A courier provides a chain of custody when an object is shipped from one institution to another. The courier is a representative of the owner of the work; s/he may be a staff member of the lending institution, an independent contractor, or a staff member of a sister institution sharing the task.

There are many good reasons for museums to send a courier when objects travel locally, nationally, and internationally. Museums may make the decision to have a courier accompany a shipment when shipping is not direct, when an object has a high value or is very fragile, when customs have to be cleared, or when the object has special installation requirements. The destination could be down the block, or a trip could easily last 30 to 40 hours with combined surface and air transportation. Couriered shipments may be soft-packed, crated, or packed in a special case for a hand-carry.

The events of Sept. 11, 2001 (9/11), have drastically changed the way we transport museum objects. New phrases such as tarmac security, boarding security, and TSA (Transportation Security Administration) are not everyday vocabulary before that date. New security requirements and systems are established continually to counter perceived threats. It is important to know these changes and how they affect museum objects in transit, and a freight forwarder or agent is the best source of current information.

During the initial stages of loan approval, the borrower should immediately be advised of the need and purpose of a courier. Reasons for using a courier for a loan may be the object's fragility, monetary value, historical or cultural value, museum policy, installation requirements, political considerations, or simply the complexity of the shipment. These trips are most frequently made by a member of the lending museum's staff. It is important to select the appropriate person for this task since there are many factors to consider and different expertise may be needed for different shipments. Qualifications for the task include knowledge of packing, crating, art handling, condition reporting, etiquette in a trucker's personal residence (the truck), and airline procedures, as well as being a quick thinker when plans go awry. The importance of being in good health at the start of a journey cannot be underestimated. Accommodating a courier imposes tremendous expense on the borrower. The lending institution should be sensitive to these costs and consider sharing a courier with another lender from the same area, especially if the two lenders have the same standards and are in agreement as to the shipping plans.

Hiring a security person, in addition to a courier, may be necessary for different aspects of a complex trip, especially if the courier must be separated from the shipment at any time. In some cases two couriers may be needed. The assistance of a forwarder or agent in booking the freight and courier is essential for international shipments. The agent is no longer allowed in the passenger terminal, but security services can be hired through the agent to supervise boarding of both courier and object on the plane. These combined services are also useful for complex domestic shipments.

**PREPARATIONS**

There are differences between domestic and international shipments, especially the paperwork. The proforma invoice (stating the catalog information on the work(s) with purpose for shipment) should include name and address of consignee, forwarder, value of work(s), and crate size and weight. This should be signed by a representative of the shipping institution and given to the forwarder/agent prior to the international shipping date.

The following documents are needed for any trip:

- recent condition report with photograph, and knowledge of how the object is packed and repacked
- copies of loan agreement, evidence of insurance, and pertinent correspondence
- health certificate, permits, licenses, if applicable
- list of representatives at borrowing institution, staff home or cellular telephone numbers, and contact information for forwarder/agent, if applicable
- names of hotels and reservation information en route and at final destination
- names and telephone numbers of and instructions for connecting with personnel meeting the courier at final destination
- e-ticket or airline tickets, updated passport, cash, travel checks, and/or museum credit card
- names and telephone numbers of truck drivers and/or security guards at both ends of the trip

One sheet of paper with all these names, telephone numbers, and other pertinent information together for easy reference is one of the greatest tools the courier will have. Provide an extra copy of this sheet to be placed in the courier's luggage.

Information on the exact route to the destination should be verified and confirmed with the driver(s), and details should be revealed to staff members and others on a "need to know" basis only. Keep in mind that this information is confidential in nature.

A courier should wear respectable, comfortable clothes and shoes and be prepared to climb steep ladders and stairs, sweat in the sun, and freeze in the warehouse breezeway. He or she must be prepared to carry luggage up and down stairs, and so should pack lightly. It is prudent to have snacks and water in a carry-on bag, although the water will be taken away by airport security; empty the container beforehand and refill it on the other side of the checkpoint.

Visit the lavatory just before boarding a vehicle. Facilities at airport cargo areas are available "sometimes." Use good judgment and prepare for a long wait between stops.

