

Museums & Galleries NSW

Acquisition and Numbering

Acquisition is the formal process of obtaining legal possession (as by purchase, donation or bequest) of an item. Generally details such as the object's acquisition number, the object's name and a short description, the date of acquisition, the source of acquisition and how the object was acquired, are recorded in a register.

The acquisition register is therefore an official record of an organisation. As such, details should be kept as clear and accurate as possible to allow the information to be comprehended quickly. Sometimes you may need to add to the original entry, for example when objects are renumbered with a new system, when an object is deaccessioned, stolen, lost or destroyed. As you are leaving a trail for the next person to use the register, the original details should not be erased but ruled through with pencil, corrected, initialled and dated as they may prove to be valuable at a later date.

The acquisition register can be used as a base for inventories and stock takes, but it should not be marked by crosses, checks etc. This would quickly result in a messy and unusable record. It is better to transcribe the information from the register to an appropriate worksheet for these duties.

Once your committee looks at its Collections Policy and decides to acquire the object, the acquisition procedure begins. Donors should be sent two deeds of gift or gift acknowledgment forms which indicate the formal transfer of the object from an individual's possession to that of the museum.

Both copies of the form should be signed and one copy returned to the museum to be kept as a record of the transfer. It is important to have this form returned before the object is formally acquired as it is your primary reference to be used if ownership of an object is disputed. Please note that the gift acknowledgment form is optional as it is the deed of gift that transfers legal title to the institution.

It is a worthwhile public relations exercise to forward to the donor a letter acknowledging their gift and support of your organisation. If an object information form has not yet been completed, this can also be sent to the donor at the time of acquisition.

The newly acquired object should be given its unique number. This number should be recorded in the acquisition register along with other details. The number and the decision to acquire the object should also be recorded in the appropriate column in the receipt register. The initial tag should be replaced with one that shows the acquisition number and the object should be permanently numbered.

If the object was purchased retain the receipt from purchase and place on object file or with catalogue sheet. If you don't wish to use the original, take a copy and use that for this purpose.

Fact Sheet

Numbering Systems

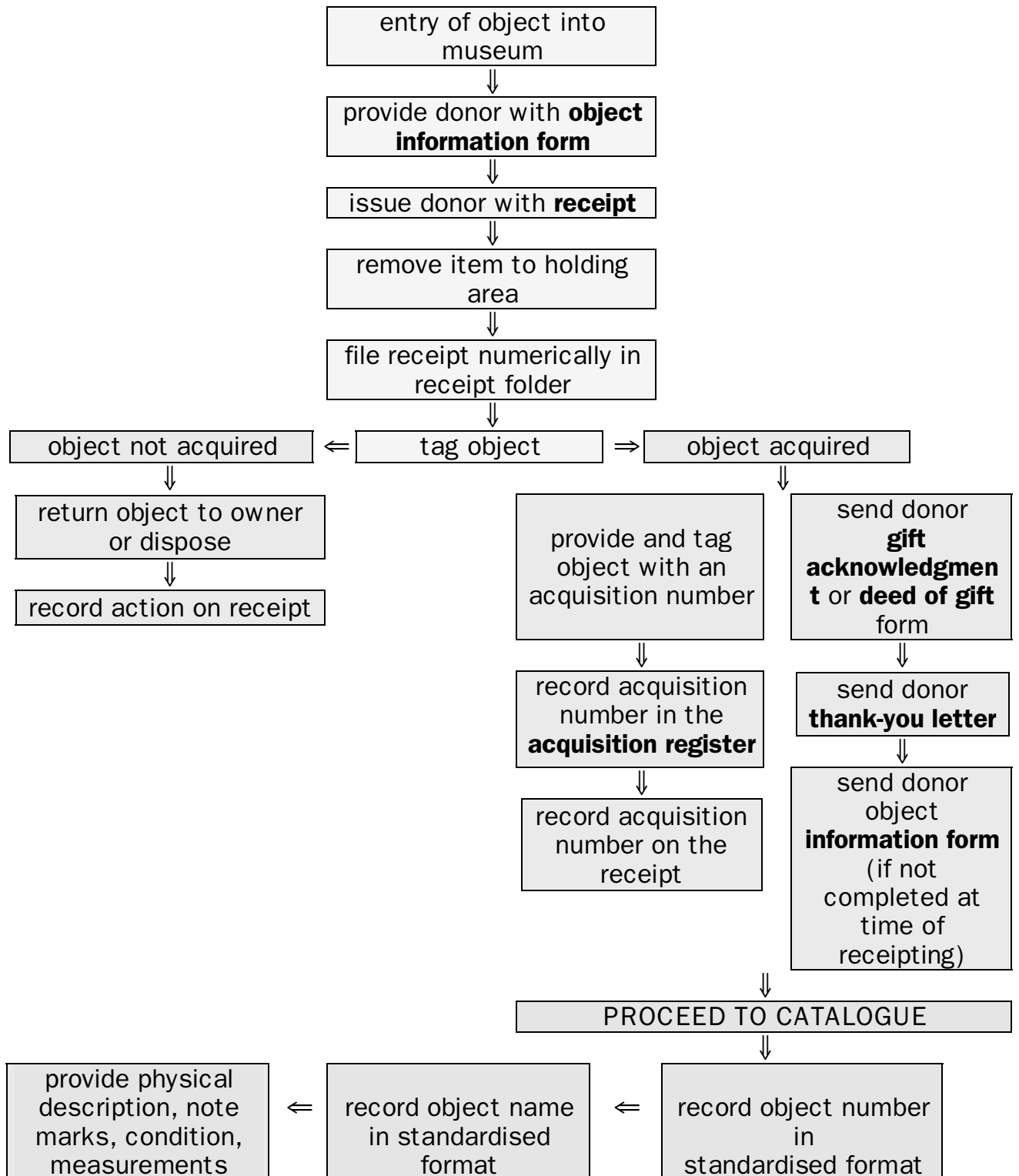
Numbering systems used by museums vary considerably. These days most organisations favour a numeric system that is combined with punctuation notation to express information about a particular object. A frequently used system is the two part system which is based on the year of acquisition and the sequential number of the acquisition. Thus a teapot being the fifth object acquired in 1994 becomes 94/5.

