

# **GUIDELINES FOR MUSEUMS**

## **IN NEW BRUNSWICK**



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## Acknowledgement

The Guidelines for Museums in New Brunswick was compiled and edited by an Ad Hoc Committee of the Board of the Association Museums New Brunswick with reference to standards documentation prepared by the Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador Associations.

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## Introduction

This publication was developed by the Association Museums New Brunswick for use by museums, art galleries, and related institutions in New Brunswick.

They are intended to provide a consistent set of operational objectives that will assist museums in New Brunswick, regardless of size or kind, to plan, develop, and achieve their unique potential in a rational and progressive manner. Most institutions will still need to develop advanced guidelines for exclusive activities.

These guidelines are premised on this definition of a museum: "Museum is a not-for-profit permanent institution, exempt from federal and provincial income taxes, open to the public and administered in the public interest for the primary purpose of collecting, preserving, studying, interpreting and exhibiting objects and specimens of educational and cultural value including artistic, scientific, historical and/or technological material." (CMA)

Guidelines may be used in a number of ways:

At the institutional level they

- Provide the framework for developing an internal audit of procedures and policies;
- Encourage board development and training;
- Strengthen funding applications;
- Show that the museum meets guidelines as a basis for funding in new areas.

At the Association level they

- Demonstrate that Museums are worthy of the public trust placed in them;
- Strengthen funding requests made to public and private sectors.



## *Unit 1 Management Guidelines*

Management guidelines encourage careful custodianship of finances and development of personnel (governing, paid, and volunteer staff) so as to ensure both present and long-term well-being, effectiveness, and stability of the institution.

*This objective is accomplished by a combination of the following:*

- Striving to provide effective and efficient organization and planning;
- Ensuring honest and accountable financial practices; and
- Providing safe, secure and publicly accessible premises.

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### **1.1 Administrative Management General**

*Goal: To meet essential museum guidelines in all operations and management areas within its available resources.*

The museum is constituted on the basis of an organizational document such as municipal by-laws, a constitution of a not-for-profit corporation, or such other document giving evidence of the facility's legal existence.

Within the constituting documents of the museum, there are provisions for its dissolution.

The museum's operation is governed by a Statement of Purpose which has been ratified by the governing body.

The museum usually incorporates collections management and public programming as part of its budgetary consideration.

*It is ethically incumbent upon the museum management to be knowledgeable of all levels of laws governing its operation.*

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### **1.2 Administrative Management Governing Body**

*Goal: To provide effective and publicly accountable management for all aspects of museum operation.*

Activities of the institution are monitored and recorded by governing body. Ultimate responsibility for all policy decisions rests with this governing body.

Members of the governing body are informed of any personal liability that applies to them under public trust laws.

Where an institution has a board of governors or trustees, by-laws should include:

- Regular schedule of meetings;
- Written description of roles and responsibilities of trustees;
- Orientation for each new board;
- Fixed-terms for members with possible renewal after hiatus;
- Endorsement of the Code of Ethics of the Canadian Museums Association.

*An up-to-date manual recording all pertinent data required by a board member greatly facilitates orientation of new board members and ensures continuity of good management.*

At least one member of the governing body has appropriate museum experience or formal museum training (i.e. AMNB certificate courses). If not, the governing body consults with someone who has such training or experience.

### 1.3 Administrative Management Finances

*Goal: To provide for sound and publicly accountable financial management practices.*

The museum prepares a formal annual budget.

The museum submits its accounts for an annual audit or external review.

The museum assigns a specific individual responsible for monitoring finances (whether or not that is their sole responsibility i.e. Board Member as Treasurer or a staff member as Book Keeper).

The institution undertakes short and long-term financial planning.

There is a regular fundraising program to meet strategic needs.

*If income tax receipts are issued, it is required that the institution be registered as a charity with Revenue Canada.*

### 1.4 Administrative Management Personnel

*Goal: To create an atmosphere conducive to the development of excellence for staff and volunteers.*

The museum should have an individual or individuals assigned for: Registration/ Curatorial, Education and Out-reach Programming, Preservation, and Security Activities.

The institution complies with provincial and federal employment legislation.

