

# Collections Research News

Summer 2007



## Elements of Successful Collections Management

### Part 2

There are nine major elements of successful collections management in museums and all of these elements should be present to insure your museum is fulfilling its public trust and collection stewardship obligations. These key elements are:

- ✓ Clear Museum Mission Statement
- ✓ Mission-driven Policies and Procedures
- ✓ Knowledge of proper handling procedures
- ✓ Thorough and accurate documentation of collections
- ✓ Knowledge of safe and proper numbering methods
- ✓ Inventory control
- ✓ Safe and stable environment
- ✓ Consistent and sound access procedures
- ✓ Safe and secure exhibition practices

*Collections Research News* addressed the first two elements—the mission statement and mission driven policies and procedures in the last issue. In this issue we will address proper handling procedures.

#### ❖ Proper Handling Procedures

##### Why is it important to pay attention to proper handling of objects?

More objects are damaged through careless or improper handling than from any other cause. Objects can be dropped; parts can be broken off; physical integrity can be distorted or destroyed; and all manner of chips, cracks, holes, fingerprints can show up on otherwise sound artifacts.

#### ❖ General rules for artifact handling

ALWAYS wear gloves (cotton, latex or nitrile [if you are sensitive to latex] as appropriate) when handling collection items or photographic materials. For archival documents or slippery items such as porcelain and glass be sure your hands are clean. DO NOT use lotions or creams on your hands when working with collection material. When your gloves get dirty, find a clean pair!

Use only pencils when working with or around collection material. DO NOT use pens. Pencil marks are much easier to remove if a collection item is accidentally touched.

Practice careful handling procedures when working with collection items. The number one cause of damage to collection items in the museum is improper handling.

Handle everything with care even though it does not look fragile.

Always use two hands when picking up or moving a collection item; one hand under the item to support the bottom, the other on the side to steady it.

DO NOT use handles or appendages to pick up an item. You may be left holding that handle/appendage while the item lies broken at your feet.

ALWAYS have a place to put it down before you pick it up.

Chart your path and make sure it is clear of obstacles that the artifact may bump or you may trip over.

Continued on page 2

**Cont from page 1**

If the item is too big, too heavy or too awkward for one person to handle, get help!

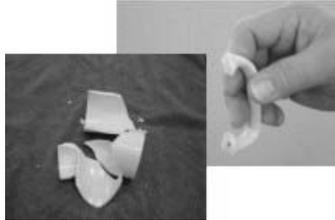
If there are doors to navigate through that can not be safely propped open, get help!

Be aware that a museum is not the same as your home or office. Old habits must be altered when working with collection material. What works at home is not necessarily the best practice at the museum. The primary function of the museum is to preserve and protect our heritage (our collection objects) for future generations to enjoy and learn from.

**HANDLING  
DO'S AND DON'TS**



Don't do this.



It could result in this!



Don'ts

**Do protect metal from fingerprints  
Wear Gloves!**



**Do wear latex or nitrile gloves with  
slippery objects**



**Do support your objects fully**



The remaining elements will be addressed in subsequent issues. Stay Tuned!

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**2007 TRAINING SCHEDULES**

**ONLINE TRAINING**

MS103: Basics of Museum Registration  
**\*NEW DATES\***

September 17 to October 13, 2007

MS207: Collections Management: Cataloging Your  
Collection

Look for this class in July 2008

MS007: The Mission Statement: Is It Really That  
Important?  
July 2008

**WESTEND TRAINING CENTER**

Collections Management in Times of Change  
November 26 to 30, 2007  
February 25 to 29, 2008

Check our website for details:  
<http://museumcollectionmgmt.com>

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**SERVICES**

**FILEMAKER® PRO CATALOGING**

**TEMPLATES**

*Collections Research for Museums can assist small museums with computerizing their collection documentation using off-the-shelf database software.*

*Training is available for our database and in general FileMaker Pro techniques.*

**ON-SITE TRAINING**

*Collections Research for Museums offers classes for small museums in Cataloging and Collections Management. The course is designed for those museums which have small, non-professionally trained or volunteer staffs. It covers the basics of marking, handling, measuring, and cataloging, plus general care and storage for all types of objects and materials.*

**PROJECT SERVICES**

*We also offer a variety of other services to museums, large and small. These range from simple inventories to complete and thorough cataloging of collections. Feel free to contact us for more information. We provide a free initial consultation.*

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*Questions, comments or story suggestions are always welcome.)*

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CATALOGING/COLLECTIONS  
MGMT HELP OR TRAINING**

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