If the teapot has more than one part, for example the pot and the cover, this system can also accommodate this feature by the use of further numbering and punctuation. The pot becomes 94/5-1, the lid 94/5-2 and a tea cosy 94/5-3.

Further sub numbering can occur to account for parts of the identified components. - You may then have an object that is numbered 94/5-1 (pot), 94/5-2/1 (cover), 94/5-2/2 (detachable knob from lid), 94/5-3/1 (cosy), and 94/5-3/2 (detachable trim from cosy).

Whatever numbering system your organisation chooses, be sure to document it in your standard procedure file and include examples and explanations.

COLLECTION ACQUISITION FLOW CHART



Fact Sheet

Museum _____

Address _____

Telephone/Fax _____

Deed of Gift

This Deed made the _____ day of _____ 20_____

BETWEEN _____ (full name of Donor)

of _____ (full address of Donor)
(hereinafter called 'the donor' on the One part)

and the _____ as Administrators of (name of

administrating body of the Museum) the _____
(name of Museum) (hereinafter called 'the Museum' of the Other
part)

WHEREAS the Donor desires to give the goods and property described in the Schedule hereunder to the Museum upon the following terms and conditions:

Now this deed witnessed as follows

(1) The Donor warrants to the Museum that she/he is the sole beneficial and unencumbered owner of the goods and property described in the Schedule hereunder free from all claims and encumbrances.

(2) Upon the occurrence of the event described in Clause (5) hereof, the Donor, for her/himself, her/his executors, administrators, assigns and heirs, hereby agrees to give, convey, dispose and deliver to the Museum, her/his right title and interest in the goods and property described in the Schedule hereunder including all rights of copyright, if applicable to the Museum absolutely.

(3) The Donor agrees and declares that this deed shall not be determined by her/his death and upon occurrence of the event specified in Clause (5) hereof the Deed shall be absolute, whether or not the Donor is alive upon that occurrence, and this Deed shall bind Legal; personal representatives of the Donor.

(4) The Donor agrees and declares that this Deed and the gift of goods and property hereunder shall ensure to the benefit of the museum, its successors, assigns and transferees in perpetuity.

(5) _____ (insert the event by which the property will transfer, eg. date or event) or twenty one years from the date hereof whichever is the earlier

(6) The Donor declares she/he has entered into this Deed of her/his own free will, voluntarily and without influence.

(7) The Donor declares she/he has held or obtained all permits and licenses of and incidental to the goods and property.

Fact Sheet

(8) It is agreed that words importing the singular number or plural number shall include the plural number and singular number respectively and words importing any gender shall include each other gender.

This gift of goods and property have been given in consideration for the Museum paying/giving the Donor _____ (name the benefit eg. free entry to the Museum)

Schedule of Goods and Property

(eg. description of object, including acquisition number if possible)

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Signed, sealed & delivered

by _____
(Donor)

in the presence of _____
(Witness)

2 copies to be made, one retained by the Donor and one by the Museum (PLEASE NOTE: In respect of a company, the company seal should be affixed.)

Fact Sheet

Museum _____

Address _____

Gift Acknowledgment

I _____ of _____

_____ (full name of Donor) (full address of Donor) hereinafter called the 'Donor' for myself, executors, administrators, assigns and heirs, in consideration for the Museum paying/giving the Donor,

_____ (name the benefit eg. free entry)

hereby give to _____ as administrators of _____,

(name of administrating body) (name of Museum) (hereinafter called the 'Museum) the goods and property described in the schedule below, and I the Donor do:

(1) Warrant that I am the sole beneficial and unencumbered owner of the goods and property in the Schedule, free from all claims.

(2) Hereby give, convey, dispose and deliver unto the Museum all my right title and interest in the goods and property in the Schedule hereto including rights of copyright, if applicable to the Museum absolutely.

(3) Declare that this gift shall not be determined upon my death and shall bind my legal personal representatives.

(4) Declare that this gift shall ensure for the benefit of the Museum, its successors and transferees in perpetuity.

(5) Declare that I have entered into this gift of my own free will, voluntarily, and without influence.

(6) Declare that I have held or obtained all permits and licenses of / and incidental to the goods and property.

Dated this _____ day of _____ 20_____

Signed _____
(signed by Donor)

Fact Sheet

Schedule of Goods and Property

(eg. description of object, including acquisition number if possible)

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Acknowledgment of Museum

The Museum hereby accepts the gift of goods and property described by the Donor in the Schedule above.

Signed _____
(signed on behalf of the Museum)

Dated _____

2 copies to be made, one retained by the Donor and one by the Museum.