The museum has task orientated job descriptions for volunteers and for staff.

Management of the Museum should ensure that staff, whether paid or volunteer, have adequate training. Options for encouraging training include:

- Ensuring at least one person on staff or volunteer has completed or is completing an introductory program of museological training such as the AMNB certificate program;
- Implementing regular in-house training for all staff, both paid and volunteers;
- Providing a regular orientation for the Board;
- Providing time to attend professional development activities.

*Providing orientation on the history of the institution broadens the perspective of new staff members.*

*"At no time should either a volunteer or employee be required to perform tasks which would place that individual in a position of compromise or likewise jeopardize the credibility of the museum."  
CMA Code of Ethics*

#### **Volunteers**

The museum has a written volunteer policy.

The institution has assigned a specific individual responsibility for co-ordinating volunteer activities.



## 1.5 *Administrative Management* Risk Management

*Goal: To minimize risk as much as possible to which visitors and staff, facilities, and collections are exposed.*

### **Risk Mitigation**

The museum has a risk mitigation program. At a minimum the program should contain these measures:

- Complying with National Building Code and fire codes where applicable;
- Implementing opening and closing procedures to minimize the number and severity of hazards which may reasonably be expected to endanger the collections and building, including theft, vandalism, and accidental damage;
- Ensuring regular building inspections and maintenance including plumbing, heating, electrical, structural and security;
- Ensuring potentially hazardous materials, such as flammable cellulose nitrate films, cleaning supplies, and solvents, are isolated and stored appropriately;
- Ensuring access for emergency vehicles (providing snow removal as required);
- Keeping the physical plant maintained;
- Strictly controlling the distribution of keys;
- Implementing measures to divert any potential leaks, if utilities (water and drain lines) are located overhead;
- Ensuring storage areas are used for storage of collections only.

*Risk management touches all activities in the museum. One person should be assigned to this function to ensure that no critical activities are overlooked.*

*Be careful not to compromise load bearing requirements by placing storage units or exhibits which are too heavy for a floor to safely support.*

### **Risk Assessment**

A risk assessment is performed periodically and updated regularly.

The risk assessment should include:

- Consulting with appropriate bodies such as the fire department concerning the means of improving fire safety;
- Completing applicable audits of operational procedures and facilities;
- Completing a general vulnerability assessment.

*Risk management is a formal strategy to assess risk and manage it in a cost-effective manner.*

*When there are fewer than three employees, registering for the program offered by the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission is non-compulsory. However, registering even one person, protects both the institution and the staff person from potential catastrophic financial liability.*

### **Insurance**

The Museum has public liability insurance or an equivalent provision.

The Museum Board complies with the regulations of the Workplace Health, Safety, and Compensation Commission.

The Museum Board should consider purchasing insurance to provide volunteer staff coverage for injury either at the museum or while travelling on museum business.

The Museum Board should consider purchasing insurance for artifacts on temporary loan to the museum. If this is not done, the lender should be made aware that the Museum accepts no responsibility for loss or damage to the artifacts while they are in its possession.

If the Museum Board carries general insurance, ensure disaster recovery costs are included.

### **Health and Safety**

The museum complies with relevant federal and provincial provisions including:

- Public health and safety regulations;
- Provincial regulations for disabled persons - where applicable;
- Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS).

The museum maintains an inventory of basic first aid supplies.

The museum maintains emergency response procedures and reviews them regularly.

Emergency procedures and schematic plans showing location of exits, emergency pull alarms, evacuation routes, and fire extinguisher equipment are posted.

Depending upon the size and complexity of the institution, a Fire Emergency Officer, a Floor Emergency Officer(s), and an Occupant Traffic Officer should be assigned as required.



## *Unit 2 Program Guidelines*

Program guidelines encourage the extension of an institution's collection and the information associated with it to the public. In order to fully address this objective, programming should be designed to ensure that:

- Meaningful interaction between the public and the collection will be facilitated;
- Public requirements for information concerning the institution, its collection and programs are accommodated;
- Reasonable public access is provided to utilize expertise of the institution's personnel.

