[Your Museum Logo Here]

Collections Continuity Planning Template

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Introduction

This template was first discussed in 2023 as part of a roundtable presentation for Southeastern Museum Conference (SEMC). With the backing of the Southeastern Registrars Association (SERA), this roundtable discussion was a melding of minds across the Southeast to create a template that anyone could download and fill with information that could be passed on to future managers of collections and collections spaces in order to ensure consistency and retainment of institutional knowledge.

A few notes about the use of this document:

* Not all parts may pertain to your institution, use what is needed and delete the rest.
* Institutional records are great for this work, but you may also have to use oral history with past staff and/or volunteers to fill knowledge gaps.
* This is a living document and must be updated regularly to be useful. Save it to a shared drive or file where others can access and update it.
* Information may be suitable for multiple sections of the document. You may choose to include it in one section or repeat it throughout the document in case different users may look for the information in different sections.
* The document may seem overwhelming at first. Approach it in small sections or add information as you think of it and the document will gradually come together.
* The document may not cover all points for your specific museum. Use it to spark your thought process on what else you might need to include.

**History of Institution**

**Key Dates**

Include bullet points of institution history with key dates. Consider putting a short version on Wikipedia and updating it there.

**Governance**

What is the current governance or status of the museum? Are there any past changes in that governance/status?

**Accreditation**

Do you have it? When was it last granted? When is your next update due?

**Historic Locations**

What are the historic locations of your institution? Include key dates of when the museum changed locations.

**Staff**

What is the current staff reporting structure? Do you have an organizational chart?

Include staffing history (FT/PT/Contract) with job descriptions and changes in titles. Who works where and what are their roles?

*[this can be for your whole museum or only for the collections management department, depending on the size of your museum staff]*

* Archives
* Buildings
* Collections
* Curatorial
* Development/Fundraising
* Education
* Exhibits
* Leadership
* PR/Marketing
* Security
* Visitor Services
* Other

**Building and Construction**

**Phases of building**

List all phases of the construction for the museum building, including the original building plus any additions/renovations). Include key dates for and constituents involved in those construction projects.

Are there institutional archives which hold architectural drawings, floor plans, etc. Do you have a building project management document that records building/architectural changes, maintenance, etc. If so, where are the documents stored and how can they be accessed?

**Storage Spaces**

List all current storage spaces with their names and abbreviations/acronyms (if applicable). Have the spaces changed or been repurposed over the years?

**Exhibit Spaces**

List all current exhibit spaces with their names and abbreviations/acronyms (if applicable). Have the spaces changed or been repurposed over the years?

**Maintenance**

Past trouble points – are there certain areas of the building that consistently pose problems?

HVAC systems – who inspects and maintains? When were previous changes or upgrades implemented?

Fire extinguishers and fire suppression systems – who inspects and maintains? When were previous changes or upgrades implemented?

Lighting systems – who inspects and maintains? When were previous changes or upgrades implemented? What bulbs are used and where do you source them?

Security systems - who inspects and maintains? When were previous changes or upgrades implemented?

Exhibit presentation – include a list of standard or frequently used paint colors and paint finishes. Does your museum exhibit space include historic materials, such as plaster or period woodwork, that require special maintenance procedures? Who does the cleaning of exhibit spaces?

Exhibit technology - who inspects and maintains? When were previous changes or upgrades implemented?

Temperature & RH Dataloggers – who monitors and records the data? How is it accessed?

Grounds/landscaping/parking – who maintains? When were previous changes or upgrades implemented?

Contractors – include a list of past contractors, the work that was done, and key dates.

General Facility Report – who maintains and updates this document?

**Collections and Exhibit Access**

**Access Points**

Who has access to what parts of your museum campus and buildings?

Who is authorized to grant access?

Do you conduct an annual review of who has access?

How are visitors or non-staff workers escorted throughout the non-public spaces?

List collections with restricted access:

Collections Storage Area #1 – Building Name, Floor/Room information

Collections Storage Area #2 - Building Name, Floor/Room information

Historic House Name – Address (if different than institution)

Offsite Storage Area – Address (if different than institution)

List of exhibit spaces with restricted access:

Exhibit Name #1 – Building Location – Key Info

Exhibit Name #2 - Building Location – Key Info

Which keys or access codes are needed for specific areas? Are there any steps that must be taken to access specific areas? Are there any other tools or requirements needed?

Are there specific keys for certain cases or spaces? Is there a Key list for Cases/Spaces?

Are there elevators, loading docks, or other spaces that have restricted access and/or space limitations?

