

QMN PROCEDURE: Procedure for Acquisition (Cultures & Histories Program)

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that staff process objects proposed for acquisition in a standard way addressing concerns of all stakeholders.

2.0 SCOPE

This procedure applies to the Curatorial and Collection Management staff of the Cultures & Histories Program and staff of the Conservation Department.

This procedure outlines the steps involved in an object being acquired and prepared for inclusion in the State Collection. It must be read in conjunction with the *QM46 Acquisition Policy*.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Accessioned items are objects or specimens or specimen lots that have been incorporated into the 'State Collection' through the formal process of Registration (numbering), and Accessioning (recording locality and other contextual information in an electronic database).

Accessioning - see Registration. Includes the process of undertaking a significance assessment.

Collection Checklist is a list specific to each collection area based on the expert knowledge of the related Curator, which highlights any high risk issues relating to the objects or specimens being considered for loan or acquisition – such as the country of origin, the specific lending institution, or the type of item. (As outlined in *QM306: Due Diligence Procedure*.)

A **Collection item** is an Object or Specimen and associated data that has been formally acquired by QMN.

Cultural material is physical and documentary material that represents the intangible and tangible elements of individual cultures. Such material may be, may refer to, may represent or may be a component of specific practices or knowledge systems. It includes but is not limited to artistic works including visual, performing and literary works, moveable cultural property, Ancestral Remains and other sensitive materials, photographic, film, and sound recordings and all forms of documentation which include any elements of culture - past, present and future.

Documentation is supporting evidence, recorded in a permanent manner using a variety of media (paper, photographic, electronic etc.) of the identification, condition, history, or

significance of an Object, Specimen or collection. This encompasses information that is inherent to the individual Object / Specimen and its associations in its environment as well as that which reflects processes and transactions affecting the Object / Specimen (e.g. Accessioning, documenting, loaning, analysis, treatment etc.). Documentation is an integral aspect of use, management and preservation of an Object, Specimen or collection. All digital and paper based documentation must be collected, maintained and stored in accordance with *QM318: Collection and Research Record Keeping Policy*.

Disposal is the process of removing an Item from the care and custody of QMN. In the case of State Collection material this can only be undertaken once the Deaccessioning procedure has been followed.

A **Donation** is an item given to QMN without encumbrance. Donations are to be recorded on the appropriate forms and reported to the Board.

Due diligence all the required endeavours to establish the facts of a case before deciding a course of action, particularly in identifying the source and history of an item offered for acquisition, use before acquiring it, or for inward and outward loans.

An **Item** is an interchangeable term used for an Object, record, Specimen or Specimen lot.

Lot is the term used to define a group of Specimens or Objects recovered from the same location at the same time, which are registered, accessioned, stored and documented together for efficiency reasons based on manageable quantities of Objects (e.g. multiple specimens of insects, fishes, small crustaceans).

An **Object** is a human-made item, often manufactured or created from naturally-occurring materials and made for use in a cultural context. This term differentiates human-made collection items from those acquired in nature (Specimens).

Provenance an object's full history and ownership from the time of its discovery or creation to the present day, through which authenticity and ownership are determined.

QMN means the Queensland Museum Network

Reserve Collection items are held by various programs and campuses of QMN specifically for the purpose of public display, teaching, public education and or interpretation, non-scientific loans, etc. The former group of items do not meet QMN criteria for state significance, are not accessioned into the State Collection, nor intended to be held in perpetuity.

Restricted Collection pertains to a Collection Item, image, data or information, to which unrestricted access may cause offence or endanger the safety or sanctity of that item, image, data or information, or the survival of the population from which the material was collected. Restricted Collection Items may include rare and threatened species, species of significant commercial value, secret and sacred objects, etc.

Senior Decision Maker this will depend on which process is being undertaken (acquisition, incoming loan, international exhibition etc.) and at what level approval is being sought. It could be the relevant Program Head, Director or CEO, and may differ depending on the specific circumstances of the situation (for example, an issue may be elevated to a higher

decision making level if necessary). In some cases this role is replaced by a **Project Board** (The Project Board provides overall direction and management to a project, such as a major exhibition, and is accountable for the success of the project. The Project Board is comprised of a Project Executive (often the CEO), Senior User/s, and Senior Supplier/s. The Project Executive is the ultimate decision maker and is supported in the decision making process by the Senior User and Senior Supplier.)

