

Museums & Galleries NSW

Collections Management Manual

Introduction to Collection Management

Collections management has a key role to play in a museum. The physical care and management of an object and the records associated with that object are crucial to any museum activity. In fact, every aspect of a museum's function depends on the availability of reliable information. Without collections management, therefore, the effectiveness of a museum is challenged.

Collections management covers both the handling of objects and the documentation that goes with them.

Collections management is all about gaining control of a collection and providing access to it. This is achieved by implementing a series of interdependent systems made up of standardised procedures. Together these systems create a trail of information providing insight not only into the collection but the way in which it is managed. It is all very well to believe that you or another person has all the relevant information stored away in their head, but what if something happens to this person? The 'corporate memory' of the organisation is gone and no one knows what is going

on. While it is very much a fundamental part of museum work, collections management is often viewed as background activity. But it always when something goes wrong that poor collections management is highlighted. This is usually when you can't find an object when the donor or lender comes to look at it, when something is stolen and you have no record of it to show the police or to prove it was yours if it happens to be recovered.

While this manual serves to primarily aid the collections manager working with a manual system, the principles and practices demonstrated here can also be applied to those with a computerised system and will be especially helpful to those contemplating a computer project. Pro forms can be used for database design in addition to hard copy use and programs for implementation can be designed with confidence once the complexities of collections management are grasped. In fact, one purpose of this manual is to foster confidence in the performance of collections management activities and encourage ongoing participation in program maintenance to the extent that computerisation is considered a natural step.

Receipting

When an item enters a museum, a decision is made as to whether it should be acquired or not. The collections policy of the organisation should be consulted as well as the condition of the item, available storage space, indexes to avoid duplication and possibly reference files to establish the item's context and significance. As these considerations may take time, the unacquired item needs to be controlled. This is also necessary as there is a danger that the item may become confused with the established collection. This could result in the loss of important provenance details and those details concerning source, date of acquisition etc.

The means of controlling the unacquired item are the receipt register and the receipt number. The potential donor should be issued with a receipt immediately on the deposit of the item. The receipt acknowledges the organisation's acceptance of the item for consideration only. The museum should keep a copy of the receipt for its own record. It is advisable to have conditions printed on the receipt concerning the care of the item whilst at the museum in this situation.

Once the receipt has been issued, the museum can use its copy to fill out the receipt register. This register functions like the acquisition register with columns drawn up for receipt number, date of receipt, source, name of the item, location and the decision made by the organisation as to acquire, dispose or return the item. If the object is acquired, the acquisition number can be noted in this 'decision' column.

The unacquired item should also have its own number. Many organisations use the number printed on the receipt for this purpose. It is a good idea to use a prefix such as 'T' for temporary or 'R' for receipt to distinguish this numbering system as much as possible from that used in the official acquisition process. To further keep track of the item, a luggage tag should be secured to it and be printed with the receipt number. It is also a good idea to put the source details on the tag so that you can keep track of where the item came from. This number should not be recorded on the object itself.

As well as documentary distinction, the newly received object should be physically separated from the acquired collection. A small area of the office or store should be set aside for this purpose and shelves, cupboards, etc should be labelled 'unacquired objects' and the location recorded in the receipt.

An object information sheet (Pro forma 1) should also be given to the potential donor at the time of receipt. This sheet asks questions about the item and may help the committee make a decision to acquire the item. If the object is acquired, the sheet will be useful in the cataloguing process.

PROCEDURES OF COLLECTION MANAGEMENT IN A NUTSHELL

Receipt

Acquire

Catalogue

Locate

Fact Sheet

Museum _____

Address _____

Telephone/Fax _____

RECEIPT

Receipt No. R _____

The object described below has been received by the Museum subject to the conditions printed below.