Elevator – Building Name, access point, measurements (or refer to facility report)

Loading dock #1 - Building Name, access point, measurements (or refer to facility report)

**Approved Staff**

What positions should always have access to the collection areas? Are there limitations or training requirements for this access to be granted? Are there positions that have access for limited reasons?

Full Access

Title – Name - Requirements

Partial Access

Title – Name – Requirements

Temporary or Term Access

Title – Name – Requirements

**Keys**

How are the collections and exhibit areas secured?

Who has keys or badges?

How do you manage lost keys or badges?

How do you manage alarm codes and who knows them?

Does your badge/key access keep track of who has been where?

Which keys or access codes are needed for specific areas?

Are there any steps that must be taken or special procedures to access specific areas?

Are there any other tools or requirements needed for access?

**Communication**

It may be necessary to explain to other staff or non-staff members why access is restricted to some areas of the museum. List key point about the necessity for security of the collection. Consider referring to your “collections” as “assets” when discussing with non-collections people to help with understanding the importance of restricted access.

**Inventory**

Do you have an inventory process which can be used to evaluate security and mitigate the risk of theft? *[NEH offers grants for inventory processes]*

Briefly outline your inventory processes with key dates and/or benchmarks.

**Collections Documentation**

**Collections Management Staff – Past & Present**

Current and Past collections management staff – what are their names & titles?

**Past Interns**

Do any names of past interns appear in records such as condition reports? If so, list their names and dates of internships (if known).

**Policies & Plans**

Collections Plan – Where can the plan be found? When was it last updated? Who writes, reviews, revises it and how often?

Collections Policy – Where can the policy be found? When was it last updated? Who writes, reviews, revises it and how often?

Deaccessioning Policy & Checklist – Where can the policy be found? When was it last updated? Who writes, reviews, revises it and how often? Where is the deaccessioning process documented?

Emergency Plan/ Disaster Plan– Where can the policy be found? When was it last updated? Who writes, reviews, revises it and how often?

Consider having a printed binder in case of emergency.

Housekeeping and IPM Plan– Where can the policy be found? When was it last updated? Who writes, reviews, revises it and how often? Who manages the IPM task and how is data recorded, reviewed?

Rights to Reproduction Policy– Where can the policy be found? When was it last updated? Who writes, reviews, revises it and how often?

Insurance Policy– Where can the policy be found? When was it last updated? Who reviews, renews it and how often?

**Accessioning**

Do you have an accessioning policy and procedures and where can those documents be found?

Past numbering systems – has the object numbering system changed over time? Record past numbering systems here or record if you make a change to the numbering system.

Object Processing Checklist – is there a checklist of steps for processing new acquisitions? If so, where can that checklist be found?

Donation documents - Where and in what format are legal documents such as deeds of gift stored?

Gift reporting – Do donations of collection objects to the museum need to be reported to other entities such as boards, university foundations, or governmental property/asset management divisions?

Standard credit lines – are there standard credit line formats for identifying the museum or specific donors? If so, list them here or indicate where that list can be found.

Archival materials - Are there specific vendors used purchasing archival materials for housing of objects? *[See also Supplies/Suppliers section]*

**Deaccessioning**

Do you have a deaccessioning policy and procedures and where can those documents be accessed?

Deaccessioning Checklist – is there a checklist of steps for deaccessioning? If so, where can that checklist be found?

Deacessioning documents – How and where is the deaccessioning process recorded?

Deacessioning reporting – Do deaccessions of collection objects need to be reported to other entities such as boards, university foundations, or governmental property/asset management divisions?

Do you use particular auction houses or other means of disposition for deaccessioned items? Include a list and contact information here.

**Database Management**

Where is the collections database stored and who manages it?

Is there a user manual that indicates styles, conventions, or controlled vocabularies for data entry? If so, where is the manual stored and how is it accessed?

Who do you contact for troubleshooting?

Are there other databases or information systems used by collections staff?

Are there subscriptions or passwords that should be passed along?

**Exhibits and Loans**

**Galleries/Exhibit Spaces - General**

What are your gallery/exhibit spaces and how do you identify them? Include names and abbreviations or acronyms.

Is there a history of how these spaces were used in the past (if different from their current usage)?

How are they used now?

Who are the staff involved in managing exhibits and what are their responsibilities? Do you have written procedures for considering and implementing temporary acquisitions and, if so, where can those procedures be found?

Temperature & RH Dataloggers – who monitors, records the data, and attends to any issues? How is the recorded data accessed and shared?

