**Managing Paperwork and Documentation for Collections**

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It's seems that many of you aren't quite sure how to manage the paperwork and documentation for your collections. You all have a system, but maybe it doesn't work as well as it should.

Having managed collection records for decades, I use a system that many curators use and it's easy to implement and makes finding the records much simpler. It's based on using a 3-part numbering system (year/gift number in sequential order/object number within gift - i.e. 2016.10.5 - meaning the objects were received in 2016, this was the tenth gift that year and this is the fifth item in the donation).

How to arrange collection file/records:

Arrange records chronologically by year

Within each year, have individual folders for each gift/donation/donor number

Keep all records pertaining to that gift together in one folder.

What goes in a collection file/records:

Temporary receipt that was completed before the donation was accepted

Deed of Gift, signed by donor and museum staff/volunteer who accepted the gift listing the items in the gift

Donor Questionnaire - a simple form that can be completed by the donor in an effort to capture as much information about the gift as possible

Catalogue Worksheet - that records all the pertinent information and describes the object

Condition/Conservation reports

Loan forms

Exhibition information

Research information

Communication with donor

Communication with other's regarding this item

Any and all paperwork related to a donation, purchase, transfer, etc, should be kept together. Your collection records are part of the permanent record of the institution.

Helpful Hint - since I use temporary receipts, I always have to mail the Deed of Gift to the donor. Make three copies of the Deed of Gift, one for the file to document that you mailed one, and two to the donor, one for their records and one for them to return to you in a self-addressed stamped envelope. Take a page of small white return address stickers and print out a page reading "Deed of Gift Returned." Stick this on the outside of the file folder. When you receive the Deed of Gift mark the date you received it on the label on the outside of the folder. At least one or twice a year, go through the collection files and check which Deed of Gifts weren't returned and send a reminder letter with another copy of the Deed of Gift (hopefully you saved a copy on your computer). Makes managing this very important part of your documentation, much easier. Remember if you don't have a signed Deed of Gift, you don't have clear title to the donation.