**AIR SHIPMENTS**

The truck shipment should arrive at the airline cargo area well in advance of the cargo close-out time. A single crate or an entire exhibition should never be left unattended. Observe unloading and count each item. Staying with the shipment at all times may be impossible, and this is where hired tarmac security comes in. The shipment can be accompanied until it is taken to be palletized at the cargo area of the airport. The courier must respect the rules at each cargo area, as restrictions vary. Airlines no longer permit a courier to observe the packing of a pallet or container unless this takes place beyond their designated "yellow" line, which cannot be crossed; the forwarder or agent will be able to observe the palletization or containerization. Airline personnel should be informed ahead of time to place crate(s) on pallets in the correct orientation, and confirm that only non-liquid, non-flammable materials and nothing that would pose a risk is placed next to the museum's shipment. Crate(s) should be completely covered with plastic sheeting and the final netting should secure the entire pallet. The courier should record the pallet and/or container number. If the plane is not an all-cargo flight, the courier will be taken by the agent to the terminal. Hired tarmac security personnel will stay with the shipment until it is loaded onto the plane, and the courier must be informed that the cargo is on board before boarding plane. Exchanging cell phone numbers enables the tarmac security person and the courier to maintain direct contact.

**SURFACE SHIPMENTS (TRUCK, VAN, CAR, TAXI, TRAIN)**

Many of the rules of air shipment apply to the transport of objects in a vehicle. In general, the courier must ensure continuous supervision; monitoring the shipment is easier when traveling by vehicles than when moving through airports. For all types of vehicles, supervise the loading and unloading of the items, check the number and condition of the cases, and sign the appropriate release and receipt upon
leaving the point of origin and arriving at the final destination. Upon arrival, the driver must wait until the courier and shipment are safely inside a secure area before departing. If a vehicle breaks down and the shipment is small enough to handle, seek out another means of transport that would safely and securely complete the transit. Waiting for a replacement truck and transferring all the crates need the same attention as when first loaded.

**Hand Carries**

When accompanying an item as a hand carry or hand-luggage, the courier should travel "first" or "business class" to take advantage of extra services provided by the transport carrier in placing the item in a safe, secure location. Only small and portable items should be hand-carried. Avoid over-packing, as the courier may have to unpack and repack during an inspection at security. Simplicity in packing allows someone to view the item without handling. It may be necessary to purchase an extra seat next to the courier into which the object can be strapped with a seat belt extension. Advance planning will assure that this extra room is available and may also provide for a cheaper ticket. If applicable an agent should book the courier's seat, especially if clearance formalities are required and coordination of the courier's arrival must be arranged. The trip may involve customs formalities at ports of entry and exit and can involve long delays that an agent will be able to ease. Return trips without the object should be coach class.

**Upon Arrival**

The borrowing institution should arrange hotel accommodations and provide the courier, upon arrival, the cash per diem for expenses as promptly agreed. Keep a copy of the receipt that is signed for this payment. The borrower should make any adjustments to the travel arrangements if travel condition change or delays occur.

Upon arrival, the courier should inspect the location of where the item(s) will be temporarily stored and assist the area and method of display. After the items have acclimatized, the courier will supervise unpacking, complete a thorough condition check, comparing the item with original document, and observe installation. Should a change in the object's condition occur, photograph these changes in case they are to be given to your insurance company. Obtain a written agreement for any treatment that may be required. Agree in advance where the object will be stored or handled if the exhibition area is not completed before the courier departs. Have the borrower sign a receipt of delivery to verify that all conditions agreed upon are in force. Inform the lending institution that the object has arrived safely and of the circumstances of the object's condition.

**Return Shipment**

The borrowing institution must make similar preparations for the return trip. Secure advance reservations and bookings and work our details, such as trucking company, flight plans, hotel, per diem, time of departure, personnel and staff information, etc. Such preparation ensures that the courier's work will be completed as quickly and smoothly as possible. Details and documentation must be completed before the courier leaves on the trip. Again, the courier's travel without an object should be coach class unless otherwise agreed. Returning with the object(s) has the same requirements described above. Be aware that the time lapse between trips could also mean a seasonal change, posing differences in climate conditions. Plan ahead for these changes and dress accordingly.

After the object has arrived at its final destination and has been unpacked and condition checked, the borrowing institution should be informed that the work has arrived safely. Signing the borrower's receipt of delivery will close out this portion of the loan.
COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT

RC-AAM COURIER POLICY STATEMENT

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CODE OF PRACTICE FOR COURIERING MUSEUM OBJECTS

Courier Policy

The consideration for using a courier is based on certain primary facts:

1. Certain museum objects are of a fragile nature, whether by construction or formation, size, materials used, deterioration by age or abuse, and/or require special handling or installation techniques.

2. Certain museum objects are irreplaceable, rare and unique, politically or culturally sensitive, of extreme artistic, historical, scientific worth, or are of extreme value for other reasons.

3. Certain shipping routes may prove dangerous to fragile museum objects because such routes expose the object to careless handling, excessive movement, changing and/or extreme temperatures, and other human and/or natural hazards.