What is the square footage of your gallery spaces? What are the measurements of usable wall space?

Are there standard paint colors and paint finishes (glossy, eggshell, flat) for each gallery?

What are your installation methods for various types of objects? Do you have a list of available casework? Do you have a list of contract manufacturers of casework, risers, or other exhibition equipment?

Where are the tools & equipment needed for exhibition installation or maintenance stored? Who has access to them? Does specific casework require specific tools?

What are the unusual/quirky things about your exhibit spaces that are not readily apparent?

**Labels**

Is there a standard format, color, and/or font for labels, credit lines? Is there a guide for these standards? Do you have a branding guide? Insert examples here or point to where samples can be found.

How are labels and other signage produced?

How do you indicate photo restrictions for objects in exhibitions? Do you need to train security staff on these restrictions?

**Purchasing and budgets**

Are there standard purchases or costs that are frequently made for exhibitions or a list of frequently used vendors?

Do you use contract labor and how is that hiring done?

Who manages budgets for gallery changes or maintenance?

**Permanent collection exhibits**

How often do you rotate exhibits or objects within exhibits? Who is responsible for making those decisions & who implements them?

Who manages budgets for gallery changes or maintenance?

Who schedules gallery changes or maintenance? Is there a calendar for scheduling and tracking gallery changes and/or maintenance?

**Temporary traveling exhibitions**

Who is involved in choosing or curating temporary exhibitions?

How often do you rotate temporary or traveling exhibitions? Who is involved in that process? Who is the main point of contact on your staff for managing traveling exhibitions?

Who manages budgets for temporary traveling exhibitions?

How is your temporary/traveling exhibition calendar managed? Who schedules gallery changes or maintenance?

Who has signing authority for contracts or loan agreements?

Do you work regularly with certain Fine Arts Shippers for packing, crating & transport? Add trusted shippers here or point to where the list can be found.

How do you manage insurance for temporary exhibitions? Who are the key contact people regarding insurance?

Do you hire additional workers for exhibition installations? If so, how is that hiring processed managed?

Where do you store empty crates while a temporary exhibition is on view?

If you have a loading dock, how is it accessed and monitored?

If you have a freight elevator, how is it accessed and monitored?

**Incoming and Outgoing Loans**

Do you have a Facility Report? Where can it be found? Who updates it?

Do you have incoming & outgoing loan agreements? Where can they be found? How often are the documents reviewed/updated?

Is there an internal process for reviewing & approving or denying outgoing loan requests?

Who acts as a courier for outgoing objects, if needed?

What are the past and current loan numbering systems? How are loans tracked in the database or otherwise?

Are there nuances to particular lenders that others should know? Is there a backstory or context that is important?

**Emergency Procedures**

Do you have a disaster plan for collections and where can it be found? Do you have a disaster plan for continuity of business operations and where can it be found?

Are there any specific details about your location, your building, or your staff that are not included in your disaster plan that should be known by a collections manager?

**Legal**

**General**

Do you have an official legal name (as opposed to a commonly used name for the museum)?

Do you have a legal department or lawyer whom you contact for assistance? How do you contact that office/person?

Consider including a list of the legal documents the museum uses frequently and any forms or checklists that accompany these documents to help with the process. Or, point to where these documents can be accessed. These documents may include:

* Contracts for employees or vendors
* Deeds of gift (standard, shared rights, born digital materials, etc.)
* Loan agreements
* Rights to reproduction agreements
* Receipt and Release forms
* NAGPRA documentation

**Supplies/ Suppliers**

**General**

Consider including a list of frequently-used supplies and the suppliers from which you are frequently purchasing archival or other products and equipment. Or, point to where a list of these supplies and suppliers can be found.

Do you work for a government institution that has approved vendors?

Do you have a purchasing threshold beyond which you must submit specific paperwork for purchases?

Are there terms and conditions that you must meet or cannot agree to, particularly for large purchases or purchases beyond a certain cost threshold?

What budget is used for supplies?

Who replenishes supplies and how often?

Where are supplies stored and who has access to them?

Who manufactured your collection storage units (cabinets, shelving, etc.) and when were they purchased?

Supplies may include:

* Bags
* Boxes
* Cabinets
* Cleaning Supplies
* Conservation Supplies
* Dataloggers
* Ethafoam
* Emergency supplies
* Gloves
* Gun Socks
* Sleeves
* Tags
* Tissue
* Racks (pull-out)
* Shelving
* Volara

Collections Continuity Working Group 2023 – 2025

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