Sensitive Material is anything which requires special protection from disclosure or specific treatment. It is material which can potentially cause offense, distress, embarrassment or threat to members of the community. It can be political, medical, religious, social, cultural or sexual in nature and can be in the form of information, images, the spoken word, objects or activities.

State Collection is the official collection of Items registered by QMN through Acquisition or Transfer. It is the sum total of all Accessioned items of scientific or historical significance vested in the Board of QM.

4.0 ACTIONS

Staff must undertake **due diligence** in order to ensure the Museum only acquires material with clear provenance; where the vendor or donor has legal title, the item is authentic and is not identified as having been looted or illegally obtained or exported. This applies to material acquired through purchase, gift (including via the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program), bequest or exchange.

(The Museum may accept custody and control of material without legal title. This may occur when items are transferred to the Museum as a result of statutory requirements such as through state heritage legislation; in relation to shipwrecks or archaeological material or Voucher Specimens of animal material used for biodiscovery purposes. Also material may be deposited at the Museum by request of Traditional Owners, such as Secret / Sacred objects or human remains. In these cases staff must be aware that the relevant legal and QM procedures in relation to this type of material will override the procedures as outlined here.)

Staff are required to make professional judgements on the extent of **due diligence** required on a case by case basis based on the specific situation and the objects in question; assessing the potential risks and balancing the resources required in each situation to mitigate those risks; in accordance with the parameters of *QM305 Due Diligence Policy* and *QM306 Due Diligence Procedure*.

Specifically staff must comply with the Museums obligations outlined in the following legislation and conventions: *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, 2004*; the *Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act, 1986* and the *UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970*.

When staff are determining whether an object is acquired or not, consideration must be given to the following principle objectives of acquisition

- Objects produced in Queensland;
- Objects used in Queensland but made elsewhere
- Objects that recognise Queensland's place in the Asia-Pacific region and the world; and
- Objects associated with or strongly related to individuals significant in Queensland History.

Assessment of potential donations must also take into account the detailed criteria as outlined in *Section 5.7* of the *QM78 QMN Collection Policy* and both the immediate and long term objectives of QMN; guided by QMN's Values and Strategic Themes. Collection development must build on strengths and address weaknesses utilising the *Queensland Museum Definitions of Significance Criteria* to assist the decision making process, whilst taking into account current and future projects and needs. (The *QM78 QMN Collection Policy* is also very clear with regard to the types of objects the Museum does not collect, as outlined in *section 5.5*.)

All documentation associated with acquisitions must be scanned and attached to the relevant record in Vernon (where one exists) and hard copies must be kept in the appropriate file located in the Collections and Research Records area (whether that is the designated CRRC located in the QM&S Library or a campus / Collection specific repository) in accordance with *QM319 Collections and Research Record Keeping Procedure*.)

4.1 Donated material

If a member of the public comes to the museum wishing to donate an object, the following process must be followed. The donor must be given a copy of the *FAQs About Donation* and asked to complete a *QM44 Donation Proposal Form* available from the QMN website or from Program staff at any campus or the Discovery Centre (at QM&S) or Front of House (at The Workshops Rail Museum and Museum of Tropical Queensland). Where possible, donors must be encouraged to complete the form online via the QMN website.

Donors are requested not to leave objects at the Museum; instead the completed *QM44 Donation Proposal Form* must be given to the relevant Curator for assessment. If for some reason the donor insists on leaving an object, an *Object Receipt* must be completed by the receiving staff member, a copy being given to the donor, the original being retained by the Museum and provided to the relevant Curator along with the object. In both cases the following procedure must then be followed:

Option 1 – Object NOT required:

- Curator to acknowledge receipt of the donation proposal within 30 days.