Examples of programming activities include:

- Developing liaisons with local and regional media;
- Creating joint ventures with other institutions and interest groups (publicity campaigns, tourism, conventions etc.);
- Presenting special programs that expand the institution's interaction with the community, such as Heritage Day;
- Developing an active membership program (members can form vital links to the community).

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### **2.1 Program Management**

#### **Public Relations, Marketing and Access**

*Goal: To inform the public of the museum's mission and activities.*

The institution should use its Statement of Purpose to develop a written communication plan and marketing strategy.

The museum endeavours to ensure that all publicity materials are correct.

The museum periodically reviews and evaluates its publicity and public relations efforts against its Statement of Purpose for overall effectiveness.

Opening hours are clearly posted or if open on request, access method should be reliable and easy for visitors.

Provision is made for answering general inquiries such as local bus access, directions, as well as general museum information such as opening hours and current exhibitions.

All staff are made aware of the necessity of dealing with any and all inquiries with politeness and attention to maintaining good public relations.

*Identifying and understanding the role of the institution in the community will help define the communication plan and marketing strategy.*

## 2.2 Program Management Research

*Goal: To ensure and develop the history of the collections and related communities.*

The Museum Board promotes research related to its collections and to its theme as defined in the Statement of Purpose.

Time will be provided for staff to carry out the museum's research program.

In addition to accommodating staff researchers, the museum has a responsibility to assist outside researchers where possible. When visiting researchers are using the collections:

- Ensure that they are supervised and instructed to respect the condition, security and handling requirements of artifacts;
- Access to confidential information concerning the value of the collections and the ownership of specific artifacts should be restricted.

For oral history interviews, the informant must sign a Release Form which gives permission for the interview to be used in print, film, or tape.

## 2.3 Program Management Exhibition

*Goal: To provide exhibits which convey specific theme or message in an accurate and visually attractive manner.*

The institution maintains an exhibition program.

The institution maintains a written exhibition policy and procedures. Public programming should:

- Relate to the museum's Statement of Purpose;
- Enhance the public's understanding of the museum's collections;
- Not represent replica pieces as original.

Exhibitions are examined on a regular basis for security purposes and to ensure continuing good quality of presentation and preservation of the artifacts.

Smoking and the consumption of food or drink is not permitted in display areas.

A reasonable level of supervision is maintained during open hours.

*Where a museum is housed in an historic building, prior history and use of the building should be researched and noted for the public who inevitably will have questions that will need to be answered well.*

*Documenting the broader community stories is necessary to put the collections into context.*

*Effective exhibits are arranged in a logical sequence to explain them or tell the story or are based upon some other formal organizational principle.*

Exhibit design should include these preservation considerations:

- Maintaining appropriate environmental guidelines for objects on exhibit as outlined in section 3.6;
- Ensuring display furniture and techniques are designed not to damage objects on exhibit. (Exhibit cases, for example, should be designed not to subject artifacts to heat build-up);
- Ensuring security measures do not damage objects;
- Displaying any object only on a temporary basis which cannot withstand the effects of long-term exposure;
- Recording the amount of time that light sensitive items (such as watercolours, textiles, and photographs) are on exhibit to prevent excessive cumulative exposure to light;
- Ensuring collections that are placed on display are secure from being handled by the visitor, except when they form a component of a hands-on exhibit.

***"In the presentation of exhibition material the museum is expected be honest and objective."***

*CMA Code of Ethics.*



## Unit 3 Collections Guidelines

The museum should have a clearly written Collections Management Policy which articulates its mission statement, collecting objectives, management policies and procedures, and accessioning and de-accessioning policies and procedures.

Collections guidelines encourage the ethical accumulation of artifacts, specimens, works of art or documents which fall into the institution's collection mandate, and the management of that collection so as to prolong its existence and well-being, and maximize its value and use with respect to the aims of the institution.

Addressing this objective requires comprehensive study, full and accurate documentation and rigorous, conscientious physical and environmental care and handling of all items in an institution's collection.

