

**Ingenium – Canada’s Museums of Science and  
Innovation**

**DEACCESSIONING AND  
DISPOSITION OF COLLECTION  
OBJECTS**

**GUIDELINE # 100-B**

**July 2017**

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**Guideline: DEACCESSIONING AND DISPOSITION OF ARTIFACTS**    **Date: July 2017**

**No: 100-B**

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### **1.0 OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this guideline is to provide direction on the deaccession and/or disposal of collection objects in the collection of Ingenium.

### **2.0 DEFINITIONS**

**Accessioning** is the process whereby an object or group of objects is added to the Corporation's collection.

**Artifacts** are human-made objects accessioned into the Corporation's artifact collection. In addition to historical and contemporary objects of invention and manufacture they include models, replicas and works of art.

**Collection Object** is any artifact or library or archival material that has been accessioned into the Corporation's collection.

**Deaccessioning** is the process of permanently removing an object from the collection.

**Disposition** is the action of removing a deaccessioned object from the Corporation's collection storage and disposing of it through a variety of means.

**Exchange** is the action of transferring ownership of a deaccessioned object in return for a collection object or objects of equal value.

**Inventory Items** are any objects that are stored with the collection but are not, and were not intended to be, accessioned. They include "spare parts," props, former exhibition materials and other items generally but not invariably identified by a variety of inventory numbers (SP, MV, T, etc.).

**Library and archival materials** are books, photographs, trade literature, technical drawings, archival documents, audio-visual records and other materials that are part of the Corporation's library and archive collection.

**Transfer** is the action of transferring ownership of a deaccessioned object in return for no financial or other consideration.

### **3.0 DEACCESSIONING**

It is an accepted museum practice to deaccession collection objects that no longer serve the purposes of the museum. Among other reasons, an object may be deaccessioned from the Ingenium collection because it:

- is not relevant to the mandate of Ingenium or its collection subject areas;
- has suffered irreparable damage, deterioration or loss;
- has unknown or poorly documented provenance or doubtful authenticity or ownership (as determined after research);
- is incomplete or composed of non-original material;
- poses a physical danger to personnel or collections (e.g. contains hazardous materials);
- over-represents or duplicates a particular type of collection object, historical theme or technology.

All registration information regarding deaccessioned collection objects will be retained by the Corporation.

### **3.1 Authorization:**

A curator or assistant curator submits a formal rationale for deaccession of an artifact and a proposed method of disposition to the Ingenium Acquisition Committee. For library and archival materials, this function is performed by the Chief Knowledge Officer. The Committee recommends or rejects the deaccession by a simple majority vote. The Vice-President, Collection and Research approves the recommendation of the committee.

In addition to the Vice-President, Collection and Research, a recommended deaccession will require the further approval of the Chief Executive Officer of CSTMC in the following two cases:

1. the estimated fair market value exceeds \$25,000; or
2. the estimated value is below \$25,000, but the object's ownership is in question or the object is subject to a repatriation claim.

### **4.0 DISPOSITION**

Following confirmation that a collection object is not subject to any conditions established at the time of acquisition that may affect its disposition, and that there is sufficient documentation to assure clear title to the object, a deaccessioned collection object will be disposed of in accordance with section 4.1 of these guidelines.

In situations where disposal may be problematic, the Vice-President, Collection and Research, will choose the most appropriate method of disposition in consideration of Corporate policies and the public interest.

To avoid any conflict of interest or appearance thereof, Board Members, Ingenium staff, and immediate family are restricted from acquiring any objects disposed of by the Corporation.

#### **4.1 Methods of Disposition:**

##### **4.1.1 Transfer or Exchange:**

A deaccessioned collection object must first be offered for transfer or exchange to another public institution within Canada. This offer must be posted on a widely accessible, on-line Canadian museum forum for a period of 30 days. Any such transfer or exchange will occur only on the written understanding that the object must remain within the public domain for a period of ten years. Recipient institutions will incur all transportation costs, unless otherwise agreed, and are expected to provide appropriate preservation/exhibit facilities.

If no public institution agrees to a transfer or exchange, deaccessioned collection objects may be exchanged with an individual or private institution, provided the transaction enhances the development of the Ingenium collection. In such cases the exchange must be approved by Acquisition Committee after the tabling of an "arm's length" appraisal of both in-coming and out-going objects. In the case of collection objects with a value exceeding \$20,000, two appraisals will be required. Except in certain limited cases where designated for destruction (see 4.1.4) deaccessioned collection objects may not be transferred to private individuals.

Where appropriate, given the collection object's provenance and/or the collection specializations of the receiving institution, a deaccessioned object may be transferred to, or exchanged with, a foreign public institution. In such cases, the above appraisal requirements will apply.

In cases where a collection object poses a physical danger to personnel or collections Acquisition Committee may decide that such an object may not ethically be offered to another institution or individual. In such cases Acquisition Committee may vote to immediately consign the collection object for destruction according to relevant laws and regulations governing disposal of hazardous materials.

