mandatory catalog data for archives:

- (1) Local collection number.
- (2) Collection title.
- (3) Date(s) documents were created.
- (4) Scope and content.
- (5) History of the organization or person who created the record group.
- (6) Organization and/or arrangement.

1.8 Inventory Standards. An inventory is an itemized listing of objects. It is also the act of physically locating all or a random sample of the objects for which a unit is responsible. Inventories of museum collections must be consistent with 410 DM, *Personal Property Management* and Interior Property Management Directives Section 114-60, *Personal Property Management Program*.

- A. Annual Inventories. Bureaus/offices must physically verify and document, according to the requirements in Paragraph 1.8C of this Directive, the objects listed in the inventory for museum collections located in both bureau/office and non-bureau facilities. The following annual inventories must be completed:
 - (1) A 100% inventory of all controlled museum collections. The Accountable Officer or other designated authority may approve an exception, which includes an alternative inventory approach, for a unit that holds large amounts of controlled museum collections.
 - (2) A random sample inventory of all non-controlled cataloged museum collections, unless a more stringent method is required by bureau/office policy.
 - (3) A random sample inventory by accession number of all accessioned but uncataloged museum collections, unless a more stringent method is required by bureau/office policy.

- B. Other Inventories. Bureaus/offices may need to conduct additional inventories under the following circumstances:
 - (1) When the designation of accountability changes, such as the Accountable Officer or Custodial Officer, the bureau/office has the following options:
 - (a) A 100% inventory is performed.
 - (b) A random sample inventory is performed.
 - (c) The incoming designated authority signs a statement of responsibility for the accountability of the museum collections.
 - (2) When a Report of Survey or other indications reveal that a number of objects are unaccounted for or a significant loss has occurred.
 - (3) During special audits or other circumstances.

- C. Inventory Requirements. The following mandatory inventory data must be verified and updated if changes are found:
 - (1) Object(s) found.

- (2) Item count.
 - (3) Location of the object(s).
 - (4) Condition of the object(s).
- D. **Reconciling Inventories.** Museum collection inventories must be reconciled with museum records and ICMS. If objects not previously listed in museum records are found during an inventory, the objects must be accessioned and cataloged if the objects meet the definition of museum property and fit within the unit SOCS. Each bureau must develop procedures concerning missing or lost museum collections that address the following:
- (1) Contacting law enforcement or an equivalent authority.
 - (2) Processing Reports of Survey (DI-103) in compliance with Interior Property Management Directive (IPMD) 114-60.803, *Report of Survey*.
 - (3) Deaccessioning the museum object(s), as appropriate, when the Board of Survey action is completed.
 - (4) Requesting that the Department's Office of Inspector General investigate the situation as described in 355 DM 2, *Departmental Investigations, Policy for Investigating Complaints and Referrals*, and IPMD 114-60.807, *Survey Procedures, Property Irregularities*.
- E. **Certifying Inventories.** The status of annual inventories of museum collections and their reconciliation must be certified in writing to the bureau/office Property Management Officer or other designated official per bureau/office policy.

1.9 Loan Standards. Loans are made to further the bureau's goals of research, preservation, interpretation, and access to the public. Incoming loans are temporary transfers of custody of objects to a bureau/office unit on a short-term or long-term basis. Incoming loans involve objects for which a unit has responsibility and custody, but not ownership. Outgoing loans are temporary transfers of custody of objects that are owned by a bureau/office to another entity. General requirements are to:

- A. Loan bureau/office museum objects for official purposes only and with approval by the designated authority. Loans to private individuals are prohibited.
- B. Ensure that the borrowing entity meets the standards in 411 DM and the DOI Museum Property Directives prior to approving the loan.
- C. Prohibit the use of museum collections for commercial purposes or private pecuniary gain except where specifically authorized by law or approved by the designated authority.

