The Management and Deaccession Toolbox: Making the Right Decision for Your Collection
Initiated by the Professional Network Council following AAM’s December 2017 workshop “Don’t Raid the Cookie Jar.”


PN Representatives
Curators Committee
Collections Stewardship
Leadership & Management
Historic House Network

The PNC believes that sharing resources to help museums survive and thrive is a critical means of avoiding crises that negatively impact the mission and specifically the collections at the core of the mission.
Task Force Charge

The objective of this Task Force is to promote thoughtfully managed collections and deaccession practices. By promoting best practices and providing the opportunity for peer consultation on such matters, the Task Force aims to safeguard institutions and avoid crisis that often lead to poor management of collections and divestment thereof.

Goals

To help institutions of all sizes consider their work from the broader perspective of sustainability and promote institutional and collegial conversation on the matters of deaccessioning and governance.

We believe...

Deaccessioning is part of the life-cycle of an institution. Generally speaking, deaccessioning does not cause institutional failure. However, deaccessioning is sometimes a symptom of institutional challenge if it is considered as a means to financially stabilize an institution.
How do institutions end up in trouble with deaccessions?

Institutional Choices and Collection Stability

Collections management and administration must work together and with equal diligence to promote sustainability.

Reason for disconnection might include:
- poor communication between leadership and collection staff
- missions that no longer support the community
- institutions unaware of established museum practices
- outdated policies and plans
- staff turnover or lack of direction and protocol

Stable collections are formed by board and staff communication and support.

When ethical practices in administration and collections management are overlooked and when personnel development and support are neglected, sustainability is at risk.
What is a Deaccession Toolbox?

A collection of resources and peer support to help institutions maintain sustainability and make appropriate decisions for their collection

Tools

➢ Collections Sustainability Rubric

➢ Resource List
  ○ Compilation of existing publications, white papers, or essays with citations and/or hyperlinks.
  ○ Organized into groups that mirror the matrix of the rubric.
  ○ Will be updated periodically as new resources are published.

➢ Peer network: coming attraction!
# Collections Sustainability Rubric

## MISSION

**Does your institution have a strategic plan? Does it include collections? Does it align with AAM's core document requirements?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEALTH OF INSTITUTION</th>
<th>COLLECTIONS</th>
<th>GOVERNANCE</th>
<th>MANAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institution is...</td>
<td>Indicators</td>
<td>Red Flags</td>
<td>Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing well. Regularly reviews professional standards. Consistent Resources Accreditation</td>
<td>Trained staff, Relates to community, Clear procedures, Development supports preservation and interpretation. Collections Mgt Policy is comprehensive and followed; Deac's and Coll. Plans Programming incorporates collections and include community involvement.</td>
<td>Staff understands most standards, less engaged with community, Development sometimes incorporates collections in fundraising strategies, usually graps museum standards, CMP, Deac's, and Coll. Plans are more than 5 years old. Collections and programming are active but not collaborative, community may or may not be involved in the process.</td>
<td>STRATEGIC PLAN IS CURRENT Board understands role and mission.ollections committee is active and understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggling. Do good and effective things but resources and/or communication are challenges. Resources MAP, SEFs, professional development</td>
<td>Changes in staff, mission, leadership. Deadlines slip but catch-up is possible. Collections management backlog grows. Communication is usually good, omissions are overcome. Collections and programming have different agendas but still produce positive results, usually include community.</td>
<td>Collections Mgt Policy not current. Stakeholders not familiar with CMP; Coll. Plan doesn't serve mission. Deacession procedures not followed. Communication with management challenging (lack of common ground, personality). Coll. Mgt slowing down, which limits access to the public. Collections and programming effective but don't interact and community not in the process.</td>
<td>STRATEGIC PLAN NEEDS TO BE UPDATED Board and staff may seek relevant advice to address gaps in strategies. Board and collections committee lacks consistent communication with collections staff or each other, may not meet regularly. Recruitment of board members occurs on as ad hoc basis, limited collections interests are represented. Term limits not consistently maintained. Orientation sporadic. Blurred definition of role/impact on collections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In crisis. Usual resources not available. Inconsistent processes and communication. Resources Peer-to-peer network, consultants</td>
<td>Collections staff have little awareness of the job, would ask for help if they knew who to ask. Collections programs and projects unsynchronized or may be limited; access to either is inconsistent. Community is not an obvious partner. Development efforts not focused and/or exclude collections. Collections issues fall on deaf ears.</td>
<td>Staff has no knowledge of standards or who to ask. Collections stored inappropriately and endangered; there is no access. There is little attempt to communicate across the Institution. What is a Collections Mgt Policy?</td>
<td>STRATEGIC PLAN IS ACHIEVED OR NEVER CREATED. Obstacles (internal/external) to creating strategic plan. Collections committees less active or functions independently. Communication with staff is limited, advice not sought or ignored Term limits are meaningless, no orientation. Disregard for collections standards.</td>
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## Community Support

