Elements of Successful Collections Management
Part 10

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 seven elements in previous issues. In this issue we will look at the importance of consistent and sound access procedures.

❖ Consistent and Sound Access Procedures

Consistent and sound access procedures must include the following elements to protect your collection from mishandling and/or theft of collection items.

➢ **Secure collection storage and processing areas**

The museum must limit access to the collection storage and processing areas to authorized personnel only--those staff members who are charged with the care and feeding of the collection.

The most important component of your access policy and procedures is accompanied access--only Collections Staff should be allowed unrestricted access to secure collection areas. All others requesting access (even other staff members or the Director) must be accompanied by a Collections Staff person. Doors to the collections storage areas must remain locked at all times. Maintenance workers must be accompanied at all times when work is being done in collection areas.

➢ **Key control**

Key control involves not only maintaining control over keys to the building, but also keys to the secured interior spaces such as collection storage areas and exhibit cases.

- ✓ Exterior Key Control

  The Museum should keep a list of the persons issued exterior door keys and security codes for the alarm systems (if you have them). Each person should have their own security code, rather than assign one code for the entire staff. Individual codes will make it easier to track who accessed the museum and when. The list should be reviewed and updated yearly. Always collect keys from terminated/resigned employees and change/disable access codes immediately.

- ✓ Interior Key Control

  All keys to restricted areas should be secured in a locked Key Box. The key box must remain locked with key to the box placed in a secure location. This key must not be left in the lock of the key box at any time.

  Anyone wishing to use a key to a secured area MUST sign it out and sign it back in when

finished with it. Be sure to clear your access with collection staff so someone can accompany you. Even if it 'will only take a minute' the key must be signed out. Keys must be returned at the end of the day, if not before. No keys should remain outside the secure key box overnight.

Sign in/Sign out sheet: Interior keys must be signed out on the sign out sheet which will include location accessed, key number, date out, time out, name, date in, time in.

Key Number log: The log that designates the key number and the location it opens must be kept in a secure location.

➢ **Set up an area for researchers to view items brought out by authorized staff (outside, *not inside*, collections storage):**

<u>Assign a staff person to monitor research area while the researcher is accessing collection items.</u>

Patrons should not be allowed to access the collection unaccompanied. A staff member must be present when patrons are in the research area. A staff member will remove requested items, one at a time, from the shelf. A Removal slip will be filled out and placed in the spot from which the item was removed to facilitate its return to the proper location. Patrons should be asked to make an appointment at least 24 hours in advance of their visit to ensure that a Museum staff member will be available to assist them. Researchers will be asked to give the Museum staff a general idea of the topic of their research. This will allow the staff to make preparations for the visit and to ensure that the Museum has materials that will be helpful to the researcher's work.

<u>Patron Rules</u>

Patrons may bring a notebook and pencil, or a laptop, into the research area, but briefcases, coats, purses, backpacks, etc. must be secured outside the research area. Allow only paper and pencils—no pens! Patrons should be given a short instruction on the Museum's rules and on handling objects, library and archival materials. They should be asked to acknowledge that they received these instructions on their access sheet. Patrons will access materials in full view of staff. A log should be kept with the name and contact information of all persons accessing the collection, what was accessed, and include the date and time of access. If photocopies are requested of any materials, the patron will accompany the staff member to the copy machine and the staff member will make the necessary copies. This will prevent damage to the library materials and ensure that any archival materials are returned to the proper place in the file. Under no circumstances is the patron to be left alone in the research area. All materials will be returned directly to the Museum staff member assisting the Patron before he/she leaves the research area.

If these items are in place in your museum, you will be able to maintain control over access to your most precious property--your collection!

2012 TRAINING SCHEDULES

ONLINE TRAINING
MS103: Basics of Museum Registration
Look for this in early 2013

MS207: Collections Management: Cataloging Your Collection
July 2 to 29, 2012

MS007: The Mission Statement: Is It Really That Important?
July 9 to 13, 2012
November 12 to 16, 2012

MS218: Collection Inventories
November 5 to 30, 2012

MTN/WESTEND TRAINING CENTER
Collections Management Boot Camp
Look for this in early 2013

!NEW!
SECURITY WORKSHOPS FOR TINY MUSEUMS
Collections Research for Museums now offering a half-day workshop titled "*Security for the Small Museum: Practical Low and No Cost Solutions*". This workshop is designed for small museums with 10 or fewer staff (paid or unpaid) who are looking to improve or learn about museum security. It will present practical tips that anyone can implement with little or no cost focusing on non-technical solutions.

Fall Schedule
September 17, 2012
Animas Museum, Durango, CO

September 19, 2012
Wyoming State Museum, Cheyenne, WY

September 25, 2012
Denver Museum of Miniatures, Dolls and Toys, Denver, CO

September 28, 2012
Golden History Center, Golden, CO

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

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**.