### 3.1 Collections Management Acquisition

*Goal: To develop and maintain a collection in keeping with the museum's Statement of Purpose.*

*To avoid conflict of interest or its perception, museum staff should not provide appraisals.*

***"It is an important professional responsibility to ensure that all items accepted temporarily or permanently by the museum are properly and fully documented to facilitate provenance, identification, condition and treatment."***  
*(ICOM Code of Professional Ethics, 1990, p. 31, nr. 6.2)*

The museum has a written acquisition policy formally approved by its governing body, which specifies the collection's subject and geographical and/or temporal limits.

Collection conforms to institution's acquisition policy.

The museum acquires only those objects that it can properly document, preserve, store.

The museum does not acquire collections that have been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of domestic or international laws or treaties.

Donations are not normally accepted with conditions other than, possibly, to give donor recognition.

The museum has an acquisitions committee with final decision in all acquisitions where the governing body chooses to delegate this aspect of its normal responsibilities.

### **3.2 Collections Management Documentation**

*Goal: To provide an adequately written and permanent record of the museum's acquisitions.*

#### **Record Format**

The museum's documentation records are written or printed in permanent ink and on good quality paper.

As a safeguard against fire, a paper copy of all essential records or an up-to-date back-up computer record is stored in another physical location.

#### **Accession/Registration**

The museum has established procedures for maintaining accessioning records as part of a collections management manual. Minimum record-keeping needs include:

- Listing of all loans in and out;
- Noting the location of every artifact in a location catalogue;
- Obtaining signed donor forms or other proof of legal title to the artifact such as transfer of title or bill of sale;
- Issuing temporary deposit receipts for all incoming material.

The museum has assigned documentation duties (or co-ordinator of those duties) to a trained individual board, volunteer, or staff member.

The museum employs a standard method of identifying all objects on temporary deposit, loan or which are part of the permanent collection. Objects are most easily identified with numbers. Therefore, each object is assigned a unique number. The number should:

- Be attached to the item in a consistent manner;
- Incorporate standard numeration;
- Meet conservation guidelines.

The Museum carries out a collections inventory periodically.

For inquiries involving objects in the institution's collection, care is taken to protect confidential information.



### *Cataloguing*

*Record documentation immediately. Notes on miscellaneous pieces of paper get lost easily and one's memory fades quickly.*

*Describing archival collections according to the Rules of Archival Description (RAD) provides consistent access to these collections.*

*Provenance will allow researchers to place the object or specimen into its contemporary society and be used as an historical document for future generations. With these links the artifact can be used to ask and answer questions about society forever.*

The museum catalogues all objects as fully as possible according to the procedures identified within the collections management manual.

The catalogue system includes a master file for each object. At a minimum it typically contains:

- Detailed notes, provenance/history gathered from the donor;
- Description of the physical object's condition;
- Every artifact source (owner) if known;
- Photographic documentation or hand-drawn sketches of the objects in its permanent collection (wherever feasible).

The museum has adopted or developed a standard system of information recording.

The museum is able to provide ready retrieval of data as well as controlled access to the catalogue records pertaining to confidential information or insurance valuations.

All Curatorial staff and volunteers (and others as warranted) are trained in retrieval of catalogue data.

Where catalogue records include insurance valuations or other confidential information, they are kept in a secure place where access is controlled, such as a locked filing cabinet.

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### **3.3 Collections Management Loans**

*Goal: To provide for legal and accurate documentation of its collections.*

The museum maintains a written loan agreement form for incoming and outgoing loans. It should contain provisions for the care for material on loan and the procedures to be followed in case of damage or loss.

The museum maintains a written loan policy and procedures.

The institution does not loan objects that are judged to be too fragile to survive either the travel or conditions present during the loan period.

The museum accepts permanent or long-term loans from other institutions only. This is done on a case-by-case basis.

Loans from private individuals should be for a fixed and short-term only (i.e.: when term ends they must be donated or returned).

The museum's loan policy contains a clause regarding copyright and reproduction rights for loaned materials.

Loans are made only to other institutions or affiliated groups, and only where guidelines of artifact care can be maintained.



### 3.4 *Collections Management* De-accessioning

*Goal: To manage the disposition of the museum's collection in a publicly accountable manner.*

The governing body of the museum makes all final decisions regarding de-accessioning.