| HOSPICE! State Att'y General, abandoned prop. law | There is no effort to care for or understand the collection. Its purpose is lost and the collection is deteriorating in place or is disappearing from the institution. It has little relevance to the community. | NO STRATEGIC PLAN. No obvious community support. Is the institution of value in current form? | There is no effort to lead, internally or beyond the walls of the institution. If there was a vision at the beginning, it is no longer obvious. Finances are insufficient and potential volunteer help is insufficient or non-existent. | Collections committee less active and not necessarily aware of tasks. Communication with collections staff is challenged (lack of common ground, personality). Collections policies are unclear. Succession plan is on the list but low priority. | Collections committee less active and not necessarily aware of tasks. Communication with collections staff is challenged (lack of common ground, personality). Collections policies are unclear. Succession plan is on the list but low priority. | Collections committee less active and not necessarily aware of tasks. Communication with collections staff is challenged (lack of common ground, personality). Collections policies are unclear. Succession plan is on the list but low priority. | Collections committee less active and not necessarily aware of tasks. Communication with collections staff is challenged (lack of common ground, personality). Collections policies are unclear. Succession plan is on the list but low priority. | Collections committee less active and not necessarily aware of tasks. Communication with collections staff is challenged (lack of common ground, personality). Collections policies are unclear. Succession plan is on the list but low priority. | Collections committee less active and not necessarily aware of tasks. Communication with collections staff is challenged (lack of common ground, personality). Collections policies are unclear. Succession plan is on the list but low priority. |

## Community Support

- **State Att'y General, abandoned prop. law:** There is no effort to care for or understand the collection. Its purpose is lost and the collection is deteriorating in place or is disappearing from the institution. It has little relevance to the community.
- **NO STRATEGIC PLAN:** No obvious community support. Is the institution of value in current form?
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# How to Use the Resource List

## MISSION

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## COLLECTIONS

**Red Flags**

- Staff understands most standards, less engaged with community. Development sometimes incorporates initiatives often against standards.

**Indicators**

- Staff Relates to community Clear procedures Development supports preservation and interpretation.

**Resources**

- Accreditation

## GOVERNANCE

**Red Flags**

- Strategic plan is current Board understands role and mission. Collections committee is active and understands the difference between advising and participating.

**Indicators**

- Strategic plan is recent but the scheduled update. Some board members understand role while others are not involved. Museum standards not understood. Some board members have no understanding of the collection. Some do not provide financial assistance; some are not members. Term limits are usually adhered to but there's little board training diversity.

## Resources

- AAM
- Deaccessioning Dilemma: Laws, Ethics, and Actions, John E. Simmons, PowerPoint and handouts from 2015 webinar: https://www.connectingtocollections.org/the_deaccessioning_dilemma_laws_ethics_and_actions/
- Why Do We Needs This? Insights and Hindsight from Deaccessioning, Leslie B. Jones, PowerPoint and handouts from 2017 webinar: https://www.connectingtocollections.org/why-do-we-need-this/
- Martha Morris, Managing People and Projects in Museums, 2017

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### Level #2 – The institution is struggling, despite doing good and effective things.

In addition Level #1 resources, these options provide additional insights into improving challenges with the collections or governance and consideration for deaccessioning.

- **Stand for Your Mission, The Power of Board Advocacy: a discussion guide for museum trustees, AAM**
- **The Deaccessioning Dilemma: Laws, Ethics, and Actions** by John E. Simmons, PowerPoint and handouts from 2015 webinar:
  https://www.connectingtocollections.org/the_deaccessioning_dilemma_laws_ethics_and_actions/
- **Why Do We Needs This? Insights and Hindsight from Deaccessioning** by Leslie B. Jones, PowerPoint and handouts from 2017 webinar:
  https://www.connectingtocollections.org/why-do-we-need-this/
- **Martha Morris, Managing People and Projects in Museums, 2017**

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### RUBRIC TO RESOURCE LIST

- **Communication with management challenging**
- **Stakeholders not familiar with CMP**
- **Deaccession procedures not followed**
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