##### **4.1.2 Sale:**

If a deaccessioned collection object cannot be transferred or exchanged, it may be sold as a means of disposition, preferably by public auction. Auction arrangements will be handled through the office of the Chief Financial Officer or the Ingenium Foundation.

Deaccessioned collection objects may also be sold to private individuals, either directly or through a reputable and established dealer. In these cases, the sale will be based on the fair market value of the collection object and the transaction itself will be public information.

If the collection object is not saleable by these means, it may be sold for scrap value.

In accordance with Canadian and international museum codes of ethics, net proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned collection objects must be used for collection acquisitions or direct care of the collection.

#### 4.1.3 Assignment to Other Museum Operations:

If a deaccessioned collection object cannot be transferred or exchanged, it may also be made available for other operational purposes within the Corporation. In keeping with the principle that the proceeds from deaccessions should be applied to collection development or care, the first priority for operational use will be to provide parts for the restoration of another collection object. If not required for restoration, the deaccessioned collection object may be used for interpretive programming, exhibition props or similar purposes.

The parts of a deaccessioned collection object that remain after restoration may also be used for programming or other operational purposes. Alternatively, they may be sold or destroyed.

The curator or assistant curator responsible for initiating the deaccession proposal, or where applicable the Chief Knowledge Officer, will identify the most appropriate operational purpose in consultation with applicable conservation or museum programming staff. Prior to receipt of a deaccessioned collection object, the receiving division must make arrangements for storage of the object. Except in the case of deaccessioned artifacts required for a foreseeable restoration project, deaccessioned collection objects identified for operational use will not be housed in the Ingenium collection storage.

#### 4.1.4 Destruction:

Disposal of a collection object by destruction is the final recourse and is permitted under the following circumstances:

- All reasonable efforts were made to dispose of the object through other means.
- The object is environmentally hazardous and poses a danger to other collections or staff.

- The object has no residual heritage, preservation or market value to the Corporation.

Collection objects identified for destruction may be used for conservation research or public programming where this use involves destruction or permanent disassembly.

If the above public program involves participants making a new object from parts of deaccessioned collection objects (as in an art or “maker” program) the participant may receive permission from the program administrator to assume ownership of the new object that incorporates these parts. This permission shall be limited to objects containing source parts of nominal value.

#### 4.1.5 Return to Donor:

In accordance with Canadian income tax policy, the Corporation will not return deaccessioned objects to their original donors or donors’ estates.

#### 4.1.6 Inventory Items

As unaccessioned objects, inventory items do not have to be deaccessioned prior to disposition. Disposition of an inventory item is initiated by the relevant curator or assistant curator by means of a Collection and Research Service Request. The process of disposition follows that for deaccessioned collection objects, although there is no requirement to first offer them for transfer or exchange to other public institutions.

### **5.0 DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Vice-President, Collection and Research is responsible for the development of policy and procedures related to the development and management of the collection, including:

- approving all recommendations subject to section 3.1;
- approving the mode of disposition subject to section 3.1;
- making decisions on those matters involving multiple requests for an object and resolving contentious issues.

Curators, Assistant Curators and the Chief Knowledge Officer are responsible for:

- developing and preserving a nationally significant collection of objects and associated documentation with respect to their area of responsibility;

- recommending collection objects for deaccessioning by submitting a formal rationale for deaccessioning and a proposed method of disposition;
- appraising the market value of the collection object proposed for deaccessioning or, where required, arranging for its evaluation by an arms-length appraiser.
- identifying, where applicable, the most appropriate operational purpose for the deaccessioned object, in consultation with relevant conservation or museum programming staff.

The Director, Conservation and Collection Services and, where applicable, the Chief Knowledge Officer, is responsible for implementing the necessary steps to deaccession and dispose of Ingenium collection objects and inventory items. Steps include:

- verifying and providing details on ownership and any obligations associated with the acquisition of the collection object;
- documenting the process;
- amending all related records;
- removing accession numbers, tags etc.;
- arranging for the physical removal of collection objects from corporate premises;
- signing off ownership of collection objects;
- ensuring that collection objects to be physically destroyed for safety reasons are so destroyed, according to all relevant laws and regulations governing disposal of hazardous materials;
- maintaining the inventory of spare parts;
- notifying the museum community regarding disposition.

The Manager, Conservation Services, in concert with the subject curator, will remove all items to be used as spare parts for future artifact use.

## **6.0 AUTHORITIES**

Ingenium Collection Development and Management Policy (#100)

Ingenium Conservation Management Plan (Directive #101)

## **7.0 REFERENCES**

Canadian Museums Association, Ethics Guidelines (2006)

## Collection Development Strategy

“Deaccessioning and the Income Tax Act,” *Muse*, 13,4 (1996), p. 59.

International Council of Museums (ICOM), Code of Ethics for Museums (2013)