The institution employs some means of recording the de-accessioning of items from the museum's collections.

The museum maintains a written de-accessioning policy and procedures.

When an object is de-accessioned from a museum's collection, other than an item that has been damaged, the object is first offered to other public museums or similar institutions (by exchange, gift or sale) before any other means of disposal.

The museum uses all funds derived from the de-accessioning of objects for the direct benefit of the collection, either through acquisitions or direct improvements in collection care.

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### 3.5 *Collections Management* Preservation

*Goal: To retard deterioration and to prevent damage to artifacts through the provision of optimal conditions of storage, use, and handling.*

#### *Storage*

The museum employs storage techniques which minimize damage to artifacts. An effective strategy usually includes these techniques:

- Providing suitable environmental conditions for the needs of the collections;
- Monitoring conditions on an ongoing basis (see section 3.6 on environmental guidelines);
- Storing items according first to material and second by size;
- Storing all small items in boxes;
- Storing artifacts in their natural position or that which is most stable;
- Ensuring that objects that are stored outdoors (such as machinery) are provided with appropriate shelter and drainage;
- Keeping artifacts out of direct contact with exterior walls;
- Storing all light sensitive materials in storage boxes to protect them from any source of light at all times;
- Storing collections susceptible to particulates and gases in appropriate housing (designed to absorb contaminants) to minimize deleterious effects;
- Ensuring fragile collections are protected from sliding off shelves;

*Housing individual items in boxes provides multiple benefits including: buffering against temperature and humidity fluctuations; protecting against dust and pests; enabling safe handling; blocking light, and facilitating rapid response to a disaster threat should any of the collections have to be moved on short notice.*

- Segregating all easily portable objects with high monetary value;
- Ensuring access to storage areas is key-controlled;
- Restricting public from non-public areas of the museum, particularly where collections are stored, except in the presence of a staff member.

The museum should delegate one person to be responsible for preservation activities. This person should also have a meaningful role in the risk management of the institution.

Sacred native materials may be stored in a separate area where purification ceremonies and observances may take place.

The institution maintains a written preservation policy and procedures.

### ***Disaster Response***

There is a written disaster response plan, which is up-dated and tested regularly.

### ***Handling and Moving Objects***

At least one staff member should be familiar with safe handling, packing and unpacking methods for each category of objects in the collections, and be available to instruct other staff and volunteers before they handle such material.

Objects made of materials such as polished metal, porous ceramics, paper, and textiles should be handled with clean hands that are protected, where necessary by gloves.

Trays, trolleys or padded boxes are provided for moving objects.

A written guide is provided to all visitors, staff, and volunteers who handle collections.

Objects which are shipped off premises are packed using methods that provide protection from shock, vibration, and climatic fluctuations as required.

*Items in a collection should be handled as little as possible.*

*Consider options such as substituting models, replicas or audio-visual records for originals for demonstration purposes wherever possible.*



### ***Pest Control***

The museum maintains an integrated pest management program (IPM). Typical activities of an IMP program should include:

- Employing a strategy to minimize attracting pests such as removing garbage and recycled beverage containers from premises daily (store empties in a bin outside), and cleaning the facilities regularly;
- Checking all newly acquired material and if necessary treating before placing in the collection;
- Checking vulnerable collections regularly for signs of active infestation in materials subject to damage by plant and animal pests.

Extermination is carried out only in consultation with an appropriate professional.

***The Board of the Museum has acquired and maintains the artifact collection "in-trust" for the public and must exercise due diligence in maintaining this trust.***

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### **3.6 Collections Management Environmental Guidelines**

***Goal:*** To provide an environment conducive to the long term preservation of the museum's collection.

#### ***Temperature and Humidity***

Temperature and humidity should be as stable as possible and within an appropriate range for the materials stored. (Meeting these requirements will be very difficult to achieve if the collections are stored in a damp basement or a hot attic.)

The museum monitors and records environmental levels either manually or with recording equipment.

Refer to guidelines published by the Canadian Conservation Institute.