- Curator to make an initial assessment of the object and determine whether it should potentially be acquired or not (in accordance with process indicated above in section 4.0)
- If the Curator determines that the object should not be acquired they must advise the donor in writing (by letter or email) explaining the decision. This assessment must be done within 90 days of receiving a *QM44 Donation Proposal Form*.
- If the object has been left at the Museum, the Collection Manager must contact the donor to arrange for them to collect the item. (Collection must occur within 90 days of the donor being contacted otherwise the object will be disposed of). When the object is collected, the Collection Manager and donor must each sign and date the bottom of the original *Object Receipt* to confirm the item has been returned. (If the donor requires a copy, the original *Object Receipt* can be photocopied.)
- If the donor is unable to collect the object, Collection Management must arrange return. If this is done by hand, the Collection Manager and donor must each sign and date the bottom of the original *Object Receipt* to confirm the item has been returned. (If the donor requires a copy, the original *Object Receipt* can be photocopied and sent to them in the mail.)
- If the object is to be returned by mail, it must be by Registered Mail. The Collection Manager must sign and date the bottom of the original *Object Receipt* to confirm the item has been returned and include a photocopy of the receipt with the item. (In addition the Registered Mail Receipt must be attached to the original *Object Receipt*)
- If the potential donor does not require the object to be returned, the Collection Manager is responsible for appropriately disposing of the item.
- If the Collection Manager is unable to contact the donor or the donor does not respond within the 90 day period, the Collection Manager must send a final notification via Registered Mail informing the donor that the object will be disposed of within 30 days after the date of the letter unless the donor contacts the Museum to make other arrangements.

Option 2 - Object required:

- If the Curator determines that the object should be acquired they must complete an *Acquisition Proposal* within the Vernon CMS (which must be completed within 90 days of receiving the *QM44 Donation Proposal Form*.)

4.2 Process for acquisition proposal and approval

A Curator who wants to recommend an object for acquisition must complete all relevant acquisition details in the *Vernon Acquisition Proposal* module, including a basic object description and significance statement (based on the *Queensland Museum Definitions of Significance Criteria*) in the *Object module* (in accordance with the *Acquisition Proposal Vernon Guidelines*).

This must also include copies of all associated documentation collated as part of the **due diligence** requirements as outlined in *QM 305 Due Diligence Policy* and *QM 306 Due Diligence Procedure* (these can be scanned and attached to the record in Vernon.); plus a *QM320 Collection Checklist* specific to the type of material being acquired, identifying any and all potential risks associated with the origin of the material (e.g. assessing the country of origin, the type of object, the donor etc.).

(If the material proposed for acquisition contains material of a specific cultural or sensitive nature, then staff must also complete a *QM322 Cultural and Sensitive Material Checklist*; which has been developed to guide staff through the process of identifying whether or not material may pose additional risks for the Museum. When doing so staff must adhere to the protocols outlined in *QM321 Protocols for Community Consultation*; this process will ensure that the Museum has consulted with relevant stakeholders in the community to whom the cultural material proposed for acquisition relates.)

The Acquisition Proposal is then automatically circulated by the Vernon system, via email, to Conservation and Collection Management staff for their assessments, which must also be recorded directly in the Vernon system. (For those campuses which do not have direct access to Conservation staff, alternative arrangements may be negotiated directly with the QM&S Conservation Department.).

All costs associated with the acquisition must be included in the proposal.

The assessment can be achieved through one or more of the following ways:

1. Based on the information in the *QM44 Donation Proposal Form* and images (either provided by the donor or taken by the Curator).
2. Through a site visit to the donor. (It is preferable for a Conservator to be part of the site visit, but if they are unable to attend, a *Conservation Condition Checklist* will be provided for the attending staff to complete. The checklist will indicate what additional images may need to be taken to assist with the evaluation).
3. The object(s) can be brought to QMN by the donor. In this case the Collection Manager must issue an *Object Receipt* to the donor.

Finally the Acquisition Proposal is forwarded to the **Senior Decision Maker** (in most cases the Program Head) for final approval. It is then their responsibility to assess the documentation and weigh up the potential risks identified by the Program staff in order to

determine whether to proceed with the acquisition. They must document this decision and any risk mitigation requirements and return all documentation to the Curator for processing. Ultimately the final decision will rest with the **Senior Decision Maker**.

