

Collections Policy

Introduced
February 2003
Updated 2012
Revised May 2017

PURPOSE

The Museum Act [SBC 2003, c. 12] mandates the Royal British Columbia Museum and Archives to “secure, receive and preserve specimens, artifacts and archival, and other materials that illustrate the natural or human history of British Columbia,” and defines “collection” as “the specimens, artifacts, archival material and associated records [that are] kept by [the Royal BC Museum and Archives].”

The purpose of the Collections Policy is to establish guidelines for the growth, management and care of and access to the specimens, artifacts, archival materials and associated records (“items”) that have been approved for accession by the Royal BC Museum and Archives’ Collections Committee.

SCOPE

The policy applies the Royal BC Museum and Archives’ Board of Directors, Collections Committee, and staff (in particular those working in the Knowledge; Collections Care and Conservation; Archives, Access and Digital; and First Nations and Repatriation Program departments).

The Royal BC Museum and Archives maintains three categories of collections:

1. The permanent collection, comprised of accessioned items accorded the highest standard of care and overseen by curators, collection managers and archivists.
2. The handling collection, comprised of non-accessioned items that are cared for responsibly by learning staff for use in school and public programs.
3. The asset collection, comprised of non-accessioned items that are cared for responsibly by facilities management and exhibitions staff and used to articulate the museum precinct or exhibits.

The permanent collection comprises three collecting domains:

1. The natural history collection
2. The human history collection
3. The archival collection

The natural history collection comprises complete specimens (or parts, including genetic samples, thereof) of species found in, or of direct relevance to, British Columbia (BC). The collection focuses on the fields of ichthyology, herpetology, ornithology, mammalogy, paleontology, invertebrate zoology, entomology and botany.

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The human history collection comprises items that record the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of BC. The collection focuses on archaeology and on First Nations, settler and post-settler history.

The archival collection comprises items of enduring value to BC regardless of their form or media. The collection contains textual and born-digital records, film, video and sound recordings, photographs, documentary art, maps and publications.

POLICY STATEMENT

Principles and Guidelines

The Royal BC Museum and Archives collects in accordance with relevant Canadian legislation and international obligations, specifically those listed in Appendix 1. The Royal BC Museum and Archives abide by the codes of ethics set out by the International Council of Museums, the Canadian Museums Association, the International Council on Archives, the Association of Canadian Archivists, the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property and the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators.

Governance

Curators and archivists hold primary responsibility for the development of the collections. Together with collection managers, they implement the collections policy in accordance with the collections strategy and direct collection development and organization.

Collection managers are responsible for all day-to-day activities that involve the management and use of items.

The registrar is responsible for managing and accounting for centralized collection records and handling legal issues and logistics.

Conservators are responsible for risk management, preventative conservation and conservation treatments.

The Collections Committee is responsible for approving accessions and deaccessions in accordance with the collections strategy and delegated authority levels set by the Board of Directors.

Acquisition

Items are acquired for the permanent collection through deposit and selective acquisition.

Deposit

The Royal BC Museum and Archives is the official repository for provincial governmental archives in a non-digital form, as outlined in Section 4 of the Museum Act and Section 14 of the Information Management Act. The transfer and acquisition of non-digital government records is in accordance with record schedules approved under the Information Management Act.

The Royal BC Museum and Archives is the main provincial repository for archaeological materials. The transfer and acquisition of archaeological materials under permit is in accordance with the Heritage Conservation Act.

The Royal BC Museum and Archives is also the identified repository for paleontological and appropriately designated type specimens.

The Royal BC Museum and Archives is a designated repository for voucher specimens.

Selective Acquisition

The Royal BC Museum and Archives acquires items through donation, strategic collecting, benefaction, exchange and purchase. An item can only be acquired under the following conditions:

1. The item is of significance to the province. Significance refers to the values and/or meanings that an item has for people and communities. Whether an item is significant is determined by assessing its value by means of four primary criteria: historic; artistic or aesthetic; scientific or research potential; social or spiritual. The degree to which an item is significant is determined by four comparative criteria: provenance; rarity or representativeness; condition or completeness; interpretive capacity.
2. Acquisition of the item supports a goal of the collections strategy.
3. There must be adequate storage space to accommodate the item.
4. There must be a reasonable expectation of securing funding for the item's storage, care and conservation.
5. The item is accompanied by warranties of good legal title where appropriate.
6. The item is accompanied by a good record of provenance and must be authenticated where appropriate. Exceptions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
7. The item is valued where appropriate.
8. The item is accompanied by a bill of sale or other statement signed by the