OBJECT

DESCRIPTION _____

RECEIVED FROM

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____

DATE RECEIVED _____

RECEIVED BY

SIGNATURE _____

CURRENT LOCATION _____

2 copies of this form to be signed, one retained by potential donor, one by Museum

RECORD OF RETURN OF OBJECT/TO OWNER OR AGENT

SIGNATURE OF OWNER OR AGENT _____

DATE RETURNED _____

CONDITIONS OF RECEIPT

Under this receipt:

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1. The museum shall be responsible for the protection and safekeeping of objects belonging to others to the same degree that precautions are taken for the protection and safekeeping of their own property.
2. The museum shall not carry insurance on objects deposited with it.
3. The museum may request removal of property deposited with it by the depositor at the address shown on the face of the receipt. Failure of the depositor to remove property 30 days after notification will result in the museum disposing of the object.

Object Information Sheet

The questions below are to act as a guide to prompt your memory regarding the object offered for donation. This form will allow us to capture the stories behind the object and assess the object's significance. Not all questions will be relevant, nor do they have to be answered in the given order. Use additional pages if you need to.

OBJECT INFORMATION

1. What do you call the object?

2. What did the maker call it?

3. When was it made? _____

4. Where was it made? _____

5. Who made the object? (eg. name, location, occupation age etc. if relevant)

6. Can you describe how and with what tools/equipment the object was made/manufactured?

7. How was it used?

8. Where was it used?

Fact Sheet

9. In what circumstances was it made or used?

10. When and where was it last used?

11. Has it been used for any other purpose?

12. Has the object been altered in any way?

13. Is it damaged/are there parts missing?

14. What were the original colours?

15. How did you acquire this object?

16. Could you list any known owners and how they acquired the object?

Fact Sheet

17. Are there any people, places, stories associated with the object?

18. Please record any additional information below.

Acquisition

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 that 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.

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 (Pro forma 1) 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 (Pro forma 10). 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 this.

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 that 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 (lid), 94/5-2/2 (detachable knob), 94/5-3/1 (cosy), and 94/5-3/2 (detachable cosy trim).

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

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
the _____

(name of administrating body of the Museum) (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 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 himself, his executors, administrators, assigns and heirs, hereby agrees to give, convey, dispose and deliver to the Museum, 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 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

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

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

(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

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.)

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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 _____ 19 _____

Signed _____
(signed by Donor)

Fact Sheet

Schedule of Goods and Property

eg. description of object, including acquisition number if possible

--

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)

2 copies of this form to be signed, one retained by the Donor, one by the Museum.

Cataloguing

Cataloguing objects is very important because it is the means by which the information about your collection is recorded permanently in a methodical and consistent way. Your catalogue should be a permanent record of all the objects in your collection and all the facts you know about each object. It is the central way of making that information available to the community, whether that be children from the local school, some one chasing up their family history or a university student coming to research a thesis. A catalogue is what ensures that the information will always be available and that it will outlast individuals, who tend to come and go in historical societies, museums and archives and take the information they have in their heads away with them! An "Object Information sheet" (Pro forma 1) is a guide to the sort of information you can gather about each object in your collection. Remember that any stories which the donor has about when they got the object, how they used it and what it means to them is very important, as are any supporting materials such as photographs or operating manuals etc.

Museums link this information, which is stored in the files, to the object by giving each object a unique number. It is similar to the way libraries number their books and means that you can always match an object to the information about what that object is and where it came from.

The catalogue worksheet is the most frequently used document in collections management. Museums should use a standardised form that makes the retrieval of information easier and helps the museum control its collection through its focus on particular data. Provision on the form should be made for acquisition number, object name, description (including measurements), manufacturing or production details, provenance or history of the object, its current location, display or storage requirements, source of acquisition, the name of associated reference files, its classification or collective identification, (indexing) and perhaps its significance to the whole collection. Remember the worksheet is not a static document and may need to be frequently updated as more information comes to light.

The aim of the catalogue description is to provide a clear, concise picture that enables another reader of the worksheet to visualise the object and recognise it immediately if searching for it. The description should refer to the physical properties of the object - the materials of its composition, its colour, shape, structure, texture, decoration, finish, distinguishing marks and any other feature. The condition of an object and its state of completeness should also be mentioned. Such information also allows the museum to monitor whether an object has deteriorated since acquisition.