Lending and borrowing museums must agree that:

1. The museum that owns the object may determine that a courier is necessary to lessen the hazards inherent in the object itself, and may specify the transportation methods and/or the route to preserve the object from loss by damage or theft and/or to assure that the object will not receive such wear as would cause future problems in the museum’s efforts for preservation.

2. Both the lending and the borrowing museum are fully cognizant of and in accord with the limitations and requirements of third parties to the loan (such as insurance companies, transport companies, and forwarding companies) and are in agreement about which museum will take responsibility for actions not covered by such third parties.

The lending and borrowing museums accept that:

1. The care of museum objects is the top priority in the shipment, except in life-threatening situations.

The requirement of a courier will be established and agreed upon by the lending and borrowing museum by the time the loan agreement is signed and accepted.

The courier, acting as the agent of the lending museum, has full authority to act in protection of the object until the object is officially released to the borrowing museum.

Therefore:

The courier designated must be a museum professional (understanding the condition of the object and its special requirements, familiar with packing, trained in handling, and, as applicable, experienced with transport procedures) in whom the lending museum reposes complete trust for execution of all courier-related duties.

The museum that selects the courier is, in effect, lending that person for knowledge of the problems of the object and of the transit, for ability to withstand the rigors of travel, and for taking full responsibility for protecting the object.

The courier will be made aware of and understand the responsibilities entrusted to him/her, and of all known or possible hazards that might be encountered in transit.

The lending and borrowing museums must agree in advance on costs related to the courier, on which museum shall pay for them, and on the method of reimbursement for expenses whether foreseen or unforeseen.

The shipment of a museum object will not become the basis for unrelated travel or activity.

Courier Procedures

Who Selects a Courier?

The decision to select a courier should be made in consultation among the director, curator, registrar, and conservator, or by one of these, in accordance with authority specified in museum policy.

Who is Qualified To Be a Courier?

Directors, curators, registrars, conservators, and, in certain cases, senior preparators, should be the only people eligible to serve as couriers. People who serve as couriers must be those who are experienced in handling museum objects.

The courier must possess certain qualities: firmness, patience, stamina, and the ability to make intelligent decisions quickly. If the object is to be hand-carryed, the courier must have the physical strength to do so. The courier should not carry any luggage while hand-carrying an object. He/she must possess packing skills, be able to make condition reports and effectively use a camera, and be familiar with shipping brokers, customs, surface transportation, and airport and airline procedures.

Borrower and Lender Agreements and Responsibilities

The agreement to courier an object should be included as part of the loan agreement or a separate written agreement. If the lender has special requirements (that the object be a hand-carry, that it travel flat, that armed guards be required to be present along the same of the aircraft to the door of the museum, that first-class travel is necessary, that an extended stay by the courier at the borrower’s institution is required, or special installation instructions), these should be stipulated in writing at the outset. The borrower should clearly outline its courier procedures regarding all flight details or surface arrangements, arrival, unpacking, condition reporting, and installation, as they apply. All arrangements should be understood by all parties well in advance of the shipping date, including backup plans for sudden schedule changes. Hotel accommodations and terms for daily expenses should be clearly set forth as part of the formal agreement. It is incumbent upon both borrowing and lending museums and their appointed couriers to make every effort to adhere to cost-effective planning and implementation of courier expenses.

Arrangements

The borrowing and lending institution registrars or loan officials make the arrangements for the loan and courier in accordance with accepted practice and the loan agreement. The registrar or borrower’s representative must meet the courier upon delivery. The courier must know exactly where he/she is to be met when arriving. For international shipments, the borrower’s customs broker must be at plane-side if possible to supervise off loading while the borrower is bringing the courier to cargo to meet the broker and shipment. The borrower should not move the shipment until the courier is present unless an emergency develops. The borrower’s broker must make incoming customs clearance arrangements so that the objects are not jeopardized at the airport by having their crates opened for inspection. The borrower must provide suitable vehicles to get the courier and shipment from the airport to the museum, and provide personnel at the museum to help off load the truck. If courier and object are in separate vehicles they should travel in tandem.

Once the courier is satisfied that the object is safely stored, the borrower should assist the courier in getting to his/her hotel, and should inform the courier how and when to return to the museum to unpack the object. Twenty-four hours should be designated for object acclimatization. The borrower should provide help to unpack, prepare, and install the object as necessary, and should initial the courier’s condition report.

The borrower must provide secure storage for the courier’s objects. The borrower must recognize that the courier has authority over the object until the courier is satisfied with its disposition. The courier should act cooperatively with the borrower’s staff and accommodate shipping arrangements and installation schedule.