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- owner transferring ownership, and if applicable, transferring of copyright as defined in the Copyright Act [RSC 1985, c.C-42].
9. Donation of the item is free and clear of conditions and restrictions.
 10. Donation of the item is irrevocable upon the formal transfer (with a signed Deed of Gift) of title to Royal BC Museum and Archives.
 11. The Royal BC Museum and Archives receives all rights necessary to permit the exhibition and non-commercial reproduction of the item. All details regarding the creator's right to the integrity of his or her work and the right to be associated with the work will be governed by and construed in accordance with existing relevant laws.
 12. The Royal BC Museum and Archives is afforded the right to conduct treatments or analytical techniques on the item, to exchange the item with another institution, to deaccession the items, or to remove samples from the items.
 13. The Royal BC Museum and Archives is satisfied that the item has not been stolen or otherwise illegally acquired or collected.
 14. The Royal BC Museum and Archives is satisfied that the acquisition of any item originating from a foreign country complies with the Cultural Property Export and Import Act.
 15. The Royal BC Museum and Archives is satisfied that all required documents relating to the legal and permitted collection of the item have been provided.

Items of Uncertain Origin

In cases where new information or circumstance calls into question the grounds on which an item was originally acquired, the Royal BC Museum and Archives undertakes substantive and transparent research in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders and facilitates the prompt return of any item for which its claim may, in light of this research, be considered invalid for legal, moral or ethical reasons.

Ancestral Remains

The Royal BC Museum and Archives stewards a small number of ancestral remains and holds these in areas with restricted access. The Royal BC Museum and Archives actively pursues the return of these remains to their originating communities, where known, in full collaboration with these communities. Where the originating community is not known, the Royal BC Museum and Archives actively pursues the reburial of ancestral remains in accordance with advice from relevant cultural organizations. The Royal BC Museum and Archives does not collect human remains and does not exhibit human remains unless this is considered acceptable by the relevant cultural groups.

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Professional Conduct

All staff involved in collections acquisition must:

1. Be aware of all applicable binding international conventions; federal, provincial and municipal laws; and regulations and sectional policies pertaining to the acquisition, import and export of collections.
2. Not use their connection to museum and archives to promote personal collecting.
3. Not, through their own collecting activities or through those of their immediate families, compete with the collecting activities of museum and archives.
4. Ensure that any non-staff persons collecting on behalf of the Royal BC Museum and Archives clearly state their relationship with the Royal BC Museum and Archives to all potential vendors or donors.

Deaccession and Disposal

Deaccession

An item can be deaccessioned if:

1. It is no longer of provincial significance.
2. It was acquired illegally at the time of acquisition.
3. It was collected immorally or unethically by current collecting standards.
4. It has failed to retain its integrity or authenticity.
5. It cannot be properly preserved, stored, or used.
6. It does not support the Royal BC Museum and Archives' mandate to collect items from BC or adjacent provinces, territories or states.
7. It is more appropriately housed at another museum or archive.

Disposal

Disposal of a deaccessioned item is made in one of the following ways (in descending order of preference):

1. Exchange with or transfer to another museum, archive or charitable institution.
2. Donation to another museum, archive or charitable institution.
3. Sale to another museum, archive or charitable institution.
4. Sale at public auction outside the Royal BC Museum and Archives' immediate location without the listing of the Royal BC Museum and Archives' name or an associated accession number.
5. Incineration or physical destruction.

No member of the Royal BC Museums' Board of Directors, staff, or volunteers, nor any representative or immediate family member thereof, can receive, purchase or otherwise knowingly obtain a deaccessioned item.

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A deaccessioned item cannot be sold directly to a private individual or corporation.

Proceeds realized from the sale of a deaccessioned item are designated for the development and care of the Royal BC Museum and Archives' collections.

With the exception of archival records, an item is not disposed of through gift to the original donor, though the original donor is permitted to purchase the item at current fair market value. In this respect, living artists are permitted the first right of refusal to acquire their own works which they have themselves donated.

An item under the jurisdiction of the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the BC Wildlife Act or the Migratory Birds Act is not returned to the donor unless the donor acquires a permit from the responsible ministry.

An item under the jurisdiction of the Firearms Act can only be deaccessioned through transfer to a registered federal depository or through surrender to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for licensed destruction. It cannot be transferred to another museum.

Archival records can be returned to the donor at no cost after appropriate consultation and mutual agreement between the Royal BC Museum and Archives and the original donor if the records should not have been acquired in the first place or where the originating agency now has the ability to manage the records itself. If donors were issued a tax receipt for the value of their donation, the archival records must be purchased at fair market value.

When archival records of government have been transferred to the museum and archives in error, or have since been deemed active by the donor, these can be returned to originating ministries, agencies, courts, boards, commissions and commissions of inquiry for active use.