- D. Document each loan (both incoming and outgoing) by assigning a unique number and completing a loan agreement or similar instrument.
- E. Include conditions for shipping, handling, and insurance in the loan agreement.
- F. Include an itemized list of museum objects in the loan agreement.
- G. Only include copies of original museum records, as appropriate, for outgoing loans as indicated in 36 CFR 1228.10, *When do loans of permanent and unscheduled records require NARA approval?*
- H. Obtain the authorized signatures of both the borrower and lender on all agreement documents.
- I. Store all agreements in archival quality folders.
- J. Attach copies of permit documentation to the loan form as appropriate.
- K. Record the following mandatory loan data:
 - (1) Loan number.
 - (2) Loan type (incoming or outgoing).
 - (3) Loan duration with start and end dates.
 - (4) Purpose of loan.
 - (5) Borrowing institution:
 - (a) Institution name.
 - (b) Department, as applicable.
 - (c) Responsible official, including name, title, email, and telephone number.
 - (d) Physical and mailing addresses and telephone number of the borrowing institution.
 - (6) Lender:
 - (a) Lender or responsible official (institution), including name, title, email, and telephone number.

- (b) Department, as applicable.
 - (c) Institution or unit, as applicable.
 - (d) Physical and mailing addresses and telephone number of lending individual or institution.
- (7) Transaction dates:
- (a) Date of agreement.
 - (b) Date agreement terminates.
 - (c) Date object(s) sent or received.
 - (d) Date object(s) returned.
- (8) Objects in loan:
- (a) Catalog number.
 - (b) Item count.
 - (c) Object name(s).
 - (d) Description, including a photograph whenever possible.
 - (e) Condition.
 - (f) Value.
- (9) Acknowledgement or credit line.
- (10) Insurance policy information, as applicable.
- (11) Packing and shipping terms.
- (12) Loan return status.

1.10 Temporary Custody Standards. A temporary custody receipt or equivalent document must be used when holding museum collections in temporary custody. Temporary custody may be used for purposes such as identification, review for possible donation, conservation, or examination for purchase. General requirements are to:

- A. Use a temporary custody receipt only for short-term custody without insurance.

- B. Obtain the authorized signatures of both the borrower and lender on the temporary custody receipt or equivalent document.
- C. Adhere to a time limit for temporary custody set by the bureau/office.

1.11 Deaccessioning Standards. Deaccessioning is the formal, documented process by which an accessioned object or group of objects is permanently removed from a museum collection. Only bureaus/offices with deaccessioning authority may deaccession. Reports of Survey due to loss, theft, damage, destruction, or abandonment (410 DM) may lead to deaccessioning. General requirements are to:

- A. Follow deaccessioning ethics standards including:
 - (1) Prohibit bureau/office employees or their family members from acquiring deaccessioned bureau/office museum objects (or financial interest therein).
 - (2) Prohibit any bureau/office employee from either benefitting or appearing to benefit personally in any way as a result of a deaccession action and subsequent disposition.
 - (3) Avoid any real or apparent conflict of interest, as defined and described in 5 CFR Part 2635, *Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch*.
- B. Adhere to the principles of 41 CFR Part 102-37, *Donation of Surplus Personal Property* and 41 CFR Part 101-45, *Sale, Abandonment, or Destruction of Personal Property*.
- C. Ensure objects proposed for deaccessioning remain in public ownership whenever possible, unless repatriated under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.
- D. Ensure all objects proposed for deaccessioning are fully cataloged, as appropriate to the discipline type or federal regulations, before deaccessioning.
- E. Assign a unique number to each deaccession. Maintain all the following documentation of the deaccession using archival quality materials:
 - (1) Deaccession form and disposition document.
 - (2) Deaccession folder.
 - (3) Bound deaccession book.

- F. Ensure a museum collections committee, or equivalent, established by a bureau/office reviews all proposed deaccessions and the designated authority reviews and approves in writing all deaccessioning actions.
- G. Retain original museum records for deaccessioned museum collections.
- H. Provide the recipient with a copy of the museum records of the deaccessioned museum objects, if applicable.
- I. Record the following mandatory deaccession data:
 - (1) Deaccession number.
 - (2) Itemized list of objects to be deaccessioned.
 - (3) Disposition method.
 - (4) Disposition recipient, if applicable.
 - (5) Designated authority name.
 - (6) Date(s) deaccession approved.
 - (7) Deaccession date.
 - (8) Date disposition approved.
 - (9) Disposition date.