As important documents the catalogue sheets must be carefully maintained. Some organisations file these sheets by year using a loose-leaf system.

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Alternatively, they can be individually placed in a folder, file or envelope, along with the original receipt, a copy of the record of gift, the object information sheet etc. The folders are then filed numerically with the acquisition number recorded on a corner that protrudes from the shelf edge permitting easy access.

Any information you have about an object should all be kept together and if you have many documents about an object, a file may be the most practical way of keeping it all together.

Guide to Completing Catalogue Worksheet*a) record registration number and date of acquisition on sheet*

The primary source for these details is the acquisition register or your inventory list. It is especially important to transcribe the number correctly as it is the major identifier for an object and is unique.

b) record object name:

Sources for this section include the registers and your classification scheme (such as Summerfield's classification scheme) or thesaurus which is explained below. It helps if you keep the name simple and consistently document like items under the same name. As this is the section that is usually copied onto your indexing resource a brief description in addition to the object name is advised. With this in mind a prescribed format should be followed when filling in this section. For example, object name should precede media, then maker's name, place of origin and date. Thus a coin purse from Melbourne dated 1879 may read, Coin purse, leather & brass, Smith & Hogbin, Melbourne 1879.

c) record description:

Try to provide a visual image of the object. Imagine the reader of your catalogue worksheet has never seen it before. Focus on the physical characteristics, the object's colour, shape, texture, decoration, finish, media and distinguishing features. Detachable components of the one object, eg. hat and coat set, and their respective numbers also need to be mentioned. The description will be better if you move from left to right, top to base etc. rather than in a more random manner. Simple, objective terms should be used.

d) record any distinguishing marks:

Any inscriptions, labels etc. and their exact placement on the object should be noted. It is best if text is transcribed on the sheet or a sketch is included.

e) record the dimensions:

The organisation will have to agree to standard units of measurement being used so that all objects can be measured in the same way i.e. cms or mms. The maximum dimensions should be recorded, eg: from longest point to longest point.

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f) record the condition of the object and its completeness:

Record the condition of the object as it appears when catalogued. Again a standard needs to be developed for descriptors such as 'excellent', 'poor' etc.. Remember to note the area where any tears, missing beads etc. exist. This information will allow personnel to monitor the object's condition. It will also aid in deciding whether an identical or similar object should be acquired.

g) record the producer/manufacturer:

The source for this information is the 'object information sheet' or the object itself that is explained below.

h) record the place of manufacture:

Source is the object or the 'object information sheet'.

i) record the object's provenance:

Details concerning the history of the object such as its use, its former owners etc. establish the object's context prior to its entry into the museum and help bring the object to life. The coin purse ceases to be only a three dimensional object but can also be viewed as a representative of the period of its production, illustrative of its owners etc.. These stories and background should be taken from the 'object information sheet' or other notes taken from the donor or from others who may be familiar with the items. On the catalogue worksheet there is only limited room for this information. Try to condense the story or include only the most significant information. You can always add further pages to the object file or refer the reader to specific reference files associated with individuals or significant venues in a locality.

j) record references:

This section is created to note the reference material that the cataloguer has used to obtain their information. The source of further information could also be noted here, should the interested party wish to go beyond the potted history provided on the catalogue worksheet or database. This material may include bibliographies, the registration number of related objects and reference files containing pertinent newspaper clippings, photographs which are not objects, photocopied articles, pages from magazines or journals, handwritten notes and so on. This material is best managed by creating reference files relating to specific families, local industries, buildings etc.. Each file should be labelled related to the subject it contains. Terms used in specific indexing aids can be used to label files. Of course each file should also contain a list at the front that records which objects are relevant to the subject area.

k) assign index terms (subject classification/object name):

This section of the worksheet requires the cataloguer to assign a prescribed 'tag' to the object that will best express its relationship with the collection as a whole. In short the cataloguer must decide where the object fits in. The decision that is

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made is extremely important as this index performs as a directory to the collection and is most often thought of as the 'catalogue of the collection'. It is the resource used to answer inquiries such as 'Do we have a sea chest in the collection?', 'How many sea chests do we have?' or 'What marine artefacts do we have?' The index is therefore extremely important and requires much consideration in establishing and maintaining. The Summerfield Classification scheme is the most commonly used in Australia and a copy of the primary and secondary levels of classification is enclosed. To order a complete version, contact the West Australian branch of Museums Australia on (08) 9427 2770.

l) record the current location of the object:

The current location of the object and the date this was recorded should be noted on the catalogue worksheet. As location may change this section needs to be updated.

m) record the current significance of the object to the collection:

This section refers to the value of the object in relation to the whole collection. A rating scheme needs to be established whereby each object is accredited. For example, '1' may denote rare objects, '5' may suggest a fairly replaceable object. Such ratings can determine an organisation's decision to lend an object, have it professionally preserved or individually insured. The 'object information sheet' and an organisation's reference files can help determine significance. Remember as new information concerning an object comes to light, its significance may alter. Consequently your catalogue will have to be updated.

n) record the object's handling/storage/display requirements:

The consideration of these requirements is a means of preserving the object. For instance, a paper or textile based object should be removed from display each year and rested in a dark, dry storage facility for three years. An object with a handle should always be carried with a hand supporting the base. These needs should be noted on the catalogue sheet and observed.

o) record the object's exhibition history:

This is another means of preservation. It allows personnel to note when the object was last displayed and influences exhibition and loan decisions.

p) record details of the object's source eg. donor:

Details are available from the acquisition and receipt registers.

q) check catalogue worksheet to confirm all documentation activities have been completed, sign and date sheet.

Possible additional components of the worksheet:

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- Although not essential it is advisable to provide a collections management checklist somewhere in an organisation's collections management procedures. The catalogue worksheet is an apt location for this. Through considering the many tasks that have been performed to enable cataloguing to take place, you can be assured a strong information trail has been laid. If on the other hand you believe cataloguing is the only documentary activity required, you will be reminded that this is not the case and other tasks await if collections management is to be carried out effectively in your organisation.
- If photographs of objects are taken as part of the cataloguing procedure in your organisation, the negative number should be recorded.
- Some organisations prefer to account for detachable pieces of the one object not as part of the general description but through a separate acknowledgment.
- The provenance area can be further broken down to include a reference for the object's association with people, places, events and themes.
- A place for professional conservation treatment to be recorded may be relevant.

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Museum X Catalogue Sheet

Date of Acquisition: ___/___/___ Acquisition No: _____

Object Name: _____

Description: _____

Distinguishing Marks:(inscriptions, serial no, patent dates, trade marks, labels etc and their location)

Dimensions (cm): Height Width Length Diameter

Weight(if necessary): _____

Condition and completeness: _____

Maker: _____ Secondary

Maker: _____

Place of Manufacture: _____ Date: _____

Provenance: (History, previous owners, historical importance) _____

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References: (books or research files) _____

Indexing: (subject classification)

Primary	
Secondary	
Tertiary	

Location: _____ Location
Date: _____

Significance: _____

Storage/Display requirements _____

Exhibition History: _____

How Acquired: Gift Purchase Transfer Unknown
Tax Incentives Gift →Number _____

Source/Donor: Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

Telephone/Fax: _____ Mobile: _____

Fact Sheet

Collections Management Checklist	
Task	Date
Receipt register completed	
Accession register completed	
Tag attached	
Acquisition number applied	
Catalogue form completed	
Gift record forms received	
Thank-you letter sent	
Object information sheet returned	
Subject/classification card completed	
Donor card completed	
Location card completed	
Significance rating recorded	
Relevant documents filed	

Location and Storage

It is a good collections management strategy if staff can locate their objects quickly. The location of an object should be recorded in a location index and the catalogue worksheet. In addition some on-site documentation should be used. Such resources include shelf and display case labelling, inventories and storage location cards.

Shelves, cupboards, drawers and display areas should be numbered and labelled. These facilities should be accounted for as specifically as possible. For example, each cupboard and each shelf inside that cupboard should be individually located. Often these locations are coded. It is also advisable to have a plan of your storage and exhibitions and an explanation of your location codes both on your procedures file and in the relevant areas.

Labelling storage areas serves as a directory and allows the individual to go straight to the appropriate storage site after consulting the catalogue worksheet and location index. This saves time and also prevents unnecessary handling of similar types of objects to the one being sought that may be stored on a number of different shelves. This elimination of secondary handling helps to preserve the object. Labels can be created using tape, tags or metal brackets such as those used in a library.

A further location aid is the location card (Pro forma 12) that should be placed on each shelf. This card features a list of the shelf contents as well as the date it was placed on the shelf. Any movement of the object from the shelf should also be recorded and dated. This is a precautionary measure in case the location index and catalogue worksheet are not yet updated.

In the storage area, some practical storage techniques help preserve, control and provide access to your collection. All objects with contents should be stored upright to prevent spillage. Shelves should not be crowded as this will cause problems with access and possibly cause damage through objects touching each other or shelf collapse through excess weight. Heavy objects should be placed on middle or waist high shelves that will allow them to be handled more easily. Small items should not be placed on top shelves where they will be invisible.

Ideally a quick glance at your storage room can provide a quick summary of your stored collection. Therefore it is a good idea to store objects in their collection area if this is possible. For example, all shelvable domestic history items should be located together. If space and time allow, the components of a collecting group can be broken down so all objects relating to one sub-group, can be stored separately from another sub-group. For those objects associated with cooking can be stored separately from those associated with laundry. Of course some objects, namely documents, photographs and textiles require special storage attention and should be located by media rather than thematic concerns.

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Storage facilities

If the museum has begun collecting objects it is important that a decision is made about where they are to be housed while not on display. As you know, museums have an obligation to look after the objects which are donated to them in a way which will ensure that those objects remain in the best possible condition, for as long as possible. In order to do this, museums need to ensure that, among other things, there are adequate storage facilities. The exhibition or public areas of a museum should really only amount to about a third of the museum's total area, with work areas and storage areas taking up the other third of the space each.

While expensive, purpose built storage is not necessarily crucial, there are some basic factors that should be considered. For example, the kinds of material that will be collected and stored, in terms of media and size. This is so that environmental concerns can be addressed, and storage designed according to the specific needs of different types of objects; and also so that the storage will be practical. For example, paper-based objects, photographs, textiles and objects made from some organic materials have different storage needs than those items made of wood, ceramic, glass or metal. The practical requirements of size, and weight etc also need to be considered. It would be an expensive exercise for example if you were to order a specific type of shelving (open plan, compactus or cupboards) only to find that most of your collection is too large or heavy to be accommodated.

- security concerns, particularly if very rare or valuable items are to be brought into the collection. If the storage areas are in a separate building to the exhibition or office area you should consider alarms and superior locks. Access to the storage area, no matter where it is located, should be restricted, and you should be careful about who has access to keys. At least one copy of the keys should be kept off site.

- preventive conservation concerns. As mentioned above, storage areas are a crucial part of the preservation strategy of a museum. Above all, storage areas need to be clean, dry, dark and cool. Storage areas should be monitored regularly, and any changes in the physical condition should be dealt with immediately. Also consider the following:

1. Dust is a particular concern in storage areas, and the design of storage areas needs to include dust-combating measures. All doors should have dust seals, and possibly also polythene plastic (never PVC) curtains across the doors. If you use open shelving, shelves should also have curtains made from either washed, unbleached calico or polythene, which are pulled aside only to provide access to shelves.

2. Light should be kept to a minimum. Ideally no natural light should be allowed to enter the storage area, or at least should be well filtered using blinds and/or film on the windows. Artificial lights should be turned on only when a

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person enters the storage area. They should be low wattage lights to keep the visible light levels to a minimum, and should also be fitted with UV filtering sleeves.

3. Temperature and relative humidity need to be carefully controlled, and should be stable at all times. Ideally, the relative humidity should be between 50% - 60%, and the temperature should be between 18 - 25 C. This may entail providing an air conditioning system of some sort in the area designated for storage, or at least a system that will allow you to control relative humidity.

Metal shelving is certainly the most effective kinds of shelving to use from the point of view of strength and durability, and also from a conservation point of view, as it provides the most stable environment for objects. (With the exception of compactus shelving, which in most cases is not a good idea. The vibrations created each time the compactus is opened will over time cause stress to objects, and there is also a high risk of objects falling from the shelves and breaking.)

However metal shelving is also the most costly kind, and it may be more feasible for you to use wooden shelving. Wood must be used for storage (and display) purposes with caution, as it releases harmful vapours. These vapours can cause serious damage to museum objects, including corrosion of metals, fading of pigments, increasing the acidity of paper and other cellulose materials, and damage glass.

However where metal shelving is not feasible, wooden shelving can provide a reasonably acceptable cost-effective solution (some museums have even converted donated office and domestic furniture into suitable storage facilities), as long as the shelving is properly prepared according to the following points:

- some woods are more suitable than others. Woods to avoid include chipboard, plywood, medium density fibreboard (MDF), masonite, Formica, and particleboard (woods that are made of composite materials are especially harmful because of the adhesives used to bond the materials together). Hardwoods such as oak, Douglas fir, Oregon, pine and jarrah should also be avoided. Suitable woods include most soft woods, Kauri pine, and hoop pine.
- all wood to be used for shelving should be carefully tested for strength before it is included. The level of strength required will depend in part on the type of material to be stored.
- all exposed wooden shelves, pallets and beams should be sealed to prevent harmful vapours from affecting objects in storage. Suitable varnishes are Cabot's Crystal Clear, which is a water-based varnish; Watty's Epinamel 202, a two-part epoxy; or Watty's Proclear, a moisture cure urethane (although this needs at least 30% RH to cure.)
- three coats of varnish should be used for shelving, with at least one week allowed for drying time between each coat. Also allow plenty of drying time before

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placing objects in the storage area, and do not use the storage area until all detectable smell has gone.

- because of the greater risk of insect infestation associated with wooden shelving, careful environmental controls and a program of inspection should be strictly adhered to.

Ideally, all objects should be removed from the floor of a storage area. Pallets are useful for storing heavy objects. Smaller objects can be stored, like objects together and wrapped in acid free tissue where necessary, in plastic crates or tubs. If these have lids they can also be stacked, which will help to save space. Larger, fragile objects and objects which consist of a number of components can also be stored in these tubs. Labels can then be attached to the outside of the tubs indicating what is inside the tubs using the museum accession number and a description. The tubs are also useful for moving objects from one place to another. Tub can be purchased from Reflex (Ph. 9525 9644); or Nally (Ph. 9603 4068).

Paper-based objects and textiles also need to be treated in specific ways. Having space for specialised storage for photographs and negatives is worth aiming for (materials for specialised photographic storage are available from S&M Supply, Ph. 9584 2455). Map cabinets can provide very useful storage space for paper-based objects, allowing even very large items to be stored flat. If you are using map cabinets, aim to store like objects together, and interleave different types of paper objects (different kinds of paper have different kinds of properties and acidity levels) using acid-free tissue paper (also available from S&M Supply).

Storage for textiles should be either hanging storage, which is suitable for some types of costume (as long as hangers are properly padded out); flat storage, which is best for very fragile items (map cabinets are also useful here); and rolled storage, which is suitable for large items such as wall-hangings, rugs etc. If you intend collecting textiles, allowing for the provision of all of these kinds of storage options is a good idea.

Fact Sheet

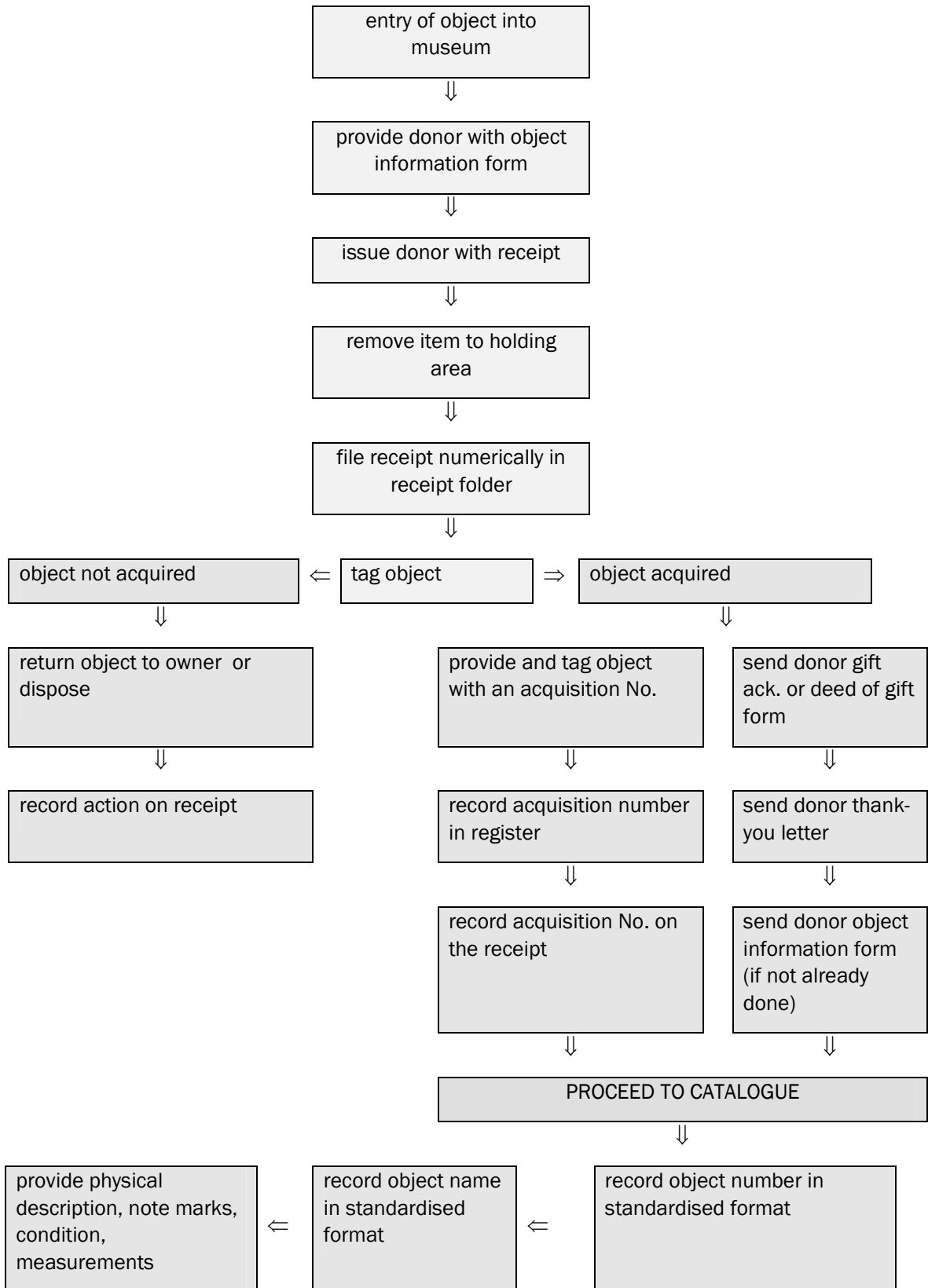
OBJECT LOCATION CARD

Site: _____

Acquisition No:	Object Description	Comments (date, new loc)

Fact Sheet

COLLECTION MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW FLOW CHART



Fact Sheet