Accompanied Shipment

An accompanied shipment is one in which a courier agrees to oversee other museum loans in the same shipment, but is not responsible for overseeing packing, unpacking, or making condition reports. Museums and couriers should have a written agreement regarding the responsibilities of the courier and/or other objects, clearly stating what the courier is expected to do about other objects, with respect to both responsibility and authority.

Responsibilities of the Courier

The courier constitutes a continuous chain of accountability for the object, from the hands of the lender to those of the borrower. The implication

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is that the courier can take efficient, rapid, on-site action to preserve the object from, or through, high-risk situations in transit. Secure and expeditious movement of the object can reduce high risk to lower levels of risk.

Responsibilities to the Object
The courier is responsible for witnessing and supervising packing, unpacking, and examination of the object at the beginning and end of shipment. The courier must stay with the shipment, physically and personally or via constant contact with centers of authority (e.g., customs brokers) where physical presence by the courier is restricted.

The courier must do all that may be necessary to keep delays or possibilities of delays to a minimum. The courier is responsible for anticipating, solving, and reporting unforeseen problems. In the event of a major change in weather, for example, the courier must decide whether it is advisable for the shipment to proceed.

The courier must have no conflicting obligations or reasons for courting the object. The courier's family/friends must not travel with the couriered shipment; the courier must not be required, requested, or allowed to visit other locations for personal or museum matters before the object is safely delivered, and the schedule of shipment of the object must not be forced to meet appointments or to ease the courier's trip at the expense of the object.

Skill, Knowledge, and Abilities
The courier must understand and uphold the museum's standards as stated in institution policies. The courier must have vocational knowledge, founded upon practical experience in museums, to understand how these policies relate to real-life circumstances. The courier must also understand the performance expectations of the borrower.

The courier should join in the pre-evaluation of shipment difficulties: dropped cases, fork-lift hazards, major temperature and humidity variations, palletization and containerization problems (e.g., objects that were wet, excessively heavy, or loose in the container with museum crates), insecure strapping, unscheduled unloading, etc.

The courier must have knowledge of the object's construction techniques, materials, and condition, and must understand the sensitivity of materials and techniques to the varying conditions of transit. He/she must be able to recognize condition problems that require examination or treatment by a conservator.

The courier must know exactly where the object is going, to whom, and by what means, including alternate/back-up routes if schedules are delayed, altered, or canceled.

The courier should have access to his/her institution or from the borrower:
- a copy of the loan agreement
- business or home addresses, telephone and fax numbers of principals (both borrowers and lenders)
- schedules of transit, including alternates
- insurance restrictions, and a copy of the certificate of insurance
- crate numbers, sizes, weights, and object checklists
- handling instructions
- condition reports
- Photograph(s) of the object(s)
- copy of the customs invoice

The courier should leave an itinerary with the registrar's office. The courier should be prepared to observe for delays, cultural differences in conducting business, language barriers, international telephone and telegraphy procedures, possible strikes, and different local and national holidays.

The courier must understand and appreciate the support functions, procedures, restrictions, and authority of carriers, forwarders, customs agents, airport security, lenders and borrowers. The courier must understand the extent of his/her own authority and responsibility, and ascribe neither too little nor too much authority to someone else.

The courier must have a sound knowledge of government regulations that can limit or curtail courier actions (e.g., restricted entry).

Information should be given only to priority individuals directly involved in the transit of the object and with a justified need to know. The courier should not tell them anything more than is necessary for them to do their job.

The courier should have some knowledge of shipping, including under-seat sizes, storage areas on board aircraft, and how to seal truck and container locks properly.

The courier must record any container numbers for crated objects, should know position numbers within aircraft, and be seated on the aircraft loading side to watch for unscheduled unloading of crates.

The courier must secure identification of any one taking crated objects before releasing the crates. The courier must obtain an authorized signature and date on receipts.

The courier must carefully read and understand every document or receipt before signing it, requesting translations when necessary.

The courier must take neither alcoholic nor medication that might in any way impair his/her physical mobility and/or ability to make decisions.

The courier should keep accurate accounting of expenses, including copies of all receipts.

Responsibility to the Borrower
The courier must know the borrower's requirements:
- The courier is representing his/her institution and as such should conduct himself/herself fairly and ethically.
- The courier should expect to travel coach class unless hand-carrying an object.
- The courier should not make last-minute changes of plan unless essential to the shipment, but if necessary then the borrower should be immediately notified.
- No arrangements should be made that would cause unnecessary risks, complicated timetables, or extra expense.