1.12 Definitions. Many of the following definitions are taken directly from 411 DM and therefore refer to museum property. Museum property and museum collections are synonymous in these definitions.

Accessioning - The formal, documented process to legally add an object or group of objects to a museum collection. A single accession transaction occurs when one or more objects are acquired in the same manner, from one source, and at one time.

Accountable Officer - A Government official assigned overall responsibility for a specified group of personal property items, including museum property, and for ensuring the establishment and maintenance of accountability records to provide effective overall control over that property. Accountable Officers are usually the individuals in charge of a region, area, project, park, refuge, office, etc.

Acquisition - The act of obtaining museum collections. Approved methods of legally acquiring museum collections for accessioning are: donation, purchase, transfer, field collection, and exchange.

Agreement - A formal, written arrangement between two or more parties that identifies roles, responsibilities, and/or outcomes or products. For museum property, agreements are most commonly used for long-term curatorial services in non-bureau facilities, such as a curation or repository agreement, or for short- or long-term loans, such as a loan agreement.

Archival quality – The material properties inherent in a medium permitting its preservation under controlled conditions, such as acid-free paper.

Associated records - All documentation generated by the activity of collecting and analyzing artifacts, specimens, or other resources that are or are subsequently designated museum property. Associated records are “associated” with objects collected and analyzed during such activities and should be maintained as part of the museum collections. Examples include site forms, field notes, drawings, maps, photographs, slides, negatives, films, video and audio cassette tapes, oral histories, object inventories, laboratory reports, manuscripts, reports, and printouts of computerized data. Electronic or digital documentation stored on a computer or server or stored on media, such as computer cards, tapes, disks, diskettes, CDs, and DVDs, are included. Also, refer to the definition in 36 CFR Part 79.

Authorized parties - Persons representing one or more entities, either within or outside of the Federal Government, who have authority to act on behalf of their institutions or themselves.

Cataloging - The action of assigning a unique identifying catalog number to an object or group of objects and completing descriptive documentation, including physical description, condition, provenience, and other pertinent information to facilitate physical and intellectual access to object(s) and the collections.

Controlled property - For museum collections, the term includes an object or group of objects that is especially sensitive; has high intrinsic or scientific value; is especially vulnerable to theft, loss, or damage; is valued at or above a threshold value established by each bureau/office; is a museum firearm; or is a short-term, incoming loan (for inventory only). The catalog record must indicate whether an object has been designated controlled property.

Custodial Officer - An official who is responsible for the daily control and supervision of personal property assigned to him or her.

Deaccessioning – The formal, documented process by which an accessioned object or group of objects are permanently removed from a museum collection.

Designated authority - A person identified by a bureau/office who is assigned specific roles and responsibilities involved in managing museum collections.

Discipline - A field of academic study by which museum property is classified. Disciplines used to classify and report DOI museum property are archeology, archives, art, biology, ethnography, geology, history, and paleontology.

Facility - A building, administrative unit, or partner facility that has space(s) dedicated to the display, exhibit, study, and/or storage of museum property. (See also Repository.)

Interior Collection Management System (ICMS) - The mandatory Department-wide information management system used to provide Department-wide consistency in accounting for, documenting, reporting on, and providing physical and intellectual access to bureau/office museum property.

Inventory - An itemized listing of objects; and/or the act of physically locating all or a random sample of the objects for which a unit is responsible.

Loan - The temporary transfer of custody of museum property on either a short-term (three years or less) or long-term basis. A loan must be for official purposes and may be incoming or outgoing. The terms of loans are documented in loan agreements or similar instruments. (See also Agreement.)

Mandatory data – Information about museum collections that must be documented in the appropriate museum record according to Departmental policy.

Museum collection / Museum property - A subset of personal property, including objects, works of art, and/or archives, that is retained for long-term preservation, study, and interpretation consistent with statutory requirements, its relationship to the mission of the respective bureau/office, or other appropriate factors. A museum collection / museum property is acquired according to a rational plan, such as a Scope of Collection Statement. It consists of all accessioned, unaccessioned, cataloged, and/or uncataloged objects; and all museum objects under the control of a facility, unit, or bureau/office. Museum property is synonymous with and referred to as “museum collection(s)” in the DOI Museum Property Directives, as a standardized term that is used by museum professionals.