#### ***Light Control***

Visible light levels from sources in display, storage, and research areas are kept within recommended levels for light intensity, duration, and appropriateness for each activity 24 hours a day. The UV component of any light source for all activities should be less than 75 microwatts per lumen. (Refer to guidelines published by the Canadian Conservation Institute.)

*Theoretical components of an IPM program includes:*

- *Blocking all possible entry points (by sealing all cracks and screening);*
- *Minimizing stimulants which attract pests (good sanitation hygiene);*
- *Monitoring pest populations;*
- *And finally removing pests should the first three components fail.*

*Ideally the storage area will be insulated to provide a stable environment.*

*Deterioration resulting from exposure to light is a factor of intensity and duration. Always use the lowest light intensity and duration possible. Block natural light with the use of curtains, shutters, or ultra violet screening film. Consider task lighting. When security cameras require lighting, use the lowest level of illumination possible.*



***Contaminant Management***

Measures are taken to minimize dust accumulation in the building such as using mats at entrances, painting concrete floors, weather-sealing windows, and not using carpets in the storage areas.

The museum only uses storage furniture, housing, and exhibit props made of chemically inert materials in order to minimize off-gasing.

**3.7 Collection Management****Preservation Requirements - Conservation Treatment**

*Goal: To ensure that conservation, repairs, or restoration work on objects are carried out in an acceptable manner.*

Items should only be cleaned, conserved, or restored under the care of an experienced and qualified person.

Any treatments carried out should meet the guidelines as outlined in the Code of Ethics of the Canadian Association of Conservators.

The maintenance of historic machinery is documented.

Restoration or reconstruction treatments are kept to a minimum in order to avoid altering the historic nature of the object.

The removal of parts of objects is done as a last resort, and the parts are retained in storage when removed.

*Preventive conservation is the most effective means of preserving collections.*

*Preventive techniques for the collections as a whole should generally be in place before treatment of individual items is considered.*

## Glossary

**Accession:** The formal act of entering an object into the collections of a museum. Once an object has been accessioned it has a status beyond that of merely being the property of the organization and can only be disposed of by referring to the governing body of the organization, e.g., the Trustees or Director.

**Accountability:** To establish accountability, a museum must demonstrate to auditors, trustees, governing bodies, and insurers that proper, responsible management of objects in custody of the museum is taking place. One important component of accountability is the maintenance of a reliable and up to date physical inventory of the objects in the institution's custody.

**Acquisition:** The transfer of ownership (title) of an object to the organization.

**Audit:** An audit is the procedure whereby the physical presence of all objects in the museum is compared with the documented presence of those objects in the museum records to enable a museum to be accountable for every object, at any point in time.

**Cataloguing:** The compilation and maintenance of primary information by systematically describing objects in the collection, and the arranging of this information into an object catalog record.

**Collections Management:** All actions taken to ensure the effective documentation, preservation, and access to objects in a museum collection.

**Conservation:** All actions aimed at the safeguarding of cultural property for the future. The purpose of conservation is to study, record, retain and restore the culturally significant qualities of the object with the least possible intervention.

**Documentation:** The records which document the creation, history, acquisition by the museum and subsequent history (including conservation records) of a museum collection.

**Fire Emergency Officer:** Responsible for the evacuation of the building in the event of an emergency.

**Floor Emergency Officer:** Responsible for ensuring the safety of all personnel, including visitors on their floor, in the event of an emergency.

**Inventory Control:** The process of establishing the physical presence of all objects in a museum for which that museum has custody and is legally responsible (including objects in the collection, objects on loan to the museum, and objects in custody of the museum).

**Object:** An item which forms part of an institution's collections either permanently (in which case it would be recorded in the accessions register) or temporarily (e.g., a deposit or loan). For natural science collections the term "Specimen" is used and in this document the two terms should be regarded as being interchangeable.

**Occupant Traffic Officer:** Responsible for directing occupants safely from the building to a pre-determined meeting place in the event of an evacuation.

**Preventive Conservation:** All actions taken to retard deterioration and prevent damage to cultural property through the provision of optimal conditions of storage, use and handling.

**Transfer of Title:** A legal term to describe the formal process of a change of ownership of an object from one person or institution to another.