The Curator is responsible for informing the Collection Manager and Conservation staff of the outcome of the final decision as soon as possible after the decision has been made.

4.3 Processing objects after acquisition approval has been given

If the object is approved for acquisition the Curator is responsible for completing a *Gift Agreement* and notifying the donor. (The pink copy remains in the book, the white and yellow copies are completed by the donor – the donor keeps the yellow copy and returns the white copy which must be attached to the original copy in the *Gift Agreement* book.) If the object is not approved for acquisition then the Curator must arrange for return of the items back to the donor as outlined in **Option 1** above.

If the object is already at the Museum, the Curator is responsible for sending the *Gift Agreement* to the donor, and ensuring the donor returns the signed copy. (If the Curator is unable to obtain a signed copy within a reasonable timeframe, the issue must be raised with the Program Head for further determination; it may mean that the object ultimately cannot be acquired.)

If the object is to be collected or brought to the Museum by the donor, the staff member collecting or receiving the object must arrange for the donor to complete the *Gift Agreement* at that time. Copies of *Gift Agreements*, *Object Receipts* and other paperwork must be scanned and attached to the relevant object record which must then be completed in full according to the **Vernon Database Guide**.

It is the responsibility of the Collection Manager to make arrangements for the donor to bring the object to the Museum, or for staff to collect the object if the object has not already been left at the Museum.

All donations which have a value over \$50,000 (per item) must be reported to the CEO and Board individually rather than as part of the general monthly Key Performance Indicators.

4.4 Material from other sources (such as purchase or exchange)

Material which is proposed for acquisition, but which is not a donation (such as exchange or purchase) must still be proposed by the relevant Curator in the same way as any other acquisition proposal through the *Vernon Acquisition Proposal* module in accordance with *Acquisition Proposal Vernon Guidelines*. This method of acquisition also requires adherence to the **due diligence** processes as outlined in *QM 305 Due Diligence Policy* and *QM 306 Due Diligence Procedure* and provision of a *QM320 Collection Checklist* specific to the type of material being acquired; as outlined previously with regard to a standard donation. The approval and documentation processes are also the same as for donated objects.

With regard to other sources such as Transfer of Title or Cultural Gifts, there may be additional processes required, but these will need to be determined for each specific situation

4.5 Responsibilities

The Code of Conduct prescribes standards for the ethical behaviour of QMN staff and volunteers. In all activities relating to the Collections an employee must not be in conflict of interest with the purposes of QMN. If a conflict develops, the interests of QMN will take precedence.

Responsible officers:

- Collection Managers / Curators – are responsible for implementation of the QMN Acquisition Procedure in accordance with all requirements associated with **due diligence**.
- Program Head – is responsible for assessing potential risks and providing that information to the overall **Senior Decision Maker** who will ultimately decide whether an acquisition goes ahead.

5.0 POLICY BASE

This procedure has been developed in accordance with the principles of the *QM78 QMN Collection Policy*.

6.0 DOCUMENT HISTORY

VERSION	DATE	AMENDMENT
0.1	29 April 2004	Original document
0.2	10 Oct 2007	Conversion of document to corporate header
0.3	22 Oct 2007	Conversion of document to new format, edited draft for comment
0.4	08 Nov 2007	Draft after comments by CM
0.5	25 Feb 2010	Draft after changes associated with change to Vernon system
1.1	29 th March 2011	Reviewed and updated
1.2	16 th August 2013	Updated to include new branding information
1.3	15 th Aug 2014	Update minor changes to process
1.4	Sept 2015	Updated to include reference to Due Diligence
1.5	March 2016	Updated to incorporate comments via Ministry for the Arts
1.6	June 2016	Updated to incorporate further comments via Ministry for the Arts

7.0 AUTHORISATION

Approved by:	Prof. Suzanne Miller
Title:	CEO, QMN
Signature:	
Approval date:	December 2016

8.0 MORE INFORMATION

Policy owner/creator:	Head, Collection Services
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9.0 REVIEW PROCESS

This document will be reviewed every 2 years and at other times if any significant new information or legislative or organisational change warrants a change to this document.

Once printed this document is no longer a controlled document.