Museum property committee - A small, diverse group of curatorial staff, museum property management staff, and relevant discipline specialists that advises on the management of museum collections. The committee provides recommendations on and contributes to collection management decisions such as Scope of Collection Statements, accessions, deaccessions, loans, and mandatory data appropriate to specific disciplines represented in the museum collections.

Museum records - Records created to manage museum property, such as accession, catalog, loan, deaccession, and inventory records. These records must be appraised through agency record schedule procedures. Museum records are not museum property.

Non-bureau facility - Any facility, which a specific bureau or office does not own and/or operate and maintain, that houses the bureau or office's museum property. This includes facilities of other bureaus and offices within DOI, other Federal agencies, and entities outside of the Federal government, such as a museum or university.

Object - A physical item of museum property. It includes art and history objects, archeological artifacts, ethnographic objects, archival items, and natural history specimens.

Personal property - Property of any kind or an interest therein, except real property and records of the Federal government. Personal property includes all equipment, materials and supplies, and museum objects. It does not include property which is incorporated in, or permanently affixed to, real property.

Records - As defined by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in 44 U.S.C. 3301, "...all books, papers, maps, photographs, machine readable materials, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any agency of the United States Government under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of data in them. Library and museum material made or acquired and preserved solely for reference or exhibition purposes, extra copies of documents preserved only for convenience of reference, and stocks of publications and of processed documents are not included." Records as defined in 44 U.S.C. 3301 are not museum property unless indicated as such in an approved bureau/office records disposition schedule. Associated records are not included in this definition.

Repository - A type of facility that is dedicated to managing, preserving, processing, studying, and storing museum property according to professional museum and archival practices. (See also Facility.)

Standards - Authoritative principles or rules for managing museum property. DOI standards for managing museum property are based on professional museum and archival standards referenced in 411 DM 1.9 and 1.10 and detailed in the DOI Museum Property Directives.

Unit - A bureau/office organizational entity, such as an accountability area, administrative unit, center, laboratory, museum, office, park, school, site, refuge, or repository, which manages museum property. A unit's museum property may be stored in multiple bureau/office facilities or non-bureau facilities and/or repositories.

1.12 References

- Ambrose, Timothy and Crispin Paine
2006 *Museum Basics*, 2nd Edition. New York: Rutledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- American Association of Museums
2000 *Code of Ethics for Museums*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums. <http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ethics/coe.cfm>
- Buck, Rebecca and Jean Allman Gilmore
2010 *Museum Registration Methods*, 5th Edition. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums Press.
- Burcaw, G.E.,
1997 *Introduction to Museum Work*. Walnut Creek, CA.: Altamira Press.
- Case, Mary (editor)
1988 *Registrars on Record: Essays on Museum Collections Management*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums.
- Gardner, James B. and Elizabeth Merritt,
2004 *AAM Guide to Collections Planning*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums.
- Genoways, H.H. and Ireland, L.M.
2003 *Museum Administration: An Introduction*. Walnut Creek, CA.: Altamira Press.
- George, Gerald
2004 *Starting Right: A Basic Guide to Museum Planning*. Nashville, TN.: American Association for State and Local History.
- Holms, Stuart A.
2000 *Facts and Artefacts -- How to Document a Museum Collection*. Museum Documentation Association.
- Lord, Gail D. and Barry Lord
2007 *Manual of Museum Management*, 2nd Edition. Walnut Creek, CA.: Altamira Press.
- Malaro, Marie C.
1998 *A Legal Primer on Managing Museum Collections*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Merritt, Elizabeth
2008 *National Standards and Best Practices for U.S. Museums*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums.

National Park Service

2011 *Museum Handbook, Part II, Museum Records*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service. (Rev. Ed.).

Simmons, John E.

2005 *Things Great and Small: Collection Management Policies*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums.

Thompson, J.M.A. (editor)

1992 *Manual of Curatorship: A Guide to Museum Practice*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Weil, S.E.

1997 *A Deaccession Reader*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums.