NEW PERSPECTIVES ON INTER-MUSEUM TRANSFER
OF DEACCESSIONED OBJECTS
AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO DISPOSAL BY SALE

by

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This master’s project is dedicated to my wife Michelle, and daughters Kimberly and Sarah DeFors. Your unwavering support and personal sacrifices have enabled this dream. Find what makes you happy, and believe in yourself to have it. I love you all.

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Executive Summary

Over 4.8 billion artifacts are held in public trust by more than 30,000 archives, historical societies, libraries, museums, scientific research collections, and archaeological repositories in the United States.

-- Heritage Health Index Summary Report, 2005

My first introduction to museum studies was an extended education night course at Sonoma State University, where a professor described the compelling responsibilities associated with permanent collections held by non-profit museums. Having spent 25 years in the for-profit business sector, I was surprised to learn of the extraordinarily high standards and professional ethics associated with museum work. In those early days, it was difficult for me, as a businessman, to imagine a successful organization where objects are accepted into inventory - forever. Accessioned objects are not intended to be processed, reconstituted, or packaged for re-sale and profit. They are accepted into a museum collection, and held in trust for the education of a community for perpetuity. This concept of permanent obligation for the care and preservation of museum objects has become what I love most about museums. It is certainly why I was drawn immediately to collections management, and later to this masters project on deaccessioning.

I no longer believe that all accessions are “forever.” Many collection objects in history museums, for example, were arbitrarily accepted before institutional collecting criteria even existed. It stands to reason then, that many early accessions would today be inappropriate for continued care and storage. And just as communities change, so periodically does a museum’s mission to remain relevant for its public audiences.
Deaccessions are in fact, necessary, even vital to the health of nearly all collecting institutions today. But, to turn a phrase; “One museum’s deaccession may be another museum’s treasure.”

The American Association of Museums (AAM) has advocated for transferred disposal of deaccessions, including both the donation and exchange of objects to other non-profit institutions since its early inception. With the relatively recent development of high auction prices for all collectables, and the innovation of internet sale websites, museums have increasingly taken advantage of sale as a method of object removal. The prospect of generating revenue for collections has allowed museums to become comfortable with the deaccessioned sale of objects. But what of the original commitment made for the object to remain in service for public education? When an object no longer meets one museum’s mission goals, is there an extended obligation to at least attempt to perpetuate public service in another? The inspiration for this masters project is my belief that the cessation of one museum’s ownership of an object, should not always relinquish the obligation assumed upon accessioning, that it should serve the educational needs of society in perpetuity.

In order to advocate for the transfer method of disposal to another nonprofit institution, especially as an alternative to disposal by sale, this project examined today’s deaccessioning practices in American collecting museums. I concentrated research on art, history, and multi disciplinary museums that make up approximately 90% of all accredited museum types according to the AAM. Methodologies for this investigation included both a detailed survey about deaccessioning practices sent to 105 museums around the country, as well as sixteen interviews with working museum professionals.

The first chapter is a Literature Review that focuses on existing deaccession scholarship in four primary areas: a history of American collecting museums, a history of
collections management in American museums, a history of the development of
collections policies in American museums, and an overview of accessioning and
deaccessioning standards and best practices as defined by the AAM, and collection
management experts.

Findings for the survey are first presented in the next section, discussed in
chronological sequence after each question and collection related theme. Later, the
Survey Findings bring together all survey data, interpreted separately by museum type in
order to identify trends and characteristics peculiar to these groups. Interviews are also
arranged according to museum type, that is: Art, History and Multi-disciplinary
museums, with an additional category of Museum/Collections Organizations. Each
interview is represented according to the highlights of the information provided.
Interview Findings interpret the attitudes and practices of museum professionals in each
museum type, as well as trends that were found to be common in all groups. By
maintaining this organization in both survey and interviews, a more accurate cross-
comparison of the data was possible. The combined survey and interview findings
produce evidence to make conclusions about the attitudes and practices of collecting
museums in America today.

The next chapter presents conclusions drawn from this project research. It
generally illustrates more similarities than differences between museums of varied
disciplines. Though unique characteristics of deaccessioning attitudes and preferences
were clearly found in each group, I discovered in my research that most collection
professionals are overwhelmingly committed to the same high standards and best
practices of their profession. My research found that most museums have institutional
preferences in both deaccessioning and disposal, often influenced by factors, correctly or
incorrectly, perceived to be beyond their control.
Based upon the expanded conclusions of my research, my final chapter presents three essential recommendations to facilitate a greater utility of transfer disposal in museum deaccessions: one aimed at the governance level of museum administration, a second involving more clear direction from collection policies, and a third giving collection professionals further data and rational to advocate for transfer disposal in both economic and ethical terms. The project concludes with a proposal to facilitate a discussion at the 2008 California Association of Museums (CAM) Conference, so that these findings can be brought to light, and the field may be further inspired to uphold its commitment to caring for collections in the public trust.
Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project was to make the case that transfer disposal of deaccessioned objects deserves to be seriously considered and utilized by all types of museums with greater frequency than currently occurs. By performing inter-museum transfer as an alternative to sale, museums uphold the values of public service inherent in their missions.

In 1925 the American Association of Museums published its first “Code of Ethics” for the museum field. It described a preference for disposal of deaccessioned objects by transfer (exchange or sale) to other like institutions. Today, museum professional associations continue to advocate this method of perpetuating use of collections within the public domain. Evidence suggests some museums successfully practice transfer, but today’s museums operate under increasing economic pressure to generate earned income. Leadership has come to expect even modest revenue from public sales that according to ethical codes must be put towards collections care. Yet, my research showed that the true “cost” of sales might also make transfer a logical choice economically. Given continued attention to deaccession in the press and within the profession, an examination of transfer disposal of deaccessioned objects as a viable option to sale merits further exploration.
Project Plan

This project analyzed the deaccessioning practices of art, history, and multi-disciplined museums, in tandem with current collections management goals. I attempted to quantify deaccessioning volume and frequency, preferred disposal methods, and perceptions of, if not the actual museum costs of implementing these methods.

Research Goals:

1. To define museum deaccessioning, and why it is a standard collections management practice.

2. To define the methods of disposal that are utilized in today’s museums. To examine trends in the methods, volume, and frequency of deaccessioning.

3. To present both the practical and ethical issues that influence today’s museum professionals in their decision to choose one method of disposal over another.

4. To compare the relative costs of disposing of objects by transfer, public sale, private sale and destruction, and determine if there is a practical (cost effective) incentive for museums to choose one method of disposal over another.

5. To bring strategies for streamlining disposal by transfer to light before an audience of museum professionals at the California Association of Museums 2008 annual conference.
Methodology

The foundation of my case advocating transfer of ownership as an option for deaccessioned disposal required an understanding of past and current museum collections management practices. To research historic practices, I conducted a thorough literature review of museum journals, books and other printed resources. I then conducted an online survey to assess current practices. These included how much deaccessioning is taking place in museums? What is the frequency of museum deaccessioning? What methods of disposal are authorized by institutions? Who decides what method is chosen, and what are the reasons for the decision?

Art, history, and multi-disciplinary museums represent 90% of all disciplines in America. My survey originally targeted 105 museums: approximately 45 art museums, 45 history museums, and 15 multi-disciplined museums. I expected the results not only to provide levels and details of deaccessioning activity, but also comparative insights on attitudes according to museum type. The field of 105 target museums was be chosen from the American Association of Museum’s 2006 list of accredited museums. I chose to survey accredited museums because accreditation demonstrates a commitment to fundamental professional codes and public accountability.

It was my intention to select two museums from each state arbitrarily, one history and one art. Should a state lack one or another type of museum, a multi-disciplined museum would have been substituted from that, or the next state in the alphabetical sequence. In order to focus my sample, I did not survey museums associated with the National Park Service, universities, single-family collections, or those concentrating on collecting contemporary art. Nor did I survey non-collecting
institutions. Each of these kinds of museums operate under special circumstances that are beyond the scope of this project.

The on-line **Museum Deaccessioning Survey** (see appendices B.1 – B.7) was directed specifically to collections managers, or head registrars at each chosen institution. Though museum boards and directors make policy, collection managers and registrars are charged with implementing those policies, and keeping accurate records of deaccessioning and disposal. These professionals would be most qualified to represent with accuracy, the actual details associated with their institution’s collection disposal practices. Ultimately, it was sent to 105 museums in 48 states.

Information received from survey respondents provided a starting point to explore today’s deaccessioning climate in American art, history, and multi-disciplined museums. The survey also helped me to identify collections professionals successfully utilizing transfer today, or those uncomfortable with the method, for follow up interviews. To realize the larger goals of my project however, it was essential to identify and interview other professionals with a working knowledge of deaccessioning practices and methods of disposal including leaders in the museum community who might have a special expertise regarding the practice of transfer, scholars who articulate the justifications for transfer, and museum associations that continue to promote the practice, or similarly structured loan programs. Speaking with professionals about successfully facilitating transfer, and those less experienced with it, help to provide balance in my thesis that gifting objects can be a practical and responsible decision in some situations for all museums. A list of these interview participants and the questions commonly posed may be found in Appendices C.1 and C.2.
Limitations

This project was limited by several variables. I chose to focus on art, history, and multi-disciplinary museums in the United States, since they represent the greatest percentage of museum types in America. I also selected museums that operate independently of a parent organization such as a university or park service. Deaccessions relating to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, (NAGPRA), were left out of the research since they are transfers mandated by law. In addition, attempts to contact and quantify donor intentions concerning gifts to museums were unsuccessful. My research assumes therefore, without qualifying data, that donors may feel the museums promise of perpetuating public domain is at least as important as the other benefit of philanthropy; tax deductions for gifts.
Literature Review

To set the stage for analyzing the transfer method of disposal for deaccessioned objects in the museum field, this literature review covers the history and evolution of American museum collecting. Within this historical context, I reveal key developments in the standards and practices of museum collections management; identify the forces influencing change in those practices; and describe the duties and responsibilities of those charged with collections care.

American Museum Collecting: A Brief History

Museums are inherently institutions that collect objects, defined by *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary* as: “an institution devoted to the procurement, care, and display of objects of lasting interest or value.” The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, England is considered the first public museum with a collection, opening in 1683. The Louvre is certainly the most famous early museum, with its enormous collection of art and historical objects opening to the public in 1793 after the French Revolution. In America, the Charleston Library Society offered examples of plants and animals from the South Carolina countryside in 1773, but it was the patriot-painter Charles Willson Peale who began to assemble the first notable American museum collection in the 1780’s. His career as America’s foremost portrait artist changed forever on July 18, 1786, when he took out an ad in a Philadelphia newspaper: “Mr. Peale, ever desirous to please and entertain the public, will make a part of his house a repository of natural curiosities.” His devotion to this new profession is evidenced by the birth of his eleventh child in 1794, when Peale ceased the tradition of naming his progeny after famous artists, and
began a line of scientists starting with Linnaeus, and later followed by Benjamin Franklin.\(^6\)

A considerable motivation for Peale’s collecting was the belief that most authentic artifacts of uniqueness or value in his time were quickly purchased, and shipped off to Europe. Throughout most of the 19\(^{th}\) century in fact, museum collections amounted to inexpensive copies of masterworks abroad, second-rate original artworks, and a conglomeration of historical or archeological artifacts of little value.\(^7\) Museum collections were predominantly just what Peale claimed: “repositories of curiosities.” As a result, the role of most pre-civil war American museums was fundamentally to entertain and educate the public with a shallow diversity of natural and scientific artifacts. No museums at that time had the resources, or benefactors wealthy enough to sponsor rare or high quality treasures as in European national collections. A new age of philanthropy was, however, about to change the character of American museum collections forever.

S.N. Behrman describes in his biography of British antiques dealer Lord Joseph Duveen, a new 20\(^{th}\) century American aristocracy. With steamships to streamline intercontinental trade, and railroads connecting key urban areas with natural resources such as coal and iron to steel factories, the United States economy was burgeoning at the turn of the century. Public utilities and large department stores flourished along with the banks that financed and served them. Unprecedented material wealth occurred from these new industries for a chosen few, at a time when economic hardship was widespread in the artistic capitals of Europe. During travels abroad, these American industrialists mingled with nobles and aristocrats of similar wealth, but found no hospitality beyond this social contact. They had little in common with aristocratic European families possessing generations of culture and social superiority. Americans were “new money,” and considered crass and unworthy of distinction. Joseph Duveen capitalized on these
otherwise powerful Americans, and suggested a remedy; by collecting Europe’s greatest artistic masterpieces and bringing them home, the Mellons, Rockefellers, Fricks, Morgans, and others could claim an equivalent aesthetic sophistication. Though America’s tycoons may not have suffered insecurities to the extent portrayed by Duveen, they did voraciously embrace his tonic. Soon, there was enormous competition among the most prominent families to accumulate the finest art available. This competition could not have occurred at a better time for Americans, or a worse time for Europeans. Whole collections of priceless, world-class artworks were attained in just a few short years. After World War I, these art collections started to become too large for private families to manage independently, and museums, along with their public communities became the ultimate beneficiaries and caretakers.

As Marjorie Schwarzer states in her book *Riches Rivals and Radicals*:

“Compared to their European prototypes, American museums at the turn of the 20th century lacked depth and quality in their collections. Instead they distinguished themselves by their education programs.” Edward Alexander also points out this relationship between collecting and education in his book *Museums In Motion*: “Most museums collect because they believe objects are important and evocative survivals of human civilization worthy of careful study and with powerful educational impact,” Museums began serving societal interests in promoting a higher standard of behavior and moral code that would make citizens more informed and productive workers in the new industrial economy. When social and economic problems befell communities, some museum visionaries recognized an even greater responsibility. The 1880’s saw the beginning of free public lectures in museums, and the first public school visits to museum exhibitions. In 1899 the Brooklyn Children’s Museum became the first museum dedicated to using collections to educate youth to supplement public schools.”
Exhibitions could deliver relevant, important information to working class audiences in communities. In the winter of 1908, a tuberculosis epidemic ravaged the country and overwhelmed medical resources. The American Museum of Natural History created a public health education exhibition about the disease, complete with take-home pamphlets in many languages to target assistance for the immigrant families. Today, we call this kind of commitment to community part of the non-profit mission. American museums have frequently been at the forefront in serving their communities, even before government tax classifications mandated such behavior.

The organizational structure of today’s museums was fundamentally in place in early museums. A small but efficient group of people were led by a director who involved himself with most aspects of operations. Frequently, the staff consisted of bookkeepers and secretaries who performed general administration, and scholar-curators who managed all aspects of the collection such as acquisitions, storage, exhibitions and disposal. Museum boards were comprised of wealthy citizens with financial, social, and sometimes political reasons for their seats. The director was responsible for keeping the board informed and aware of the larger business of the institution. Since these men were substantially responsible for funding the museum, they were familiar with budgets, and the operating costs of staff, facilities, and acquiring and maintaining a collection. When decisions pertaining to that collection were addressed by these men of action, implementing those decisions might have been an extremely quick and informal act. As Schwarzer tells us: “Cutting inside deals was commonplace. There are tales of directors who would phone a director pal at another museum and ask to borrow a European masterwork. The desired painting would be loaded into the back of someone’s car and driven to its new destiny, backed by a handshake or verbal promise.”
Paperwork was scarce, as were the rules for operating museums in an open, accessible way beholden to the public trust. This was certainly true in the collections management aspect of museum operations. When decisive and powerful individuals were in positions of authority, whether museums or private industry, they tended to manage with little regard to formal rules or fear of public disfavor. It was a time of enormous growth and economic development, and the rules were being written along the way.

American Association of Museums (AAM) has been the primary unifying agency and advocate for museums, museum professionals, and museum standards and best practices since 1906. In 1925 (AAM), published its first Code of Ethics for Museum Workers, the preface of which reads: “Museums, in the broadest sense, are institutions which hold their possessions in trust for mankind and for the future welfare of the (human) race. Their value is in direct proportion to the service they render the emotional and intellectual life of the people. The life of a museum worker is essentially one of service.”

Unlike later codes of ethics, this document is primarily concerned with relationships between employees, the director, and the governing body of museums. By advocating “common” rules of employee conduct, the AAM was creating an instrument to unite the community of museums through those who administer them. Since ethics codes are inherently unenforceable, the camaraderie of this affiliation established a system of peer pressure to bind their work. The AAM maintained this predominantly inward looking approach to museum governance and collections until the 1970’s, when new issues of professional ethics came to the forefront. From the early years of simply pulling museums together professionally, to forming global perspectives in the 1930’s, and the continual evolution of standards and practices deserving legislative affirmations
in the 1960’s, the AAM’s development paralleled its commitment to professional ethics. As the AAM noted in 2000, “Ethical codes evolve in response to changing conditions, values, and ideas. A professional code of ethics must, therefore, be periodically updated. It must also rest upon widely shared values.” These values include public service and adherence to mission. AAM’s current Collections Codes of Ethics begin with this statement: “The distinctive character of museum ethics derives from the ownership, care, and use of objects, specimens, and living collections representing the world’s natural and cultural common wealth. This stewardship of collections entails the highest public trust and carries with it the presumption of rightful ownership, permanence, care, documentation, accessibility, and responsible disposal.” (See Appendix D for entire AAM 2000 Collections Code of Ethics)

Today, the AAM has not one code of ethics but many. The primary code for museums instills the overarching obligations of the mission of public service for present and future generations of the community. Within this context, certain commonly shared standards and best practices of operation are identified in governance, collections, and programs sections. The collections code emphasizes responsible care and preservation as well as respect for museum mission. For example, disposal of collections through acts like deaccessioning and transfer must advance the museum’s mission through supporting direct care of the museum’s collections. These codes are self regulated, but required for AAM accreditation. Perhaps as a result of ethics codes in the profession, Americans have great respect for the educational role museums play in their lives. A 2001 survey revealed 87% of Americans found information from museums to be trustworthy and objective, as opposed to 61% from books, and 50% from television.

Though public museums began in England and France more than a hundred years earlier, Americans have never been content with the European model of the
museum as an exclusive institution. Early museum populists such as John Cotton Dana, director of the Newark Museum spoke eloquently for museums serving the common man. John Dewey was also influential in making education fundamental to the museum mission. As Gail Anderson declares in her 2004 book *Reinventing the Museum*; “The last century of self-examination – reinventing the museum - symbolizes the general movement of dismantling the museum ivory tower of exclusivity and toward the construction of a more socially responsive cultural institution in service to the public.”18

The evolving attitudes toward collections care certainly demonstrate this shift.

**Collections Management: A Brief History**

“That museum collections grow – and sometimes relentlessly – is simply a fact of life.”

-- Stephen E. Weil

As the character of collections changed in 20th century American museums, the obligations of stewardship for them changed as well. Curators trained in the aesthetic interpretation of collection objects found themselves increasingly unprepared to take on the responsibilities for their care and maintenance. Eventually, a separate department of specialists assumed the role of caretakers of museum objects held in trust for the public. These collections professionals were called registrars, and their field was named Collections Management. In 1958 the first edition of the AAM’s Registration Methods was published.20

John Simmons, collections manager at the University of Kansas Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Center defines the term: “Collections Management is everything done to take care of the collections, develop the collections, and make the
collections available for use.”

This concept sounds simple, and perhaps for that reason museum administrators resisted the need to articulate rules and set professional standards. It was not until 1979 that Smithsonian Institution counsel Marie Malaro first advocated for collections management policies at the American Law Institute and American Bar association (ALI-ABA) annual conference of “Legal Problems of Museum Administration.” The Smithsonian museum system followed with required collections policies by 1980, and the AAM formally made them a pre-requisite for accreditation in 1984, establishing a professional subcommittee on registration. Now virtually every museum uses collections policies to formally express the way in which it hopes to serve its institutional mission with the objects under its care. But how we arrived at the field of collections management and its ensuing collections management policies is an interesting story.

Unlike their European counterparts, which were organized, funded and managed by national governments, American museums were described as “an incredible cacophony and chaos of independent organizations.” Generally, young museums were funded from private sources, which asserted private control, in a private manner, by senior staff from a privileged social class. These administrators usually lacked formal training, but frequently had a family experience and background of collecting and borrowing art, making shipping arrangements, and familiarity with the protocols of dealing with European agents, galleries and museums. Since most museums were managed by a similar group of affluent leadership, there existed a network of like-minded “collections experienced” professionals in place for America’s early institutions.

To further understand the development of collections practices, it is necessary to define some terms that will shortly be important to this discussion. First, when a museum agrees to accept ownership of an object, whether by purchase, gift, bequest, or
transfer/exchange from another institution, that object is called an “acquisition.” The object then may be used in many ways to assist the museum in fulfilling its many missions, including as hands-on education tools. If however, the object is deemed important in terms of the museum’s mission and collection goals for the future, it will be “accessioned” into the permanent collection. Permanent collections status means the museum has agreed to an ethical and legal obligation to protect that object, preserve its condition, and make it available for appropriate use. A museum’s collection therefore, includes all the objects accessioned by a museum for permanent ownership. Acquisitions may be used in any manner desired by a museum, including selling at will. Removing an object from the permanent collection, called “deaccessioning,” is a far more complex process. Objects are accessioned into the collection through a strict set of procedures and authorizations overseen by a variety of museum specialists. To later remove that object from the collection involves even more rigorous procedures and authorizations, including demonstrating why it no longer meets the criteria of the museum collecting mission.

The 20th century offered many benchmarks that served to define collections practices and issues in museums. Some unfortunately, occurred as a result of tragic circumstances. In the 1930’s the Russian’s sold more than 2800 works of art from the Hermitage Museum to raise foreign currency for the revolution. Approximately 250 were considered major paintings, and 50 world-class masterpieces. American billionaire Andrew Mellon purchased 33 for approximately 19 million dollars. The selling off of treasures represented the first public deaccessioning scandal of the century. From it, the world witnessed an appalling permanent loss by “discounted sale” of a czar’s accumulated historic treasures to fund a war.

Between 1939 and 1944, Adolph Hitler systematically pillaged the artistic masterworks of Europe to finance the Nazi party. Tens of thousands were stolen,
primarily from Jews, with Hitler intending to sell some and install the others in German museums. Some of the most qualified museum experts in Europe assisted him in this campaign that was designed to inflict the loss of cultural history on nations as well as their freedom. Priceless masterworks were ripped from walls and stored in hazardous environments. Near the end of the war, allied forces with museum professionals from the United States in the lead, began a heroic effort to recover and safeguard these masterworks from further potential harm. Valuable lessons in art handling and conservation of objects occurred as a result of these events. In addition, the indiscriminate condemnation of modern art by Hitler as worthless “Degenerate Art,” illustrated by profound example, the hazards of deaccessioning collections according to contemporary fashion.

Though incidents of questionable behavior by American museums occurred with infrequent regularity throughout the post WWII years, they are generally viewed by this author as the growing pains expected of a profession. Improper loans, inappropriate collaborations, and misuse of collection objects certainly occurred, and lessons were learned. It sometimes took years of debate and analysis for episodes of museum misconduct to result in a collective professional response. But the world’s communications technologies were changing quickly, and American business practices were reacting with equal innovation. As museum scholar Stephen E. Weil stated in 1971, “Seventy years ago, big business could do almost anything it wanted. Today, its operation is hedged by rules prescribing virtually every aspect of its conduct …I believe a parallel transformation is occurring in nonprofit institutions, including our art museums.”

It is not a coincidence that Weil came to the above conclusion when he did, considering most museum historians agree that the early 1970’s was a seminal period for
museum collections management and policy. Not only was Weil prophetic for realizing it at that time, but he devoted many subsequent years of scholarship to contribute to that transformation. What he and others were reacting to at that time was the perception of fundamental change in the management strategies of modern museum leadership, and perhaps the most important transforming event in the United States was just around the corner.

Thomas Hoving was a brash young (36 year old) curator and administrator when he assumed the office of Director at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1967. Raised in New York City affluence, he was educated at the finest preparatory schools and universities in accordance with his upper crust station. His familiarity with donors and potential donor families made him a comfortable choice to lead America’s greatest museum into the future. But Hoving’s background could not have prepared him for controversy in 1972, when reports that he was about to sell important paintings by Gauguin, Manet, Cezanne, Renoir, Picasso and others surfaced.28

Just three years earlier, museum and non-profit leaders across the country had successfully advocated significant changes in federal legislation to allow and continue tax deductions for appreciated property in museum collections. They argued that donations to public institutions are actually owned by the public, and merely held in trust by the institution. Since this property is managed for the public good, it cannot be sold without violating this fiduciary trust. The tax deductions in dispute were therefore essential to the health of these institutions. Now, the largest and most prestigious museum in America was about to violate the foundation of that winning argument. Hoving was selling masterwork paintings simply because he and a senior curator felt they could use the considerable revenue to buy better paintings. As more and more details about collections practices at the Met came out, it was clear that these paintings were merely the tip of the
iceberg when it came to a history of selling works of art. Hoving was only the latest and most powerful of Metropolitan Museum leaders to exercise control over collection objects, often contrary to the explicit instructions of donor agreements. In a letter to the editor in the *New York Times*, Virginia Lewisohn Kahn, daughter of Metropolitan Museum donors Mr. and Mrs. Sam A. Lewisohn, said in reference to the sale of her mother’s cherished Gauguin landscape: “This happens to have been donated to the museum by my mother who intended to make it permanently available to the public. It was a painting she loved. It was not her intention to give the Metropolitan a negotiable security, so that some future curator could convert it to cash.”

The outrage was immediate and loud from the public and museum field alike. As more details of sales surfaced in newspaper articles, two issues became clear: First, museums operating as nonprofit, public institutions have an ethical and often legal obligation to protect and preserve collection objects for future generations; and second, museums needed explicit rules for managing collections under the obligations of public accountability. If reasons to remove an object from the collection do exist, it should be performed according to well thought out standards and procedures that demonstrate a respect for the museum’s unique position as steward of publicly owned property. One reason Director Hoving’s sale of masterwork paintings was so egregious, was the lack of reasonable justification for deaccessioning.

Strict compliance to collection policies with full transparency to the public is essential. “We are fairly active in the deaccessioning world. It’s one of the ways in which we can stay competitive in terms of acquisitions,” says Glenn Lowry, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, (MOMA). “We approach it from a very particular position. First of all, when we were founded in 1929 and subsequently began a collection in 1931, the inaugural gift was given to us with the understanding that we
would sell from that collection to buy more significant and important works of art. When we do accept gifts, they are always unconditional, for a reason.” This statement by the director of one of America’s leading art collecting institutions is not “controversial” in a collections management sense. Mr. Lowry clearly states it has always been MOMA’s public strategy to build and refine it’s collection by deaccessioning. It is a defining principle of it’s mission as a contemporary collecting institution.

Recently, another museum found a more urgent reason to sell collection objects. In December of 2003, Dr. Robert Breunig had just been hired as Director of the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff, (MNA). It was his misfortune to learn that the museum had lost its AAM accreditation, severely limiting its ability to acquire future funding, insurance, or collaborate professionally with other institutions. The previous director had little museum training and had administered the institution into a debilitating financial crisis. With seemingly few options, he led the museum into a partnership with a private dealer to sell 21 pieces from the permanent collection to offset the deficit. Many of these objects were considered among the finest examples of paintings and textiles MNA owned. He followed museum procedures by co-presenting the sale to the museum board with the dealer, but knowingly misrepresented both the quality of the objects and the justifications for a private sale at a fixed price of $947,000. The sale occurred and a press release gave vague details that drew little initial attention from the public. Later, however, the true facts became known among the greater museum and membership community causing public outrage. In just over a year nearly all administrators, along with the entire board resigned.

MNA was not alone in its violation of the fundamental ethical code that deaccessioning must serve the museum’s mission, and that funds must be used to replenish or care for the existing permanent collection. It was simply the latest in a series
of scandals, fortunately small in number, but never the less significant enough to alarm
the public and the field. Collections management policies are designed to protect
collections. Stephen Weil sums up this point well: “Should it ever become the accepted
practice to cannibalize museum collections in order to raise funds for operating expenses,
museums will face a dim future indeed.”

At this writing, the MNA is financially recovered and expects interim re-
accreditation to occur later this year (2007). Dr. Breunig and the board have also begun a
campaign to re-purchase available paintings lost in the original sale. Under capable
leadership, the MNA has negotiated the difficult path to recovering its professional
integrity as an institution, and the trust of the community. So let’s take a look at these
collections policies that make a deaccessioned sale by one museum a scandal, and a
similar sale by another acceptable.

Collections Policies

“Collections are held in trust for the public, and a primary
responsibility of the governing authority is to safeguard this trust.”

-- American Association of Museums

In 1984 the AAM first required all member museums to have a written
collections policy in place as a prerequisite for accreditation. According to Marie
Malaro, “A collections management policy is a detailed written statement that explains
why a museum is in operation and how it goes about its business. The policy articulates
the museum’s professional standards regarding objects left in its care and serves as a
guide for the staff and as a source of information for the public.” She goes on to
identify the following topics as essential to policy content:

1. The purpose of the museum and its collection goals.
2. The method of acquiring objects for the collection
3. The method of disposing of objects from the collection
4. Incoming and outgoing loan policies
5. The handling of objects left in the custody of the museum
6. The care and control of collection objects generally
7. Access to collection objects
8. Insurance procedures relating to collection objects
9. The records that are to be kept of collection activities, when these records are to be made, and where they are to be maintained

A good collections policy is actually a number of policy statements concerning different aspects of managing the collection, presented together for a comprehensive management plan. These varying aspect policies will frequently reference a second document of procedures. John Simmons defines these terms:

- **Policies** clearly establish the standards that regulate the museum’s activities. They identify what needs to be done and provide a framework to help the staff make decisions.

- **Procedures** tell the staff how to do things and provide the mechanism and details for implementing the policy. Procedures are a series of succinct and unambiguous action steps that are developed at the staff level.

The foundation of any good collections policy is certainly the clearly articulated purpose of the museum. This is usually called a mission statement, but may also be presented in combination with a vision statement for meeting the collections plan for the future. Only when the museum’s purpose is defined, can questions concerning the management of collection objects be addressed: How does the museum see itself serving the public? What kinds of objects will be collected to assist that service? What manner of records will be maintained for collection objects? How will those objects be acquired, accessioned, utilized, protected, stored, deaccessioned and removed from the collection, and by what criteria will that happen? These and many other issues are addressed in detail by a well-written collections policy, and the procedures necessary to implement those policies presented for all to see. Not only does the collections policy help the
museum staff better realize the successful performance of their duties, it also illustrates for the public served, exactly how the objects entrusted in its care will be managed ethically and legally within the organizational framework.

Though all nine of Malaro’s essential points of content are important for museums to include in their respective policies, this masters project is primarily concerned with points 1 through 3. We have already discussed the importance of the museum purpose statement, next is the foundation of all collections work: accessioning & deaccessioning.

**Accessioning & Deaccessioning**

“Museums contemplating deaccession should keep one thought in the forefront: A museum exists to serve its public, and to be truly effective, it must maintain the confidence of these beneficiaries.”

--- Marie Malaro, 1998 40

Earlier we defined accessioning as obtaining ownership of an object that is important to the collection vision by purchase, gift, bequest, or transfer/exchange from another institution, and formally processing documents to accept it permanently into the collection. The decision to assume ownership of an object requires that reasonable investigations have taken place to ensure at least the following basic criteria:

- The object is consistent with the goals of the museum;
- The museum is capable of providing proper care for the object;
- The object will be utilized by the museum in the future; and
- The object has been legally and ethically obtained.

Conversely, deaccessioning is the removal of an object from the collection, with one technical correction; deaccessioning is actually the process by which a decision to
permanently remove an object from the collection is made. In all cases, this decision to deaccession must be made using the same important criteria:

- Is the object no longer consistent with the museum goals?
- Can the museum no longer take proper care of the object?
- Does the object no longer have a utilitarian purpose?
- Are there any legal or ethical impediments to deaccession?

The removal of a deaccessioned object involves a two-step process. First comes the proposal by a curator or collections manager. Paperwork to deaccession is created and circulated among multiple departments and people to justify the removal based on one or more policy criteria. Documentation is then presented to the museum board by the director, and if approved, the object is then considered “deaccessioned.” The second step is to facilitate the physical *removal* of the object from the museum called “disposal.”

There are generally four methods of disposal that meet the ethical standards and best practices of the AAM, and would be identified as options in the deaccessioning procedures section of a museum’s collection policy:

1. Sale by public auction;
2. Sale through a reputable dealer;
3. Transfer or Exchange to another non-profit institution; and
4. Destruction.

Each of these methods of disposal carry with them significant additional obligations.

Paulette Hennum, then registrar at the Crocker Art Museum has stated: “The method of disposal should be chosen based upon the benefits to the institution, without compromising standards of professional ethics. In determining the most appropriate method, consideration must also be given to the institution’s responsibility to the public it
serves, the public trust it embodies, its donors, and the artists or makers of works to be disposed. These interests are not always harmonious, and a tug of war may result.\textsuperscript{41}

There are many issues that determine which method of disposal is most appropriate for an object. An important first step is that all options considered are clearly identified in the collections policy, with specific procedures to perform the disposal. The second consideration is that a museum considers each object’s unique qualities and understands that there is no “uniformly correct method of disposal.”\textsuperscript{42}

Sale still includes both public and private transactions, though public sale carries far fewer ethical encumbrances. Trade has come to include any transfer or exchange of ownership that requires no monetary compensation beyond covering the actual costs. Generally, transfers are collaborations with other nonprofit institutions. They offer the unique advantage of maintaining the object’s presence in the nonprofit “public domain,” enabling the continued use for education. Destruction by disposal is a last resort option of removal used in only two situations: when the object has no educational or monetary value, and would consequently be difficult to transfer ownership, or when the object is in such poor condition, including being tainted by pests or other contaminants, that it presents a danger to the staff and other objects within the collection. (Donations to research, or conservation training organizations is rare but appropriate alternatives to destruction)

After examining the historical evolution of museum collecting, and the standards and practices for the management of those collections, one theme stands out; “change.” The development of museums has paralleled events and transformations in American society. Museums have adapted in many ways to remain vital resources for their communities. But what are current deaccessioning practices? The next chapter discusses my research into that question.
Findings

To make a case for collections professionals to consider the transfer method of disposal as an alternative to disposal by sale, I conducted a research survey and interviews with collection professionals to evaluate current museum practices. In February 2007, one hundred and five survey invitations were sent by email to art, history, and multi-disciplined museums around the United States. (A complete survey instrument and resulting data may be found in Appendices B.1 – B. 7) Ninety-nine addressed deliveries were confirmed: 44 art, 42 history and all 13 md museums. Of the 99 delivered surveys, 32 museums participated in the survey; 31% (10) art, 40% (13) history, and 28% (9) md. Responders completing the full survey were: 85% of history museums, 75% of md museums, and just 20% of art museums finished all survey questions. An explanation will be offered after evaluating later data. Eleven questions were designed to assess the practices and attitudes of today’s working collections professionals who perform deaccessioning in their own museums. (See Appendix C.1 and C.2) In addition, I followed up with six survey responders, and nine leading museum scholars, educators, consultants, and working professionals for more detailed information and opinions by interview.

In this chapter I present my findings from this research thematically, organized by survey questions. Interview findings are addressed by comparative analysis of these same themes and applied to the broader context of my project. Each section includes a brief discussion and analysis. Synthesized findings and conclusions are presented at the end.
Survey

In 1997 Roberta Frey Gilboe, then an associate registrar at the Detroit Institute of Arts, conducted research for the American Association of Museums regarding current practices in museum deaccessioning. Her findings were based upon 79 collections policies submitted and analyzed for content. Though the expressed intention was “… a review of current practices in museums …” in reality the examination of policies offered a glimpse at the rules which govern these practices. My project required a more accurate appraisal of the attitudes of collections professionals, and the actual deaccessioning practices in use by today’s museums.

Survey questions were designed to proceed from important general information answers to more detailed ones. The survey required questions to be answered in order for the respondent to continue on to the next question. If responders had any reservations about questions a “Don’t Know” response was offered in most cases. Voluntary sections at the survey end enabled participants to provide more personal data including general comments, and name, museum, title, years a museum professional, and email for permission to follow-up. Most participants who completed the survey did provide this information.

Question 1: What type of museum do you work in?

Thirty-two participants started the survey with this question, 10 art (31%), 13 history (41%), and 9 (28%) multi-disciplined museums. The general proportions of the survey selection template were close to those in the initial participation phase, indicating a robust and random response. Two responders reported a different “type” of museum than expected, and later questions showed they were identifying themselves with their
specialty area rather than the general museum focus. Since their answers were biased in this regard, the decision was made to let them remain in the category in which they chose to affiliate themselves.

**Question 2: How often is deaccessioning and disposal of museum objects performed at your museum?**

Of all responders, 32% said they deaccession yearly. History and md museums are twice as likely as art museums to be on this yearly schedule. Those who follow a two to four year deaccessioning cycle were predominantly history museums at 50%, with art and md museums claiming 25% in this frequency pattern. Of those museums who deaccession infrequently, (every 5 to 10 years) history museums still lead the way followed closely by art museums.

My sample museums indicate 66% of multi-disciplined museums deaccession on a schedule from yearly to every 2-4 years. History museums are the second most frequent at 60%, and art museums do so about 40% of the time. Art museum respondents also admitted that 20% did not know how often deaccessioning takes place.

**Question 3: How urgent would you say the need to perform deaccessioning and disposal at your museum is at this time?**

Eighty-four percent of all museums responding to my survey claimed the need to deaccession is only “moderately urgent” or less. Only three museums (10%), claim they very urgently need collection deaccessioning. Art museums both deaccession less frequently and also claim the need to deaccession is less than all other museum types.

**Question 4: Considering the number of objects deaccessioned at your museum in the last five years, approximately how many objects are disposed of in an average year?**
Twenty-three participants (74%) said that they deaccession fewer than 50 objects per year. Considering the question asks to base the number on the past five years total, most museums can be assumed to do very little volume of deaccessioning and disposal, even over this time period. We must be reminded that the selection process for contributing museums lacked any indication of collection size, which might offer some relative basis for comparison. Of the rest, 10% (3) said they deaccession 51-500 objects a year, and only 1 museum responding to my survey deaccessions more than this.

**Question 5: What methods of disposal are used at your museum most often? Please rank: Private sale, Public sale, Transfer/exchange, Destruction, Other. Answers available: Always used, Frequently used, Infrequently used, Never used, and Don’t Know.**

I was not able to ascertain reliable answers to this question although some interesting patterns did emerge. Possible answers ranged from “Always used” to “Never used,” and “Don’t know.” After close examination it was apparent that some participants who marked “Always used” also claimed second and third less frequently used methods of disposal. It is obvious that some responders considered “Always” to be synonymous with “Most often.” Another qualification in question #5 is that this is where respondents began stopping out of the survey. I suspect the deaccession/disposal content of future questions was becoming apparent, and four of 32 responders didn’t feel comfortable or knowledgeable enough to answer these and ensuing questions.

Previous questions illustrated a somewhat common perspective among museum types to deaccessioning. Question #5 begins to show diverging “styles” of managing collections. All eight art museums indicated they most often utilized public sale 75% of the time, and transfer next frequently at 30% of the time. Private sale and destruction were less frequent choices. Nine of thirteen history museums (69%) used transfer frequently, and destruction (30%) and public sale (23%) less frequently. Multi-
disciplinary museums (8) split evenly in their preferred methods of disposal with both public sale and transfer being the chosen equally at (44%). Transfer was overall more popular however, considering more md museums chose it with higher frequency than sale.

We can assume, based on the literature review, that art museums deaccession more valuable objects; therefore they sell more frequently. This assumption is supported by my survey responses. History museums conversely deaccession objects of lower financial value, and thus may be more willing to give them away by transfer disposal. Multi-disciplinary museums are less definable in terms of their overall collections, but in many cases regional history is the foundation collection, with natural history (low value) and art (higher value) categories to manage.

**Question 6: LABOR COSTS: From start to finish, rank the following methods of disposal according to the expense of staff time to perform.**

As with question #5, the more illuminating discoveries in these answers are best seen by assessing each museum type. Art museums which chose public sale 75% of the time for deaccessions, rate it also as the most time consuming for staff to perform. Transfer is rated, by far, the least laborious choice by 75% of those who answered. History museums who utilized transfer 69% of the time consider it only moderately labor intensive compared to public sale. Five of seven history museums (71%) were convinced that labor costs with sale were more than transfer. Multi-disciplinary museums were split down the middle with public sale getting a slight edge of needing less labor. All in all, it seems that museums feel that selling deaccessioned objects involves more staff time than transferring them.
Question 7: ACTUAL COSTS: Start to finish, rank the following methods of disposal according to your estimated actual dollar fees and expenses necessary to perform.

Overall results from this question showed private sale, public sale, and transfer were rated as equally expensive in direct costs beyond labor. Art museums (5 of 7) ranked public and private sale as most expensive, while none ranked transfer as expensive. History museums rated public sale only slightly more expensive than private sale, with 90% claiming destruction as the very least expensive method of disposal. Multi-disciplinary museums contradicted both the others with 4 of 8 responders ranking transfer the most expensive, and 3 of 8 claiming the least monetary expense. Public sale and private sale followed in the expensive ratings. Again, destruction was thought to be least expensive. In summary, it seems that direct costs beyond labor are about equivalent to all disposal methods with some variations.

Question 8: Has your museum collaborated on a disposal by transferred ownership (gift or exchange) of a deaccessioned object in the last ten years?

Only 26 respondents answered this question, and of them over 2/3 (69%) claim they have transferred objects to another institution as a method of deaccessioned disposal. The least likely museum to use the transfer method was art museums, but even so, two out of the seven who answered the question had transferred objects.

Question 9: Is transfer as a method of disposal considered an available option in your museums collection policy?

Transfer remained an available option in 22 of 26 museums polled. Only one (md museum) said it was not an option, while 3 were unsure. All history museums (11), and 7 of 8 md museums said transfer was an option. Four of the seven remaining art museums said they were sure transfer was an available option.
Question 10: Are disposal options ever discussed during the process of deaccessioning particular objects?

Again, 22 of 26 museums said there were open communications regarding disposal methods during deaccessioning of specific objects. All museum types responded similarly in this category. Two history museum responders said disposal was determined elsewhere, and 2 more weren’t sure.

Question 11: The AAM discusses 5 relevant issues when considering methods of disposal for deaccessioned museum objects. According to your personal and professional beliefs, and NOT representing those of your museum, please rate these issues in importance.

- Perpetuating public domain
- Object preservation
- Generating collections revenue
- Honoring donor intentions
- Inter-museum collaborations

I received 25 responses to this question. Some people chose to rate all as “Very important” except “Generating revenue”, while others ranked none in the “Very important” category. For this reason, I chose to analyze this question by combining the two highest levels of ranked importance.

Art museum professionals rated “object preservation” as their strongest issue. It should be noted that generating revenue was also an important priority to 43% of art museum collections professionals. Multi-disciplinary museum professionals felt their highest obligations were to preserve objects (100%), with “Public domain” and “Inter-museum collaboration” following with 86% support. Donor intentions were also overwhelmingly important at 72%. History museum professionals felt that “Perpetuating public domain” was their greatest goal (91%), followed by “Object preservation” and “Donor intentions” each at 82%. Collaborations were rated strongly at 73%. All
museum types felt generating revenue was somewhat important with art museums polling highest at 57%, history museums 55%, and md museums 29%. Only art museums had “very important” rankings for revenue.

Analysis of Survey Findings

Art museums seem less engaged in regular deaccessioning than other respondents to this survey. They indicate less urgency and longer cycles between deaccessions. Nearly one third did not know how much or how often their museums even perform deaccessions. But they did seem clear about public sales of deaccessioned objects being much more expensive in both labor and actual dollars than the transfer alternative. Yet despite the costs, art museums use public sale overwhelmingly. Of all the museums I surveyed, art museum registrars seem most unfamiliar with transfer disposal. This finding raises the issue of whether art museum boards fully understand the costs involved in deaccessioning art objects in order to sell them to generate income. Though nearly all claimed disposal options were discussed during the deaccessioning process, only four art museum collections professionals indicated they were sure transfer was one of those options. When the survey asked for personal and professional opinions about the important issues identified by AAM involving disposal, art museum people claimed a higher regard for all five than any other group. A full 85% called public domain, object preservation, donor intentions and inter-museum collaborations “Very important.” Forty-three percent also selected generating revenue as being important.

History museums express more urgency to deaccession than other museums I surveyed, and actively do so on a yearly or bi-yearly basis. Nearly all dispose of under 50 objects per year using transfer more than 75% of the time. History museums agree with
art museums that public sale is the most expensive method of disposal, but history museums claim that transfer is moderately expensive as well. History museum registrars appear to be more often involved in the entire deaccessioning process from start to finish. They are familiar with alternate disposal methods, and are opinionated about the issues involved in these choices. Public domain is the highest obligation of those polled who manage history collections. Though objects deaccessioned average only modest dollar value, they somehow find partners in most cases to gift or exchange.

Multi-disciplinary museums perform regular deaccessioning more often than any other museum type surveyed. Fifty percent do so every year, with another 25% every 2-4 years. They also remove more objects from their diverse collections than other museum types. Transfer is chosen for disposal slightly more often than public sale even though it is considered more expensive in both labor and dollar costs. More md collections people claim to have participated in transfers than both art and history museums, perhaps because of the greater volume and frequency of deaccessioning. Because of the great diversity among multi-disciplinary museum collections, it is difficult to make assumptions about disposal motives. Most of those included in this survey however, share at least history, natural science and art collections within their organizations. The combination of both high and low value collection objects may in part, explain the prominent use of both public sale and transfer. When asked for personal opinions about disposals, 100% rated object preservation the greatest responsibility, with public domain and collaborations following close behind.
Interviews

Collections Organization Professionals

Beginning my project research, I investigated the potential for museum and collections related organizations to take a larger role in facilitating transfer disposal, and in adding infrastructure to facilitate web based communications that would result from accelerating collaborations. I contacted three organizations: the American Association of Museums, (AAM) Collection Exchange Center (CEC), the Museum Loan Network, (MLN) and the National Park Service (NPS) Collections Clearinghouse. I discovered that funding issues are just as precarious for museum field organizations as they are in museums. Elizabeth Merritt, Director, Museum Advancement & Excellence at the AAM, and administrator for the CEC, volunteered that contrary to appearance, the CEC had no source of funding to support more active facilitation of deaccessions. The CEC is essentially an online bulletin board for one or two dozen postings at a time, she said. The hope is that use might expand over time, but there are no plans to develop a more sophisticated database or network to make it a significant source of deaccessioned objects in the future.

Another model of museum associations facilitating collaborations is the Museum Loan Network, administered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This very active and widely acclaimed organization is a privately funded nonprofit that assists museums in performing long-term loans of objects of cultural heritage. By mentoring professionals, facilitating, and often funding these loans, museums participating in MLN benefit enormously, as do the communities receiving the educational rewards of the loans. After reviewing the MLN’s publications and website, I was convinced that if they could successfully implement their mission, an equivalent model could work for
deaccession transfer collaborations. **Lori Gross**, MLN Director was kind enough to speak with me.45

“The primary role of the MLN,” Ms. Gross said, “is to promote the spirit of collaboration.” They attempt to “change the mindset” of museums to lend, and the spirit of collaboration gets imprinted. She also offered: “Collaborations are as much about being selfish as anything else. A successful collaboration meets the needs of both institutions.” The last thing Gross wanted the MLN to be was in a “Robin Hood” situation, where it appeared rich museums were giving to poor museums.” When successful partnerships happen, she said, museums are far more likely to carry on collaborations long into the future. When I inquired whether they might also facilitate deaccession transfers, she said this would probably not happen. “There are inherent dangers in listing deaccessions on a public database,” she admits. Deaccessions are a “can of worms” MLN tries never to get involved with since it places them in the middle of donor and public trust issues.

Another point Gross wanted me to understand was that the MLN faces the same funding challenges as museums. “Private foundations supporting arts and culture are currently drying up faster than government support,” she said. No program can exist without staff and dollars to facilitate programs. When asked about the ethical issues of transfer, Gross disagreed that public sale was necessarily unethical; “Museums and staff have an ethical obligation to build their collection for their institution, audience and community.” But, she said, there are no doubt, some questionable practices going on out there, and it is up to the new generation of museum professionals to carry on the important mandate of public trust.

**Kathleen Byrne**, Museum Registrar for the NPS Park Museum Management Program told me that even though the NPS Clearinghouse exchange offers objects to
museums outside the NPS system, few transfers are actually performed by them. Most “conveyances” (NPS version of transfers out of the park system) are facilitated by individual park employees in contact with local institutions, and not through the NPS Clearinghouse. In 2006 the NPS processed 5,983 non-NAGPRA related object deaccessions from 364 Park locations. Of these, 1,184 objects were transferred out of the NPS system, but only about 100 were facilitated through the NPS Clearinghouse. “It’s not a heavily used resource for objects going outside the NPS system,” Byrne said.

Art Museum Collection Professionals

Three leading fine arts professionals contributed to my research in interviews: Roberta Frey Gilboe, and Ted Greenberg and Gianna Capecci. Gilboe authored the 1997 “Report to the Deaccession Task Force of the Registrars Committee of AAM.” She has been a collections registrar for more than 14 years with an expertise in deaccessioning in art museums. Ms. Gilboe began her museum career at the Detroit Institute of Arts, and now is a registrar at the Cranbrook Art Museum. Ted Greenberg has been in the collection field for more than 30 years, as former head registrar at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, (FAMSF), and more recently at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). Mr. Greenberg also spent nine years as an adjunct professor in museum studies at John F. Kennedy University (JFKU), teaching the Documentation of Collections course, and has been an officer in the AAM Registrars Committee for many years. Greenberg currently is a collections consultant for museums throughout the United States. Gianna Capecci is a registrar at the Fine arts Museums of San Francisco (FAMSF), and has more than 24 years collections management experience in a wide variety of collection types. She has also been an adjunct professor in collections
management at both John F. Kennedy University and Sonoma State University, and a
guest lecturer at University of San Francisco.

Roberta Frey Gilboe said it was difficult to draw conclusions comparing ideal
policies with actual practices. But, she says, “The pitfalls of deaccessioning in the past
twenty years have inspired far more awareness in the field.” The new information and
support coming from museum associations which provide professional guidance is
something most professionals are grateful for. “I feel protected by the new guidelines,”
she volunteered. Now she can represent the importance of correct standards and
procedures to her board as essential to proper care for the collection.

Regarding deaccessioning in art museums, Gilboe admitted art museums do
“operate under a lot of pressure to generate revenue for the collections.” They also
continually attempt to refine and improve the collection based upon relevance to the
mission. Cranbrook has very limited acquisition funds so refinement of the collection
through deaccessions could be a significant source of money for new acquisitions.
Though Cranbrook Art Museum has not deaccessioned in the last ten years, Gilboe is
currently completing a deaccession inventory in advance of a large building and
renovation project. The board is encouraging the museum to explore the issue of
deaccessioning material from the collection prior to the move to a new storage facility.

When asked about the possibility of transfer in her museum, Ms. Gilboe admits
it is unlikely. Deaccessioning at Cranbrook, as in other institutions, is driven by the idea
of improving the collection. When an object has little or no value, there is little or no
interest from other institutions. For items that have some value, to dispose of them by
transfer to another institution requires staff time and resources to search out an institution
that might be interested in them. “We have to balance that against the idea that a sale
offers the opportunity for Cranbrook not only to dispose of an item that does not
contribute to the mission, but also to refine and improve the collection with objects that
do contribute.”

Both the DIA and Cranbrook have deaccession procedures that ask two
fundamental questions of the staff: “Will the piece ever be shown?” and “Would another
museum want this?” The answer for Gilboe is most often no to both. But a point she
wanted me to understand was that all parties are concerned about ethics. “There may be
differences of opinion, but I think it is the registrars job to give the best advice about the
manner in which the deaccession should be managed, but they are not the only voice in
the process, nor are they the only ethical voice in the process.” Sale and transfer are
acceptable ways to dispose of deaccessions according to the guidelines of both AAM and
AAMD Gilboe stated, as long as they are performed in a transparent and ethical manner.

Ted Greenberg has managed large deaccessions by both the FAMSF and
LACMA. When asked about transfer disposal he said in the 1960’s the City of San
Francisco began to consolidate historical objects owned or held independently by city
agencies. The FAMSF transferred many historical objects since, though they were
always to another city owned organization.

When asked about the prevalence of art museums to sell most of their
deaccessions, Greenberg said he “had no problem with it.” I pointed out that sales
frequently pass objects out of the public domain where they can no longer serve
educational purposes, or for that matter be assured preservation into the future. He
contributed another perspective: “When an object is sold, it is really going back to the
public. Not for education, but at least it won’t be buried in a collection and never used.”
He went on to also say preservation would not necessarily be compromised by sale
because private owners would want to protect their investment.
Regarding the costs of sale, Mr. Greenberg said he has administered contracts at both the FAMSF with Bonhams, and at LACMA with both Sotheby’s and Christies. Most of the preparatory staff costs are duplicates of the in-house deaccessioning obligations that are simply applied to the disposal. Smaller auction houses can be less expensive with “a better deal in terms of fees and expenses, while the larger firms can be pretty expensive depending on what is negotiated between the museum and auction house.”

There are occasions however, where art is appropriately transferred he says. Greenberg is currently working with the Judah L. Magnes Museum in Berkeley California on a project where two large portraits of an early pioneer and his wife are being considered for transfer to a local historical society. The Magnes Museum leadership has decided they have no relation to the museum mission, and consequently would benefit the community more by the transfer.

Gianna Capecci has performed deaccessioning for a variety of museums and has seen successful transfers benefit both giving and receiving institutions. “There are many museums which are storing objects and art in their collection (at great cost) which never will see the light of day.” “These would be ideal long-term project grant opportunities,” Gianna said. Ms. Capecci remains hopeful for transfer disposal in art collections while admitting, “The value of the sale is one of the most important things to art museums.” On another point, she mentioned that just because art museums have high value objects, it didn’t necessarily follow that art museum deaccessions would be high value also. “In my experience, I’ve seen mostly lower value items and big lots of little things get deaccessioned.” Maria Reilly, senior registrar in charge of deaccessions at the FAMSF confirmed Ms. Capecci’s statement by volunteering that in the past two years
she has deaccessioned 236, three-dimensional and textile objects, with an average value of under $50. Four painting deaccessions realized between $80 and $4500 at auction.49

**Noreen Ong**, former assistant registrar at the Stanford University Museum of Art, supplied documents relating to a deaccessioning project she worked on in 1994-96.50 Performing an extensive inventory in advance of a move-out to a new facility, Ms. Ong kept records of staff time for deaccessions between 1994 and 1996. In all, 1991 objects were removed, 217 by sale and 1715 by transfer disposal. Five transfers to collaborating museums included from seven to 1357 objects, and averaged 2.28 staff hours per object to perform. Sales at public auction required an average of 3.61 hours of combined registrar, curator, preparator, and consulting hours. Deaccessions included all ranges of object value.

**History Museum Collection Professionals**

**Lisa Korzetz** is a senior registrar at The Henry Ford museum in Dearborn Michigan. Ms. Korzetz has more than twenty years of collections experience and recently performed an AAM re-accreditation that estimated the Henry Ford at more than 250,000 three-dimensional objects. Thirty to forty percent are uncatalogued from the days when Henry Ford collected “everything, and often in large multiples.” They regularly deaccession in a manner I found quite innovative. Korzetz says they approach the collection in areas or groups of objects, and perform internally funded CEI’s; Collection Evaluation Initiative projects. During these inspections, objects are consolidated, cataloged, and evaluated for condition, redundancy, relevance, and quality. After this process, any deaccession decisions are submitted by a curator for approval by a committee and the board. A “Deaccession Disposal Team”, which meets approximately once a month, handles the disposal of any deaccessions that may result from this activity.
The group is made up of a collections manager, a registrar (usually Korzetz), a 
conservator, and two director’s of collections. These five experienced collections people 
go over all the relevant issues and determine what method of disposal is warranted. 
Regarding disposal, Korzetz says they regularly use public sale. She is slightly 
concerned about public perceptions, but reminded me that many of these old relics were 
originally purchased by Henry Ford, and most others have no known provenance. 
Unfortunately, provenance was sometimes disconnected from the objects many years ago 
through a past practice of relying on simply tagging the objects with their information. 
Over the years the tags have disintegrated or faded until they are quite illegible and thus, 
reconnecting the objects with their past history becomes very difficult. Sales are not 
publicized, nor are they hidden, but generally performed by a smaller local auction house 
that clearly identifies the accumulated objects as deaccessions from the Henry Ford. 

Ms. Korzetz says they do initiate transfers as often as they can. In 2001, 10,000 
diamond disc molds, (early audio recording devices that related directly to a Thomas 
Edison invention) were transferred. The Edison National Historic Site of the National 
Park Service in West Orange, New Jersey was happy to accept the objects and pay the 
expenses of transfer. In 2002 an antique fire truck was returned to its original hometown 
of Wayne, Michigan. And, nothing that ever belonged to the Ford family ever gets sold; 
it is always transferred to another non-profit organization that tells the story of Henry 
Ford or his family. The Henry Ford would like more opportunities to transfer but most 
current deaccessions don’t have significant historic value to other museums. Even public 
sales generate little meaningful revenue, but they need to maintain a healthy collection 
according to modern mission criteria and open up storage space. Regarding deaccession 
decisions, Korzetz says her opinion is absolutely considered equally with others on the 
Deaccession Disposal Team. They are all “very conscious of the ethical responsibilities,”
yet again, so few objects are wanted by anyone else, most decisions are foregone
conclusions.

The Orange County Regional History Center (OCRHC) in Orlando Florida is
even more committed to transfer. **Cynthia Cardona Melendez**, Curator of Collections
says that everyone at the museum including her director, “is completely supportive of
not selling objects.” Melendez is in charge of a diverse collection of art and crafts,
furniture, decorative arts, and historical objects representing the seven counties of central
Florida. Much of her collections don’t have relevance to the museum today, and are
leftover from the old days when everything was accepted. And yet she says almost
everything deaccessioned gets transferred to another institution. “Selling is never a
preference here” Melendez says. The OCRHC deaccessions twice a year from ongoing
evaluations, and they base all decisions on “what’s best for the object,” and an overriding
sense of ethics to maintain the public domain.

Unlike other museums, Ms. Melendez says she hasn’t found it too difficult to
make contacts and perform transfers. Even when she finds objects with a provenance out
of state, they have had good luck transferring. Transfers help develop relationships and
form a network of similar thinking institutions. I asked if she felt any pressure from
public accountability and she said “Yes, sometimes. But our approach is to take great
care with accessions, and with donors to make sure we do everything right at the
beginning.” The OCRHC doesn’t concern itself with matters of public scrutiny because
everyone has the same attitude about the importance of ethics; “We’re a County museum,
and an accredited member of AAM. We feel an obligation to act ethically and
professionally at all times doing our work.” Regarding transfers Melendez says “I view
transferring objects as sending those items home where they can enrich that area’s
history. Where they can be used and researched by people who should have them. It’s the right thing to do."

In February 2007, I contacted the Registrars Committee American Association of Museums (RCAAM) Digest “Listserv” network looking for any museums that utilize transfers with some frequency in deaccessions. A number of collections managers responded, mostly in areas of natural science and history. **Mary Jane Miller**, Head of Collections Management for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) administers the collection records for 25 sites and museums that actively deaccession more than 500 objects per year. They attempt transfers within the PHMC system first, followed by transfers to museums out of the system, then sale or transfers to other “educational institutions,” and only then public sale or destruction. Ms. Miller has developed and maintains a general mailing list of institutions, a similar email list, and also utilizes AAM’s Listserve and Collections Exchange website to find potential transfer recipients. Still, she estimates 78% of her deaccessions get sold by public auction and only 15% (approximately 75 objects a year) are transferred. Though transfer attempts are not more successful, Miller states “I have always viewed transfer to other educational institutions as keeping objects within the public domain while helping other institutions to build their collections base or their educational collections.”

**Multi-Disciplined Museum Collection Professionals**

**Ron Brister** is a collections manager that performs transfer disposal nearly all the time. The Memphis Pink Palace Museum has more than 100,000 objects, which serve multiple locations including a public museum, mansion, nature center and two historic houses. Regional history, natural science, anthropology / paleontology are the strongest areas in the collection. In 1975 when Mr. Brister was a young curator at the
Pink Palace Museum, they deaccessioned 1/3 of the collection after a feasibility study preparing for new facilities. The public outcry from the ensuing sale was a “disaster” that leadership still painfully remembers. There is little chance it would be attempted again, even 30 years later.

Brister takes great pride in the relationships he has forged during his years in Memphis. He estimates 40 different museums and nonprofits in the outlying areas of western Tennessee, eastern Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Mississippi have asked him to contribute training sessions, lead projects, or perform other services either personally or under the banner of the Pink Palace. These also are among the many receiving institutions of Pink Palace transfer deaccessions. “We’re kind of like a big brother to most of those smaller museums,” he says. Brister’s superiors nearly always support his recommendations for disposal by transfer. The lesson learned long ago still lingers, that “their reputation is more important than money.” Occasionally, a transfer gets reciprocated with a return gift. A college professor who had assisted research at the Pink Palace, heard about a 78,000-object deaccession at the Vanderbilt University Museum. They were clearing out an entire paleontology gallery to sell at auction. The professor suggested the Pink Palace would be an ideal transfer, with the means to preserve and use the objects for education long into the future. The paperwork took nearly a year, but the collection greatly enhanced the museum’s profile in this specialty area. It would never have happened without the professor relating the past generosity and professionalism of the Pink Palace Museum to the university museum staff. Public domain was again the primary motivation for transfer. “It’s not the money, but community ownership that’s important,” Brister says.

John E. Simmons has perhaps the most diverse background of collections experience in my research. He is not only an author and authority on collections
management and policy, but also director of the University of Kansas Museum Studies Program, and collections manager of its Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Research Center. Simmons was not surprised by my survey findings on deaccession sales, citing the decrease in government support and the increased pressure to generate income as a motivator for the sale of deaccessioned objects. “There is a lack of funding in this country because there is a lack of appreciation for what museums do in this country,” he said. “Everywhere else in the world museums are supported by governments. Only in the United States is this not the case.” Mr. Simmons added that he feels that the AAM should take a much stronger stance on deaccessioning and cited the International Council of Museums (ICOM) code of ethics as setting a more rigorous standard toward the sale of objects.

When asked about transfer, Simmons said that sale is “perceived to be more easily accomplished,” and that museums have come to expect the earned income for the collections. The case for transfer is both “ethical and economic,” he said. “(Marie) Malaro always put object preservation at the top of her ethical obligations for museums.” Simmons feels the need to keep objects in the public sector is equally important. “When it comes to selling objects from the collection,” he says, “the market is much greater now. But the ethics responsibility is greater now too.”

**Interview Findings**

My interviews revealed that museum collection professionals from all museum types surveyed are concerned with public trust issues for deaccessioned objects. Yet, financial concerns and lack of facilitating resources from professional support organizations like AAM make transfer disposal of objects a less viable option than sale. My research confirmed that art museums seldom initiate transferred ownership, but one
museum that did utilize transfer found the process more efficient for staff to perform than public sale. History and multi-disciplinary museums commonly attempt the transfer of objects and archive documents to other regional institutions. Because of the difficulty in finding recipients for three-dimensional object transfers however, public sale is reluctantly (yet frequently) substituted for failed efforts. It is clear though, that history museums successfully perform transfer much more actively than other types of museums. History objects may represent low dollar values but frequently have some regional or utilitarian importance. My research indicated the most active and successful transferring museums were found in the Southeast region of the country, where an abundance of local historical societies and museums are concentrated. For this reason, history museum registrars more often feel an ethical and professional responsibility to attempt transfer collaborations before selling. “Sending the object home,” was a common theme.

Multi-disciplinary museum interviews, like their collections, represented the most diverse and surprising results. One collections manager claimed almost exclusive use of transfer in deaccessions, another as a first preference that frequently fails, and a third that nearly always disposes by sale.

Because md collections generally have a foundation in historical objects, and also areas of high value, they share many of the previously mentioned tendencies of history and art museum registrars. Most interviews said transfer was highly desired and frequently attempted, although public sale was also used to generate proceeds for future collections needs.
Conclusions

Although it has been written about frequently in literature and the press, my research revealed that deaccessioning is likely not a high management priority in museums today. Overall results from my survey indicated museums deaccession in small numbers on a relatively regular schedule. Three quarters deaccession and dispose of fewer than 50 objects a year. Interviews painted a picture of institutions having a genuine need to remove irrelevant, and inferior quality objects from collections. Most collections professionals however, expressed a lack of adequate funds and staff to be more ambitious in achieving deaccessioning project goals.

My research showed that the method of disposal for removing objects from the collection is primarily influenced by object value. Though institutional preferences exist according to ethical principles and familiarity of process, both high and low value objects are commonly sold, while moderate value objects may be considered for transfer. This is less true in some regions of the country that enjoy higher concentrations of potential recipient non-profits. But even then, serious efforts often fail. High value objects are considered too important for generating collections revenue to give away. My survey indicated history and md museums attempt transfer most often, at more than 60% (combined) of the time. Art museums often cite the high value of their collections as the reason they dispose by sale, yet interviews suggest their deaccessions also include many low and moderate value objects as well.

Transfer may be an economically viable disposal option for all museum types, since most museums stated it takes fewer staff resources and actual expenses to perform than sale. Even though art museums sell objects approximately 75% of the time, they rank the process in my survey as “Most Expensive” to perform, far above transfers. This
conclusion was confirmed by art museum assistant registrar Noreen Ong, who tracked staff hours for deaccessions over three years. Based upon both survey and interview data, it is clear the more familiar a museum is with the process and procedures of any disposal method, the more likely it is to be chosen and successfully implemented. Art museums that almost always remove even modest value objects by sale, may want to consider transfer more often in future disposal decisions.

With increasing pressure to generate earned income, my research suggests that museum professionals continue to question the balance of public trust obligations, with those of meeting museum mission goals. Though deaccessioning is guided by AAM promoted standards and best practices, it is actually an internal, unregulated process. Museum associations do not have the resources for oversight of these voluntary guidelines, but can support new scholarship and exchange of professional information about collections issues and practices.
Recommendations

“Museums contemplating deaccession should keep one thought in the forefront: A museum exists to serve its public, and to be truly effective, it must maintain the confidence of these beneficiaries.”

-- Marie C. Malaro

Based upon the previous findings and conclusions, I offer the following recommendations to the American museum community:

A. Museums need to recognize the value of regular deaccessioning as an important aspect of maintaining collection health. Leadership would be advised to budget staff and resources for more regular performance of such necessary responsibilities.

Not enough money is dedicated to collections maintenance. My survey illustrated modest deaccessioning practices in American museums, but interviews confirmed that the need for deaccessioning projects is much greater than the resources to accomplish them. When deaccessioning does occur, even regular deaccessioning, it is often performed with a sense of urgency to complete the project and return staff to what is perceived to be more important collection duties. I would argue that there are few more important issues that concern a museum today than holding inappropriate objects in storage.

Much has been written about the costs of collection storage. Washington architect George Hartman’s 1983 study estimated museums spend $50 per object per year in storage. My calculations appreciate that number to more than $100 per object today. Collections are expensive responsibilities. Deaccessioning inappropriate or irrelevant objects is also argued a costly process that many museums address reluctantly.
But the long-term savings of reduced storage, maintenance, and conservation expenses should justify at least serious consideration of a greater commitment.

As in disposal, my research suggests that familiarity with the procedures of collection inventory and evaluation often determines the frequency and efficiency of those projects. Lisa Korzetz at The Henry Ford museum has a model approach to the task; they regularly perform Collection Evaluation & Initiative projects (CEI’s). These inventories consolidated object types or groups, and evaluated them for condition, redundancy, relevance, and quality. Post inspection reports are sent to a Deaccession & Disposal Team (D&D), which meets approximately once a month. These experienced collections professionals go over all the relevant issues and determine whether removal is appropriate, and if so, what method of disposal is warranted. Each of these teams is uniquely trained and qualified to do a job. They work quickly and efficiently, making it possible to streamline the deaccession process. Staff is not “pulled” from other duties, but scheduled to perform CEI’s on a regular basis. In addition to deaccession evaluation, CEI’s also efficiently flag objects with condition or storage concerns for conservation follow-up.

Like many museums, Korzetz states they have an enormous amount of work to do, as 30-40% of the 250,000 object collection remains uncatalogued after decades of unrestrained Henry Ford era acquisitions. But by addressing collection maintenance in this methodical way, her modest staff is making real progress.

**B. Museums should re-evaluate their collections policies to consider not only the procedures to implement disposal options, but also the clear policy guidelines used to select them. The decision to choose how an object is removed deserves both practical (economic), and ethical considerations in order to honor museum nonprofit obligations. A museum’s mission and public trust responsibilities are relevant in disposal, just as they are in accessioning and deaccessioning.**
Collection content changes over time according to evolving strategies, opportunities, and leadership. Museum facilities, and the technology used to protect collections are updated with frequency. As the AAM noted in 2000, “Ethical codes evolve in response to changing conditions, values, and ideas. A professional code of ethics must, therefore, be periodically updated. These values include public service and adherence to mission.” In the midst of change, museum collections policies would also benefit from a periodic re-evaluation of policy vision, and appropriate procedures and guidelines.

When museums make deaccession decisions, the foremost criteria in most collection policies is mission criteria; Relevance, object condition, object quality, and redundancy. Many collections professionals I spoke with during this project research said they wished another criteria were considered; “Will this object ever be used by us?” From highest value art collections to lowest value rock and mineral specimens, registrars are troubled by the fact that an object may be within the scope of mission objectives, yet outside of the quality parameters that would permit it’s use in that institution. Roberta Frey Gilboe, registrar at the Cranbrook Museum of Art, said she asks that question all the time, but usually in the context of “should it be sold,” rather than should it be transferred to another nonprofit. When she was the registrar managing deaccessions at the Detroit Institute of Arts, she said their policy also asked, “Would another museum want this object?” They deaccessioned mostly high value objects, Gilboe said, yet some material was not of sufficient quality to be successfully sold at auction. “But there were certainly times that the DIA deaccessioned items that were high enough in value that it would have been very possible that another museum would have been interested in acquiring them.”

It is reasonable to expect collection policies to address the ethical issues of public trust. As represented previously, collections managers consider these issues
regularly in the course of their work. Interviews with art museum registrars who perform deaccessions showed they were especially sensitive to the standard mission criteria, and consider their obligations to be primarily institutional. As MLN director Lori Gross stated, “Museums and staff have an ethical obligation to build their collection for their institution, audience and community.” Most art museum collections professionals saw little conflict in the fact that deaccessioned sales generated revenue that helped to build their collection. I would argue the nonprofit mandate a museum has to manage its collection as a legal trust, deserves at least some ethical consideration during the disposal process. My survey indicated nearly all collections professionals held strong personal beliefs that public service issues were of the highest importance to their work. A common theme in interviews with history collection professionals was that they always ask first, “how can we keep these deaccessions in museums.” Without exception in my research, history professionals felt a unique obligation for all issues of public trust, without categorizing them so. The message was constantly, “how do I get this object home,” or “Who would appreciate and benefit by this object most?”

Collection policies written for museums in the 21st century should consider new issues and strategies. As always, they must streamline procedures for a staff that is already stretched thin, and identify the criteria that will ensure deaccessioning is occurring for the right reasons. They should also, however, identify criteria that will help determine where a removed object will go, and how it will get there. When will objects be offered for public sale? How will an object’s historic or aesthetic value to another institution be considered along with its dollar value for potential collections revenue? How important is it in a museum’s vision, to maintain object presence in the public domain after deaccession? Collection policies in the future should also be vision
statements, with guidelines for implementing it’s public service, as well as the management of objects that serve the museum mission.

C. All museums need to consider the benefits of utilizing the transfer method of disposal more often when deaccessioning objects.

Art museums represent the lowest incidence of transferred deaccession disposal of all museums in my survey at 30%. Even this number may be optimistic since my interviews revealed that most transfers were actually inter-system reorganizations rather than ownership changes. But art museum collection professionals do identify with the transfer method of disposal as a viable option on certain occasions.

My research presented strong evidence that object value was the primary influence in determining method of disposal. This was not always by choice, however, since history and md museums frequently attempted low value transfers that failed to find a recipient museum. In these cases, registrars reluctantly sold objects after accumulating sufficient quantities for auction. In the case of art museums, registrars expressed the opinion that since their collections contained an abundance of high value objects, they had little choice but to choose public sale almost exclusively. But does the existence of high value in galleries translate to high value deaccessions? Gianna Capecci from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco volunteered that she has seen mostly large lots of relatively inexpensive objects in her experience. In the interest of fairness, I would agree that high value art is more appropriately sold by public auction in most cases, to generate revenue for building collections. But if art museum deaccessions also include modest dollar value lots, they may represent a much more attractive opportunity to transfer objects to other nonprofit institutions where their educational and aesthetic purpose could be perpetuated in a new community.
It is good to remember why transfer has been advocated by the AAM as a preferred method of disposal since 1925. Transfer is the only method of deaccession disposal that honors all ethical issues of professional standards and practices, and public trust obligations. The AAM identifies three ethical issues when discussing deaccession disposal:

- Honoring donor intentions for education;
- Perpetuating public domain; and
- Perpetuating object preservation.

Museum professionals are additionally asked to make an ethical commitment to uphold the museum’s mission in all their professional activities. My research indicated most art museum collections professionals cited this obligation as the reason disposal by sale was justified. Lori Gross from the Museum Loan Network stated, “Museums and staff have an ethical obligation to build their collection for their institution, audience and community.” I agree, generating revenue helps museums build their collections, and consequently qualifies as an ethical decision. The question remains however, does it take precedence over the public trust obligations which preceded deaccession? As former Crocker Art Museum registrar Paulette Hennum has stated: “The method of disposal should be chosen based upon the benefits to the institution, without compromising standards of professional ethics.”

The AAM’s museum code of ethics makes it clear that objects held in the collections of nonprofit museums are legally held in trust for the community served. Museums don’t own objects, the community does. When an object is “permanently accessioned” into a museum collection, all of the above obligations are an expressed “permanent obligation.” When the decision is made to remove an object from the collection, a case can be made that these obligations do not end, but should be passed on
to another nonprofit institution. Contemporary interpretation of this mandate is usually made with a generous amount of flexibility, enabling an institution to sell objects nearly at will. But the heart of the issue is that once objects are owned by museums for public service, they should not easily or casually pass out of that stewardship where qualified caretakers may not reliably protect them.

Making Decisions for one’s own collection does not carry the same responsibility as appraising the artistic qualities and values of a public trust, and possibly depriving future generations of irreplaceable treasures.

-- John Rewald 58

If art museums do deaccession moderately valuable objects that would be highly desirable to another institution, why do they resist the opportunity to transfer more often? The answer lies substantially in my survey results; Art museums use disposal by sale more than 75% of the time even though they admit conclusively that sale is far more expensive to perform in both staff time and dollar expense. If an object has only moderate value, the sale process then becomes proportionately more expensive. Art museums choose sale based first on object value (for collections revenue), and second because of familiarity with the process. History and md museums are well acquainted with both transfer and sale processes, so they can make objective decisions based also on public service criteria. In their case, survey results showed sale and transfer to be nearly equal in both labor and dollar expense. Without the bias of either high values or familiarity with only one method of disposal, history and md museums are able to react in the best interests of their institution, and also opportunities to collaborate with other museums. History museum collection professionals commented unanimously in interviews, about the satisfaction of “sending and object home,” when a good match is found for transfer. “Selling is never a preference here” said Cynthia Cardona Melendez,
curator of collections at the Orange County Regional History Center in Orlando Florida. Everyone at her museum including her director, “is completely supportive of not selling objects,” she says. “What’s best for the object,” and the overall mission of the museum field is the only important issue.
Notes:

2 See appendix A.
6 Flexner, p. 213.
8 Marjorie Schwarzer, Riches, Rivals & Radicals: 100 Years of Museums in America, (Washington D.C: AAM, 2006), 11.
9 Edward P. Alexander, Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums, (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1979) p.119.
10 Ibid. p.11-12.
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22 American Law Institute – American Bar Association.
26 The State Hermitage Museum website, history, (accessed 3/15/2007) http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/html_En/05/hm5_1_37.html
27 Weil, p.4. 
32 Ibid.
34 AAM, Considerations for AAM Accredited Museums Facing Retrenchment or Downsizing, (Washington: AAM, 2003), www.aamus.org/.../upload/Considerations%20for%AAM%20Accredited%20Museum%20Undergoing%20Retrenchment.doc
37 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
44 Elizabeth Merritt, telephone interview and email follow-up, January 22, 2007
46 Roberta Frey Gilboe, telephone interview, March 27, 2007.
49 Maria Reilly, Email correspondence dated April 30, 2007.
50 Noreen Ong, Email correspondence providing information and her research documents from a workshop presented at the Registrars Committee-Western Region, Santa Clara University, August, 2001.
51 Cynthia Cardona Melendez, Telephone interview March 29, 2007
56 See Appendix E.
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Collections Manager,
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Ted Greenberg
Collections Consultant,
Former Head Registrar, LACM
Western Chair, Registrars Committee, American Association of Museums
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Cambridge, MA.
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Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission
Harrisburg, PA.
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Director, University of Kansas Museum Studies Program
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Callie Stewart
Collections Manager,
The Bennington Museum
Bennington, VT.
Telephone interview March 29, 2007
Appendix A

MUSEUM TYPE DEMOGRAPHICS

Masters Project Deaccessioning Survey, 2007, (32 Museums Total)

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<th>Museum Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Art Museums</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>History Museums</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-disciplinary</td>
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AAM Accredited Museums *

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<th>Primary Museum Type</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Art Museum/Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic House/ Site</td>
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<tr>
<td>History Museum</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science/Technology Museum/Center</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural History/Anthropology Museum</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General (Multi-disciplinary)</td>
<td>8%</td>
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</tbody>
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Children's/ Youth, 1%
Aquarium, <1%
Nature Center, <1%
Zoological Park, 1%
Arboretum/ Botanical Garden, 2%
Specialized Museum (e.g. railroad, music, aviation), 2%

Report to the Deaccessioning Task Force of the Registrars Committee, Contributing Museums, 1997 (79 Museums Total)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Museum Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art Museums</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-disciplinary</td>
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Appendix B.1

MUSEUM DEACCESSIONING SURVEY

Collections Professionals,
This survey is presented as a research instrument for my graduate thesis at John F. Kennedy University, Museum Studies Department. Your brief participation will greatly enhance my ability to represent current deaccessioning trends and attitudes in American museums. Thank you in advance for your time.

1. What type of museum do you work in? Please choose the closest category available.
   - Art
   - History
   - Multi-Disciplinary
   - Other

2. How often are deaccessioning and disposal of museum objects performed at your institution?
   - Yearly
   - Every 2-4 years
   - Every 5-10 years
   - Don't Know

3. How urgent would you say the need to perform deaccessioning and disposal of collection objects at your institution is at this time?
   - Very Urgent
   - Needed but not Urgent
   - Not needed

4. If you were to estimate the number of objects deaccessioned at your institution in the past five years, approximately how many would you say are disposed of in an average year?
   - 0-50
   - 51-500
   - 501-1,000
   - more than 1,000

5. What methods of disposal are utilized at your institution most often? Please rank each of the following with 1 being always used, 2 frequent, 3 infrequent, 4 never used, 5 don’t know.
   - Private Sale
   - Public Sale
   - Transfer/ (trade or gift)
   - Destruction
   - Other

6. Labor Costs: Start to finish, rank the following methods of disposal according to the expense of staff time necessary to perform. Please estimate considering all duties from initial preparation through final documentation.
   - Please rank each of the following in order from 1 being most expensive, 2 fairly expensive, 3 modest expense, 4 being least expensive, and 5 don’t know:
   - Private Sale
   - Public Sale
   - Transfer/ (trade or gift)
   - Destruction
   - Other

7. Actual Expenses: Start to finish, rank the following methods of disposal according to your estimated actual dollar fees and expenses necessary to perform. Please do not factor in any return value from sale or trade.
   - Please rank in order from 1 being most expensive, 2 fairly expensive, 3 modest expense, 4 being least expensive, and 5 don’t know:
   - Private Sale
   - Public Sale
   - Transfer/ (trade or gift)
   - Destruction
   - Other

8. Has your museum collaborated on disposal by transferred ownership (gift or exchange) of a deaccessioned object in the last ten years?
9. Is the transfer (gift or trade) method of disposal considered an option at your museum, as defined by the collections policy?
   Yes              No              Not Sure

10. Are disposal options for particular objects ever discussed during the deaccessioning process at your institution?
    Yes              No              Not Sure

11. The AAM discusses 5 relevant issues when considering methods of disposal for deaccessioned objects. According to your personal and professional beliefs, and NOT those of your institution, please rate these issues in importance.

    Very Important      ImportantSomewhat Important      Not Important
    Perpetuating Public Domain
    Object Preservation
    Generating Collections
    Revenue
    Honoring Donor Intentions
    Inter-Museum Collaborations

12. At this time, please feel free to make any comments about the content or style of this survey. In addition, I would welcome any personal experiences or opinions regarding the deaccessioning process, disposal by sale, disposal by transfer, or related topics. Your wisdom and insights will greatly enhance the quality of my thesis project.

    Yes              No

13. The following questions are voluntary, but would be extremely valuable in connecting responses with issues such as personal experience, museum & collection size, geographic region, etc. All information is absolutely confidential, and email contact by permission only with address provided below.

Name ___________________________________________ Title ____________________________
Institution ________________________________________________________________
Years a Museum Professional? ______________
Email: ____________________________________________

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

Douglas DeFors
John F. Kennedy University
Appendix B.2

SURVEY RESPONDERS

Art Museums

Anonymous Museum
Anonymous Museum
Anonymous Museum
Allentown Art Museum, Allentown, PA.
Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock, AR.
Fine Arts Museum San Francisco, CA.
Frey Art Museum, Seattle, WA.
Miami Art Museum, Miami, FL.
Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Utica, NY.
Charles M. Schulz Museum, Santa Rosa, CA.

History Museum

Arizona Historical Society Museum, Tuscon
Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, GA.
Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI.
Chippewa Valley Museum, Eau Claire, WI.
Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, MI.
Independence Seaport Museum, Philadelphia, PA.
Jewish Museum of Maryland, Baltimore, MD.
Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY.
Museum of Nebraska History, Lincoln, NB.
Oberlin Heritage Center, Oberlin, OH.
Orange County Regional History Center, Orlando FL.
Rogers Historical Museum, Rogers, AR.
Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center, Sacramento, CA.

Multi-disciplinary Museums

The Bennington Museum, Bennington VT.
Memphis Pink Palace Museum, Memphis, TN.
National Music Museum, Vermillion, SD.
Judah L. Magnes Museum, Berkeley, CA.
Kalamazoo Valley Museum, Kalamazoo, MI.
Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI.
Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA.
Riverside Metropolitan Museum, Riverside, CA.
Appendix B.3

**RESPONDING MUSEUM PROFILE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surveys sent</th>
<th>105</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surveys delivered</th>
<th>99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surveys declined</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surveys responded</th>
<th>32</th>
<th>Survey completed</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>62%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31% completed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40% completed</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28% completed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Art Museums**
- Delivered surveys: 44, 44% of all sent
- Responses: 10, 22% participated
- Completed: 2, 4.5% completed

**History Museums**
- Delivered surveys: 42, 42% of all sent
- Responses: 13, 30% participated
- Completed: 12, 29% completed

**Multi Museums**
- Delivered surveys: 13, 13% of all sent
- Responses: 9, 69% participated
- Completed: 6, 46% completed
Appendix B.4

DEACCESSIONING SURVEY – All Responders

1. What type of museum do you work in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-disciplinary</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. How often is deaccessioning and disposal of museum objects performed at your museum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every 2-4 years</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every 5-10 years</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How urgent would you say the need to perform deaccessioning and disposal of collection objects is at your museum at this time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urgency</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very urgent</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately urgent</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed but not urgent</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not needed</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Considering the number of objects deaccessioned at your museum in the last five years, approximately how many objects are disposed of in an average year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-50</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-500</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-1000</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 1000</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

( skipped this question) 1
5. What methods of disposal are used at your museum most often? Please rank each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Always used</th>
<th>Frequently used</th>
<th>Infrequently used</th>
<th>Never used</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Response Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sale</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>15% (4)</td>
<td>67% (18)</td>
<td>15% (4)</td>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sale</td>
<td>26% (7)</td>
<td>22% (6)</td>
<td>22% (6)</td>
<td>22% (6)</td>
<td>7% (2)</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer (gift or exchange)</td>
<td>18% (5)</td>
<td>46% (13)</td>
<td>21% (6)</td>
<td>7% (2)</td>
<td>7% (2)</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>15% (4)</td>
<td>63% (17)</td>
<td>15% (4)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>11% (3)</td>
<td>29% (8)</td>
<td>57% (16)</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Respondents | 28 |

6. LABOR COSTS: Start to finish, rank the following methods of disposal according to the expense of staff time necessary to perform. Please estimate considering all duties from initial preparation through final documentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Most Expensive</th>
<th>Expensive</th>
<th>Moderately Expensive</th>
<th>Least Expensive</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sale</td>
<td>8% (2)</td>
<td>19% (5)</td>
<td>8% (2)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>62% (16)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sale</td>
<td>19% (5)</td>
<td>31% (8)</td>
<td>19% (5)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>31% (8)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer (gift or exchange)</td>
<td>8% (2)</td>
<td>23% (6)</td>
<td>35% (9)</td>
<td>15% (4)</td>
<td>19% (5)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>8% (2)</td>
<td>65% (17)</td>
<td>23% (6)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>96% (25)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Respondents | 26 |

7. ACTUAL EXPENSES: Start to finish, rank the following methods of disposal according to your estimated actual dollar fees and expenses necessary to perform. Please do not factor in any return value from sale or trade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Most Expensive</th>
<th>Expensive</th>
<th>Moderately Expensive</th>
<th>Least Expensive</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Response Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sale</td>
<td>12% (3)</td>
<td>12% (3)</td>
<td>12% (3)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>62% (16)</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sale</td>
<td>12% (3)</td>
<td>27% (7)</td>
<td>31% (8)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>31% (8)</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer (gift or exchange)</td>
<td>12% (3)</td>
<td>8% (2)</td>
<td>31% (8)</td>
<td>31% (8)</td>
<td>19% (5)</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>69% (18)</td>
<td>23% (6)</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>96% (25)</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Respondents | 26 |

8. Has your museum collaborated on disposal by transferred ownership (gift or exchange) of a deaccessioned object in the last 10 years?

| Yes                           | 69.2% | 18    |
| No                            | 3.8%  | 1     |
| Not sure                      | 26.9% | 7     |

| Total Respondents | 26 |

77
9. Is transfer as a method of disposal considered an available option in your museum’s collections policy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Are disposal options ever discussed during the process of deaccessioning particular objects?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. The American Association of Museums discusses 5 relevant issues when considering methods of disposal for deaccessioned museum objects. According to your personal and professional beliefs, and NOT representing those of your museum, please rate these issues in importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perpetuating public domain</td>
<td>48% (12)</td>
<td>40% (10)</td>
<td>8% (2)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object preservation</td>
<td>64% (16)</td>
<td>24% (6)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>8% (2)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating collections revenue</td>
<td>8% (2)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>36% (9)</td>
<td>52% (13)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honoring donor intentions</td>
<td>56% (14)</td>
<td>24% (6)</td>
<td>16% (4)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-museum collaboration</td>
<td>32% (8)</td>
<td>48% (12)</td>
<td>16% (4)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. At this time, please feel free to make any comments about the content or style of this survey. In addition, I would welcome any personal experiences or opinions regarding the deaccessioning process, disposal by sale, disposal by transfer, or related topics. Your wisdom and insights will greatly enhance the quality of my thesis project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. The following questions are voluntary, but would be extremely valuable in connecting responses with issues such as professional experience, museum/collection size, geographic region, etc. * All information is absolutely confidential, and email contact by permission only with address provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>95.2%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as a museum professional</td>
<td>95.2%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B.5

DEACCESSIONING SURVEY – Art Museum Responders

1. What type of museum do you work in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-disciplinary</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 10

2. How often is deaccessioning and disposal of museum objects performed at your museum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every 2-4 years</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every 5-10 years</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 10

3. How urgent would you say the need to perform deaccessioning and disposal of collection objects is at your museum at this time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urgency</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very urgent</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately urgent</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed but not urgent</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not needed</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 10

4. Considering the number of objects deaccessioned at your museum in the last five years, approximately how many objects are disposed of in an average year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-50</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-500</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-1000</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 1000</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 10

(filtered out) 22

(skipped this question) 0
5. What methods of disposal are used at your museum most often? Please rank each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Always used</th>
<th>Frequently used</th>
<th>Infrequently used</th>
<th>Never used</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Response Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sale</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>23% (2)</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sale</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer (gift or exchange)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. LABOR COSTS: Start to finish, rank the following methods of disposal according to the expense of staff time necessary to perform. Please estimate considering all duties from initial preparation through final documentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Most Expensive</th>
<th>Expensive</th>
<th>Moderately Expensive</th>
<th>Least Expensive</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sale</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>57% (4)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sale</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer (gift or exchange)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>100% (7)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. ACTUAL EXPENSES: Start to finish, rank the following methods of disposal according to your estimated actual dollar fees and expenses necessary to perform. Please do not factor in any return value from sale or trade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Most Expensive</th>
<th>Expensive</th>
<th>Moderately Expensive</th>
<th>Least Expensive</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sale</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>57% (4)</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sale</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer (gift or exchange)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>100% (7)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Has your museum collaborated on disposal by transferred ownership (gift or exchange) of a deaccessioned object in the last 10 years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Total Respondents** | **7**         |
| (filtered out)        | 19            |
| (skipped this question)| 6             |
9. Is transfer as a method of disposal considered an available option in your museum's collections policy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Are disposal options ever discussed during the process of deaccessioning particular objects?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. The American Association of Museums discusses 5 relevant issues when considering methods of disposal for deaccessioned museum objects. According to your personal and professional beliefs, and NOT representing those of your museum, please rate these issues in importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perpetuating public domain</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object preservation</td>
<td>86% (6)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating collections revenue</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honoring donor intentions</td>
<td>71% (5)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-museum collaboration</td>
<td>57% (4)</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. At this time, please feel free to make any comments about the content or style of this survey. In addition, I would welcome any personal experiences or opinions regarding the deaccessioning process, disposal by sale, disposal by transfer, or related topics. Your wisdom and insights will greatly enhance the quality of my thesis project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. The following questions are voluntary, but would be extremely valuable in connecting responses with issues such as professional experience, museum/collection size, geographic region, etc. *(All Information is absolutely confidential, and email contact by permission only with address provided below.)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as a museum professional</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B.6

DEACCESSIONING SURVEY – History Museum Responders

1. What type of museum do you work in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-disciplinary</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. How often is deaccessioning and disposal of museum objects performed at your museum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every 2-4 years</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every 5-10 years</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How urgent would you say the need to perform deaccessioning and disposal of collection objects is at your museum at this time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urgency</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very urgent</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately urgent</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed but not urgent</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not needed</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Considering the number of objects deaccessioned at your museum in the last five years, approximately how many objects are disposed of in an average year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-50</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-500</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-1000</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 1000</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(filtered out) 18
(skipped this question) 1
5. What methods of disposal are used at your museum most often? Please rank each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Always used</th>
<th>Frequently used</th>
<th>Infrequently used</th>
<th>Never used</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Response Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sale</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>82% (9)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sale</td>
<td>18% (2)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>36% (4)</td>
<td>36% (4)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer (gift or exchange)</td>
<td>17% (2)</td>
<td>75% (9)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>27% (3)</td>
<td>64% (7)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>17% (2)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>67% (8)</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 12
(filtered out) 16
(skipped this question) 4

6. LABOR COSTS. Start to finish, rank the following methods of disposal according to the expense of staff time necessary to perform. Please estimate considering all duties from initial preparation through final documentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Most Expensive</th>
<th>Expensive</th>
<th>Moderately Expensive</th>
<th>Least Expensive</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sale</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>64% (7)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sale</td>
<td>18% (2)</td>
<td>27% (3)</td>
<td>18% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>36% (4)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer (gift or exchange)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>18% (2)</td>
<td>64% (7)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>100% (11)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 11
(filtered out) 15
(skipped this question) 6

7. ACTUAL EXPENSES: Start to finish, rank the following methods of disposal according to your estimated actual dollar fees and expenses necessary to perform. Please do not factor in any return value from sale or trade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Most Expensive</th>
<th>Expensive</th>
<th>Moderately Expensive</th>
<th>Least Expensive</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Response Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sale</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>64% (7)</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sale</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>27% (3)</td>
<td>27% (3)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>36% (4)</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer (gift or exchange)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>55% (6)</td>
<td>27% (3)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>91% (10)</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>100% (11)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 11
(filtered out) 15
(skipped this question) 6

8. Has your museum collaborated on disposal by transferred ownership (gift or exchange) of a deaccessioned object in the last 10 years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 11
(filtered out) 15
(skipped this question) 6
9. Is transfer as a method of disposal considered an available option in your museum’s collections policy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Are disposal options ever discussed during the process of deaccessioning particular objects?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. The American Association of Museums discusses 5 relevant issues when considering methods of disposal for deaccessioned museum objects. According to your personal and professional beliefs, and NOT representing those of your museum, please rate these issues in importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perpetuating public domain</td>
<td>55% (6)</td>
<td>36% (4)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object preservation</td>
<td>55% (6)</td>
<td>27% (3)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating collections revenue</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>55% (6)</td>
<td>45% (5)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honoring donor intentions</td>
<td>64% (7)</td>
<td>18% (2)</td>
<td>18% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-museum collaboration</td>
<td>18% (2)</td>
<td>55% (6)</td>
<td>27% (3)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. At this time, please feel free to make any comments about the content or style of this survey. In addition, I would welcome any personal experiences or opinions regarding the deaccessioning process, disposal by sale, disposal by transfer, or related topics. Your wisdom and insights will greatly enhance the quality of my thesis project.

| Total Respondents | 4 |
| (filtered out)    | 8 |
| (skipped this question) | 20 |

13. The following questions are voluntary, but would be extremely valuable in connecting responses with issues such as professional experience, museum/collection size, geographic region, etc. * All information is absolutely confidential, and email contact by permission only with address provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as a museum professional</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B.7

DEACCESSIONING SURVEY – Multi-discipline Museum Responders

1. What type of museum do you work in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-disciplinary</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 9
(skipped this question) 0

2. How often is deaccessioning and disposal of museum objects performed at your museum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every 2-4 years</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every 5-10 years</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 8
(filtered out) 23
(skipped this question) 1

3. How urgent would you say the need to perform deaccessioning and disposal of collection objects is at your museum at this time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urgency</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very urgent</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately urgent</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed but not urgent</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not needed</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 8
(filtered out) 23
(skipped this question) 1

4. Considering the number of objects deaccessioned at your museum in the last five years, approximately how many objects are disposed of in an average year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-50</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-500</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-1000</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 1000</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 8
(filtered out) 23
(skipped this question) 1

85
5. What methods of disposal are used at your museum most often? Please rank each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always used</th>
<th>Frequently used</th>
<th>Infrequently used</th>
<th>Never used</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Response Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sale</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>62% (5)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sale</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer (gift or exchange)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>75% (6)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. LABOR COSTS. Start to finish, rank the following methods of disposal according to the expense of staff time necessary to perform. Please estimate considering all duties from initial preparation through final documentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Expensive</th>
<th>Expensive</th>
<th>Moderately Expensive</th>
<th>Least Expensive</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sale</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>62% (5)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sale</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer (gift or exchange)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>62% (5)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>88% (7)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. ACTUAL EXPENSES. Start to finish, rank the following methods of disposal according to your estimated actual dollar fees and expenses necessary to perform. Please do not factor in any return value from sale or trade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Expensive</th>
<th>Expensive</th>
<th>Moderately Expensive</th>
<th>Least Expensive</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Response Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sale</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>62% (5)</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sale</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer (gift or exchange)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>62% (5)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>12% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>88% (7)</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Has your museum collaborated on disposal by transferred ownership (gift or exchange) of a deaccessioned object in the last 10 years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Is transfer as a method of disposal considered an available option in your museum's collections policy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Are disposal options ever discussed during the process of deaccessioning particular objects?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. The American Association of Museums discusses 5 relevant issues when considering methods of disposal for deaccessioned museum objects. According to your personal and professional beliefs, and NOT representing those of your museum, please rate these issues in importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perpetuating public domain</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object preservation</td>
<td>57% (4)</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating collections revenue</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>71% (5)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honoring donor intentions</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-museum collaboration</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>57% (4)</td>
<td>14% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. At this time, please feel free to make any comments about the content or style of this survey. In addition, I would welcome any personal experiences or opinions regarding the deaccessioning process, disposal by sale, disposal by transfer, or related topics. Your wisdom and insights will greatly enhance the quality of my thesis project.

Total Respondents | 5
(filtered out) | 7
(skipped this question) | 20

13. The following questions are voluntary, but would be extremely valuable in connecting responses with issues such as professional experience, museum/collection size, geographic region, etc. * All information is absolutely confidential, and email contact by permission only with address provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years a museum professional</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(filtered out)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C.1

INTERVIEWS

The following museum professionals, educators, consultants and scholars have contributed to this project research through interviews:

Victoria Bradshaw
Coordinator of Collections Division
Pheobe Hearst Museum of Anthropology
Berkeley, CA.

Ron Brister
Collections Manager,
The Memphis Pink Palace Museums
Memphis, TN.

Kathleen Byrne
Museum Registrar,
Curator of Deaccessioning Manager, Clearinghouse Database
National Park Service

Gianna Capecci
Senior Registrar,
Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts
Legion of Honor Museum
Fine Arts Museums San Francisco
San Francisco, CA.

Cynthia Cardona Melendez
Curator of Collections,
The Orange County Regional History Center,
Orlando, FL.

Marcia Eymann
History Science Manager
Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center
Sacramento, CA.

Nina Fairles
Collections Manager
Marin History Museum
San Rafael, CA.
Roberta Frey Gilboe
Registrar, Cranbrook Art Museum
Bloomfield Hills, MI.
Chair, Deaccessioning Task Force, 1997
Registrars Committee, American Association of Museum

Ted Greenberg
Collections Consultant,
Former Head Registrar, LACM
Western Chair, Registrars Committee, American Association of Museums
Former JFKU Faculty Professor, Collections Management

Lori Gross
Director, Museum Loan Network
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, MA.

Lisa Korzetz
Registrar, The Henry Ford
Dearborn, MI.

Elizabeth Merritt
Director, Museum Advancement & Excellence
American Association of Museums
Washington D.C.

Paula Metzner
Assistant Director for Collections,
Kalamazoo Valley Museum
Kalamazzoo, MI.

Mary Jane Miller
Head of Collections,
Bureau of the State Museum,
Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission
Harrisburg, PA.

John E. Simmons
Collections manager, University of Kansas Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Research Center,
Director, University of Kansas Museum Studies Program
Lawrence, KS

Callie Stewart
Collections Manager,
The Bennington Museum
Bennington, VT.
Appendix C .2

COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. How long have you been a museum professional?

2. What kinds of collections (types of museums) have you been associated with during your career?

3. Regarding collection maintenance and deaccessioning, how do you feel current museums generally approach deaccessioning, compared with how it may have been approached 10 years ago? 20 years ago?

4. There are two accepted methods of disposal for objects that do not have condition issues; public sale and transfer of ownership. Do you have a sense of which is most common today? Compare to when you started your career?

5. Do you have an opinion of why this changed?

6. Do you have an opinion on the prevalence of today’s museums to dispose of deaccessioned objects by sale?

7. Have you ever been associated with the transferred ownership of a deaccessioned object to another museum? Where and when approximately?

8. Can you briefly describe the circumstances, e.g., type of museums collaborating, type of object, reasons for the transfer, how the partners found each other, etc.?

9. Did the museums generally feel it was a positive experience? Did more follow?

10. Why do you suppose transfers aren’t more common today?

11. Can you represent a relative cost comparison of transfer vs. public sale? Actual expenses and labor invested? Are you aware of any research that addresses these costs?

12. My project advocates a return to transfer as an optional method of disposal because it benefits the public, the collaborating institutions, and the greater museum community. Under what circumstances would your institution transfer ownership of an object?

13. Do you see a role for the Internet to facilitate deaccessioning and transfer? Is there a model you have in mind that might connect partnering museums?

14. Is there anyone else that you know who might provide additional insights into the subject of deaccessioning and disposal? May I use your name when contacting them?

15. Are you aware of any additional research, studies, or scholarship that might contain relevant information for my project
Appendix D

American Association of Museums
Code of Ethics for Museums, 2000 *

Collections

The distinctive character of museum ethics derives from the ownership, care, and use of objects, specimens, and living collections representing the world's natural and cultural common wealth. This stewardship of collections entails the highest public trust and carries with it the presumption of rightful ownership, permanence, care, documentation, accessibility, and responsible disposal.

Thus, the museum ensures that:

- collections in its custody support its mission and public trust responsibilities
- collections in its custody are lawfully held, protected, secure, unencumbered, cared for, and preserved
- collections in its custody are accounted for and documented
- access to the collections and related information is permitted and regulated
- acquisition, disposal, and loan activities are conducted in a manner that respects the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources and discourages illicit trade in such materials
- acquisition, disposal, and loan activities conform to its mission and public trust responsibilities
- disposal of collections through sale, trade, or research activities is solely for the advancement of the museum's mission. Proceeds from the sale of nonliving collections are to be used consistent with the established standards of the museum's discipline, but in no event shall they be used for anything other than acquisition or direct care of collections.
- the unique and special nature of human remains and funerary and sacred objects is recognized as the basis of all decisions concerning such collections
- collections-related activities promote the public good rather than individual financial gain. Competing claims of ownership that may be asserted in connection with objects in its custody should be handled openly, seriously, responsively and with respect for the dignity of all parties involved.

Appendix E

CALCULATIONS COMPARING 1983 COLLECTIONS COSTS TO 2007

E.1 Washington Architect George Hartman Calculation, 1983 *

$25 per sq. ft. and the average object required 2 sq. ft. = $50 per object
Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation analysis58:
1983 CPI 99.6
2007 CPI 205.5
205.5 / 99.6 = 2.06

$50 1983 = 2.06 X $50 = $103 in 2007 dollars

E.2 Both the American Association of Museums applying Hartman’s formula in the May/June 1988 issue of Museum News, as well as Lord and Lord The Cost of Collecting 1989, substantially agreed on the costs of collections in terms of dollars per square foot at $30 and $32 respectively. Based upon Hartman’s calculations that the average museum object occupied 2 sq. ft, and adjusting for CPI again, 2007 appreciation is approximately $104 and $106 respectively.

Product

The product of this masters project is a proposal to moderate a dialogue discussion session at the California Association of Museums conference in Fresno, California in February 2008. I chose a roundtable style conference dialog because it was clear from my research that more discussion is necessary between collections professionals about alternative disposal strategies in today’s museums.

I propose a discussion format rather than a presentation so that a diverse group of participants will have a chance to share their experiences and resources. As such, I will moderate the discussion. I will do this with a short introduction to the topic-at-hand, explaining why I chose to investigate this topic as part of my masters thesis. I will then open the table up to discussion with questions I have prepared in advance. I will use my survey instrument as a model for posing these questions and allow the conversation to flow naturally as collections managers and registrars share experiences, solutions, resources and perspectives on the topic of deaccessioning and disposal of collection objects. I will conclude the discussion by asking presenters to offer insights into how the future of collections management might be influenced by the topic issues of today’s session.

I will take notes and email them to participants after the conference ends with the hope of continuing the dialog further.

Roundtable Discussion
California Association of Museums (CAM)
The Radisson Hotel and Conference Center
Fresno, California

Proposal for “Dialogue” style, 90 minute roundtable session
Submitted May 2, 2007
Title of Proposed Program

New Perspectives on the Disposal of Deaccessioned Objects Including Inter-Museum Transfer as an Alternative to Sale

Session Description

Recent research for my masters thesis in museum studies at John F. Kennedy University indicated most museums in America deaccession in small volumes, on a relatively regular schedule. Interviews and a survey with 32 responders from history, multi-disciplinary, and art museums also revealed that history and multi-disciplinary museums attempt transfer disposal in more than 60% of their deaccessions, while art museums tend to sell objects overwhelmingly. Disposal methods are often predetermined by object value, whether by choice or the market for them. As a consequence of common sale, museum professionals are beginning to question the balance of public trust obligations with those of meeting museum mission goals.

This dialog should provoke meaningful discussion regarding deaccessioning practices, methods of disposal, the ethics related issues of collections management, and the option of inter-museum transfer collaborations. Museum standards and practices evolve in response to changing values and ideas. This discussion about collections management practices today, may also provide valuable insights the future of our field.

Moderators Introduction and Outline of the Topic


Our discussion today will touch on many important issues affecting collections in all types of museums. Deaccessioning is a somewhat controversial aspect of collections management to many people outside the registration office, but for those on the inside it is a necessary and vital fact of life. All collections require at least occasional inventory and evaluation according to our responsibilities to preserve and protect the collection, as well as to identify and remove objects that no longer meet the criteria of collections policies. Deaccessioning is therefore necessary to maintain a healthy museum collection in most museums.

An inevitable consequence of deaccessioning is the need to actually remove objects physically from our care. The most common of these methods of removal are well known to everyone here, but for the sake of accuracy are identified as: Public sale, private sale, transfer (& exchange), and destruction.

I recently completed a thesis project that evaluated the trends and characteristics of deaccessioning and disposal in museums around the country. Overall results from my survey indicated museums deaccession in small numbers on a relatively regular schedule. Three quarters of museums deaccession and dispose of fewer than 50 objects a year. And interviews painted a picture of institutions having some urgency to remove redundant, irrelevant, and inferior quality objects from collections to free up storage space. Most collection professionals expressed a lack of adequate funds and staff to be more ambitious in deaccessioning projects. In addition:
Multi-disciplinary museums deaccession more regularly (50% yearly) and in greater volume than other museums, and they dispose of objects almost equally between transfer and public sale methods.

History museums have the greatest need to deaccession, and attempt transfer nearly 75% of the time as a first choice method of disposal.

Art museums deaccession with the least frequency and volume of objects, and sell those objects more than 75% of the time.

In non-art museums, the method of disposal is generally predetermined by the historic and/or dollar value of an object, with most high and low values being sold, and moderate values considered transfer opportunities.

Most museums implement the method of disposal most familiar to their leadership and staff, rather than attempting alternate strategies, even when they were considered less expensive to perform.

Questions designed to address topic issues:

1. First, any big surprises to anyone regarding the findings I’ve just listed from my research?

2. How often is deaccessioning performed at your museums?

3. How urgent is the need to deaccession?

4. How many objects do you deaccession a year?

5. What methods of disposal are authorized in your collections policy, and what are the criteria for deciding which to implement? Who decides?

6. Do you have an opinion about how expensive each method is to perform at your institution? Actual dollar costs as compared to staff time labor expense? Does cost play any role in the decision?

7. What method or methods of disposal do you feel most comfortable performing? Can you relate why?

8. Have you ever attempted disposal by transferred ownership? Can you briefly describe the process and whether it was rewarding or discouraging experience?
9. To what degree should a museum’s need to generate revenue for collections, play a role in the method of disposal decision?

10. To what degree does, or should the public trust obligations of a nonprofit museum impact the decision on disposal method?

11. Can museum associations provide greater assistance to museums in meeting the important obligations of collections management?

**Conclusion**

In the final ten minutes of the session, I will ask for brief insights about future deaccessioning and disposal trends. Do the presenters see any changing attitudes or values germinating from today’s museum landscape?

Thanks to all for their attendance and participation.