Collections Management

Collections Information

The Royal BC Museum and Archives maintains records on the identification, description, location and condition of all items in the permanent collection and of items relating to ongoing activities (in particular exhibitions, loans, research and correspondence with the public, donors and researchers). In so doing, the Royal BC Museum and Archives ensures that records are authoritative, accurate, trustworthy and objective.

Records are maintained both physically and within our collections management systems and databases. All physical and digital records or data created or received in the transaction of collections activities are corporate records that are managed in accordance with the Information Management Policy.

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The Royal BC Museum and Archives uses metadata to manage and share information about its collections, and follows standards of best practice for museum metadata and collections management specific to the collections discipline and media format.

All documentation relating to an item is publicly available in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Species at Risk Act, and conditions noted on any relevant Deed of Gift.

Collections Care

The Royal BC Museum and Archives is responsible for the long-term care of its permanent collection and for ensuring that items are maintained under conditions that preserve their physical integrity whilst on display, in storage or on loan.

Destructive Testing

Destructive testing can be used under certain circumstances to increase the scientific value of items.

Requests for destructive testing are granted by the relevant curator and are dependent upon:

1. Meeting all criteria for destructive sampling including: relevance of the particular item to the scientific research proposal; benefit to public understanding of the item; use of approved destructive testing methods; and contribution to contemporary scholarship.
2. Following approved procedures for destructive sampling including: return of unused sample portions; submission of DNA sequences to GenBank or approved equivalent as appropriate; and sharing of results.

Collections Use

Access

The Royal BC Museum and Archives is committed to sharing its collections as widely as possible across BC and around the world. In this spirit, the Royal BC Museum and Archives facilitates physical and intellectual access to the permanent collection for the purposes of research, learning, exhibition, publication and cultural use.

Recognizing the importance of public access to the permanent collection, the Royal BC Museum and Archives uses its best judgement, within the context of relevant legislation and ethical standards, to balance access to and display of items against the need to preserve them for future generations.

Access to the permanent collection or information related to the permanent collection can only be refused if the curator or archivist has, in writing, established reasons for exercising limits or if the request contravenes legislation or other binding agreements.

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Requests made under legislation are dealt with according to that act regardless of any other limitations that may have been imposed.

Loans

The Royal BC Museum and Archives lends items to responsible institutions for the purposes of exhibition, research, public programming and education.

With the exception of First Nations rights holder requests, the museum and archives does not loan items to private individuals.

With respect to the human history collection and the archival collection:

1. All loans are subject to a formal written agreement between the lender and the borrower.
2. The borrower must comply with all conditions and restrictions imposed on borrowed items.
3. Loan requests must be received by the Royal BC Museum and Archives in writing 12 months before the proposed loan date unless otherwise approved by the CEO or stated within the First Nations Collections Policy.
4. Loan requests must specify the purpose and time period of the loan (which will not exceed a continuous period of two years without the explicit approval of the CEO).
5. Loan agreements must address copyright and reproduction rights.
6. The cost of conserving, crating, shipping and returning a loaned item is borne by the borrowing institution unless otherwise approved by the CEO or stated within the First Nations Collections Policy.

With respect to the natural history collection:

1. Loan requests must be received six weeks before the proposed loan date and must specify the purpose and time period of the loan (which will not exceed a continuous period of two years without the explicit approval of the CEO).
2. The cost of shipping and returning a loaned item is borne by the borrowing institution if outside Canada and the United States.
3. Series of type specimens or all representatives for a taxon or taxa from the collection must be loaned in at least two parts, with not more than two-thirds of a series loaned at any one time.
4. Holotypes can be loaned in circumstances appropriate to the discipline where recommended by the curator and approved by the Head of Collections Care and Conservation.

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Recommended



Professor Jack Lohman, CBE
Chief Executive Officer

Date 14-6-17

Approved



Susan Knott
Chair, Board of Directors

Date 20 September 17

APPENDIX 1—LINKS, REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Copyright Act [RSC 1985, c.C-42]

<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/>

Firearms Act [SC 1995, c. 39]

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act [RSBC 1996] chapter 165

http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/96165_00

Heritage Conservation Act [RSBC 1996, s.9, s.13 (1) (a)]

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96187_01

Information Management Act [SBC 2015]

<http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/15027#section18>

Interpretation Act [RSBC 1996, c. 238]

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96238_01

Migratory Birds Convention Act [SC 1994]

<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/M-7.01/FullText.html>

Museum Act [SBC 2003, c.12]

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/03012_01

Province of BC Species at Risk website

<http://www.speciesatriskbc.ca/>

Personal Information Protection Act [SBC 2003, c. 63]

http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00_03063_01

UNIDROIT Convention of 24 June 1995 on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects:

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property/1995-unidroit-convention>

Wildlife Act [RSBC 1996]

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96488_01