

Acquisition and Accession Interim Policy (May 2017) – In Progress

General Principles

Defining Acquisition and Accession: Accessioning is a two part process in which acquisition is (1) the transfer of legal title to the Museum, and (2) the formal acceptance of the object by recording and processing [assigning a number] the object into the permanent collection.

The Guam Museum recognizes the importance of acquiring objects for the sake of enriching the Museum's Permanent, Educational, and Archival collections. All objects entering the Museum must follow the *Criteria for Acquisition*. Appropriate steps for acquisitions are described in *Procedures for Acquisitions*.

No object will be accepted by *any* Museum staff member without a signed agreement for temporary custody. Any objects left unsolicited will be considered as abandoned property.

No staff member will provide formal or informal appraisals.

Accessioned objects will be under legal care and stewardship of the Museum. The Museum will bear full ownership of formally accessioned objects under its care and will be allowed to exhibit, loan, or dispose of the object as the Museum sees fit under the service of the public. Objects acquired by the Museum will not be used for the described intention or purpose of sale, trade, or other means of immediate disposal from the institution.

A gift is considered complete when it has the following documentation: Deed of Gift or letter with the intention to donate, physical receipt of the object by the Museum (Custody Receipt or Shipping Receipt), and a letter of acceptance of the gift by Curator.

Methods of Acquisition

Bequest: An object left or given through a transfer of title under the will of a deceased donor.

Donation/Gift: An object left or given (transfer of title during the life of the donor).

Purchase: An object with title obtained through direct purchase, auction, bargain sale, exchange, or commission.

Field Collection: Purchases acquired through an expedition or a group of objects/collections of archaeological specimens gathered during an archaeological excavation or field research project.

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Conversion: See “Old Loans.” Objects that have been abandoned or left unclaimed by owners.

Criteria for Acquisitions

- I. **Relevance:** Objects under consideration for acquisition must offer enhancement to the Museum’s collection and fit under the Museum’s collecting goals and overall institutional vision.
- II. **Title:** Objects must exhibit clear title. The Museum will not accept any object into the collection if the title is unestablished or restricted. Objects accessioned into the Museum must be able to transfer full title to the Museum unless under special permission by the Museum Director.
- III. **Funding:** The Museum shall be able to properly provide the funding and resources for appropriate storage, preservation, and exhibit of the object in question. The Collections Manager/Registrar will be responsible for the estimation of storage needs and costs. A Conservator may be consulted for the estimation of conservator needs and costs. In the event of an acquisition via purchase, the price asked shall be reasonable.
- IV. **Condition:** The object in review must be in sound, stable condition or not require extensive conservation work in order to maintain its value to the Museum.
- V. **Provenance Research:** The Museum must be able to establish ownership by being able to actively research an object’s provenance. Provenance will help establish a historical reference and value of the object.
- VI. **No Restrictions:** Objects must not have restrictions for its use by the Museum, this includes any copyright or trademark issues.
- VII. **Ramifications:** The Museum will not accept objects that may harbor any moral, legal, or ethical implications. The object must not violate any applicable state, national, or international laws or conventions.

Culturally Sensitive Material, Human Remains, Sacred Artifacts—Policy will be in compliance with provisions in Guam Law.

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Authorities

Initial Acquisition Review:

The Guam Museum Director and Curator are responsible for the initial review of the acquired objects. Both the Director and Curator must agree on the significance and importance of the object's acquisition by means of cultural, educational, research, or social value before moving forward.

Accepting Objects for Acquisition:

Objects offered by donors may not under any circumstances be accepted by Museum staff members with exceptions to the Curator and/or the Museum Director. If the object appears to have potential value, only the Museum Director and Curator may accept the object on the grounds of temporary custody agreement. This object will then move forward with the acquisition review to determine the value of the object through Collections Committee.

Documentation:

The Curator will be responsible for all acquisition and accession documentation including the creation of an acquisition file, drafting temporary custody agreements, deed of gifts, condition reports, acceptance letters, assigning temporary and accession numbers to objects, etc.

Final Acquisitions/Accession Review:

The final decision for accepting an acquisition and recommending an object be accessioned will be determined by the Collections Committee.

Procedure for Acquisition/Accession

1. The Curator conducts a curatorial review necessary for the preliminary assessment in the acquisition of an object. Methods of acquisitions listed above in *General Principles*. A photograph is generally acceptable and sufficient for initial evaluation. Request documentation proving ownership or title.

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2. The Guam Museum Director and Curator must agree on the significant value and importance of the object's acquisition by means of cultural, educational, or social value.
3. The Curator will notify donor of interest and intent to acquire the object, but will maintain that the final decision for acceptance rests on the Collections Committee. The Curator will begin to organize the object's transportation to the Museum. (Donors are responsible for all costs of shipping.) A Temporary Custody Agreement will be drafted and signed by the donor before physically accepting the object into the Museum.
4. The Curator will be responsible for the creation of an Acquisition file (will later be turned into Accession if accepted).
5. A Deed of Gift is also drafted upon the retrieval or reception of the object. The date of the Deed of Gift will suffice as the date of acquisition for documentation. (The Deed of Gift is not legally binding until countersigned by the Museum Director.)
6. More extensive research on provenance will be conducted on the object and a brief analysis conducted by the Curator for costs for the maintenance of the object (storage, preservation, exhibit needs). Conservators may be consulted to analyze the estimate costs for preservation and conservation if necessary.
7. Curator recommends acquisition to the Collections Committee by drafting a proposal outlining the justifications behind the decision for recommendation. The Collections Committee review the recommendation based on the *Criteria for Acquisitions*.
8. If the object has been approved for accession the Collections Manager shall draft a letter of acceptance and send a countersigned Deed a Gift (signed by the Museum Director). If the object was acquired as a purchase, warranty of title and indemnification agreement shall be executed. If the object is rejected, the object I returned to the donor.
9. Move to process of formal Accession [in progress]– assign accession number, catalog, enter into database, etc.

Abandoned Property (“Door Step Donations” objects left by the donor at the Museum)

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If an object has been left by the donor unsolicited on Museum grounds the risk will rest in lack of legal title transfer (could potentially be stolen object) and the object will have to undergo extreme provenance check.

If undesired, the Museum shall make every attempt to return the object to its donor. If all attempts to locate an appropriate repository for the object the object may be considered “abandoned property.” The Museum will not be responsible or under any obligation to care for the object.