

QMN PROCEDURE: Procedure for Deaccessioning and / or Disposal (Cultures & Histories and Biodiversity & Geosciences Programs and the CRRC)

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that a standard process is followed by staff in processing items proposed for deaccessioning or disposal, which addresses the concerns of all stakeholders and ensures accountability and a consistent paper trail.

2.0 SCOPE

This procedure applies to the Curatorial and Collection Management staff of the Cultures & Histories and Biodiversity & Geosciences Programs, staff of the Collections and Research Resource Centre (CRRC) and Conservation Section.

This procedure outlines the steps involved when an item has been determined for deaccessioning, if accessioned or for disposal if un-accessioned, and must be read in conjunction with the *QM57 Deaccessioning Policy*.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Deaccessioning is the formal process of permanently removing an accessioned Item from the State Collection, for sale, repatriation or exchange. Deaccessioning requires the prior approval of the Board.

Disposal is the process of removing an unaccessioned Item from the care and custody of QM.

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*.

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

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).

QM means the Queensland Museum

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

Specimen means any animal or plant, or any part, product, egg, seed, or root of any animal or plant or geological sample.

4.0 ACTIONS

An item can be determined appropriate for removal from the collection for a number of reasons, which are outlined in the *QM57 Deaccessioning Policy*.

Staff members of the Cultures & Histories and Biodiversity & Geosciences Programs and CRRC can propose an item for deaccessioning or disposal.

QM has accessioned and unaccessioned items in its care. Regardless of their accessioned status, every object in QM's possession must be properly assessed by the relevant staff member before being recommended for removal from the Collection and sufficient documentation provided to accompany the *QM55 Disposal Proposal Form* or *Deaccessioning Proposal Form* (or in the case of the CRRC *QM317 CRRC: Deaccessioning / Disposal Form*).

4.1 Accessioned items

Once the relevant Curator (or Librarian) has determined an accessioned item is suitable for deaccessioning and removal from the Collection; a proposal to deaccession the object must be completed using the instructions outlined in the *Deaccessioning items from the State Collection* help sheet, via the Vernon Collection Management System (CMS). This will auto populate a *Deaccessioning Proposal Form*, which can be printed out as a hard copy report. (Or in the case of the CRRC Collection, a *CRRC Deaccessioning / Disposal Form* must be completed.)

The Curator or Librarian responsible for the item being proposed must determine the appropriate method of disposal and record the decision on the Form, including the reasons in the *'Reasons for Proposed Method of Removal'* section.

Once the report has been generated (or hard copy form completed) it must be circulated to the other staff listed on the front of the form for their comments where applicable, e.g. if the proposal relates to lack of Significance, it may only require Curatorial staff comments, if it

relates to storage concerns it may also require Collection Management comments and if it relates to condition of items or potential hazards it will require Conservation comments. (Staff members are required to make comments on whether or not they support the proposal based on their area of expertise.)

After the Program Head (or in the case of the CRRC the relevant Senior Manager) has approved the deaccessioning proposal, and if the value of the item is less than \$250,000, the documentation must be forwarded to the CEO for final approval. (If the item is valued over \$250,000 the documentation must be forwarded to the next available Board meeting via the CEO's Personal Assistant. The Director of Collections, Research and Learning will subsequently inform the Program Head as to whether approval has been granted or not.) Information regarding this final approval process must then be passed on to the appropriate Collection Manager, so that it can be added to the last page of the *Deaccessioning Proposal Form*. It is also the Collection Manager's responsibility to amend the Vernon database record in accordance with the instructions in the *Deaccessioning items from the State Collection* help sheet. The Collection Manager is also required to contact the Collection Management Systems (CMS) staff via the Service Desk to inform them of the deaccessioning so that the valuation of the item can be reduced to \$0.

Accession numbers pertaining to a deaccessioned item will not be reused, and the database record for these items will be retained for reference purposes. In addition, for items which have a record in the hand written Registers, an annotation must also be made here, by drawing a line through the record entry and recording the Board meeting details at which the decision to deaccession was made.

If the deaccessioned item is being removed by any means other than destruction, the QM accession number must be physically removed from the item using the least destructive means available prior to removal.

(In the case of the CRRC, the Librarian will be informed of the outcome of the proposal by the Director of Collections, Research and Learning and they will be responsible for completing the relevant section of the *CRRC Deaccessioning / Disposal Form*. The Librarian will also be responsible for marking the item with a CANCEL stamp, exporting the record from the DBText Library Catalogue and importing it into the Disposal Catalogue. Additional information such as purchase, donation or exchange data from the *Manage Orders* section of DBText must also be exported to the Disposal Catalogue matching the record using the accession number or serial ID. In addition, holdings of the records that are kept in **Libraries Australia Search Database** (including holdings in **TROVE**) must be removed once the item has been deaccessioned.

4.2 Unaccessioned items

Once the relevant Curator has determined an unaccessioned item is suitable for disposal, a *QM55 Disposal Proposal Form* must be completed and forwarded to the Program Head for approval, along with any additional supporting information justifying the recommendation. This process is applicable to unaccessioned objects 'found' in the Collection, objects donated but determined not to be sufficiently significant to become part of the collection (either recent or in the past), objects proposed for acquisition but rejected. Copies of all relevant paperwork must be attached to the Vernon record if one exists. (In the case of the CRRC, Librarian staff are required to follow the same procedure as noted in *section 4.1* above utilising the *CRRC Deaccessioning / Disposal Form*.)

4.3 Disposal

The Curator or Librarian must include details of and reasons for the chosen method of removal on the forms. There are five options for removing an accessioned object from the collection or disposing of an unaccessioned object listed on the forms in descending order of priority, with return to original owner as the preferred option in all cases, subject to the owner's consent. The exception to this would be in the case of a known hazard, where the only appropriate method of removal is destruction (see *QM102 Guidelines and Procedures for Handling Hazards in the Collection*).

In all cases, whatever method of disposal is determined, the original owner of the object must be given at least one month's notification of intent. If the donor is not known or cannot be found after reasonable efforts have been made to do so, the proposed disposal must be advertised in the daily Newspaper in accordance with the requirements of the *Queensland Museum Act 1970*.

If after this process, the donor cannot be located, or has declined the offer to have the object/s returned, the curator or Librarian must recommend an alternative method of disposal.

Once an item has been approved for deaccessioning and/or disposal, it is the responsibility of the Collection Management staff (or in the case of the CRRC, the Librarian) to follow the method of removal as highlighted on the *QM55 Disposal Proposal Form* or the *Deaccessioning Proposal Form*. (Or in the case of the CRRC, Librarian staff are required to follow the method stipulated on the *CRRC Deaccessioning / Disposal Form*). Both Collection Managers and Librarian staff are also responsible for making all necessary arrangements including packing and transport.

If the chosen method of disposal is transfer to another institution or sale and no institution or buyer has been identified, the item can be advertised through MAGQ or equivalent. If no responses are received after six weeks, the item may be destroyed or donated to charity.

If the item is transferred to another institution, documentation must be retained to evidence receipt of the item by the accepting institution. This can be in the form of an official receipt, letter or email so long as it acknowledges the donation.

4.4 Items lost via theft

In the rare case that an object or specimen is stolen, and it is determined that the item is highly unlikely to be returned, the relevant Curator or Librarian must follow the standard process as outline above to deaccession the item. In addition to the standard documentation completed as part of this process, all relevant documentation pertaining to the theft such as briefing notes, police reports etc. must also be included in the object record in Vernon or in the Disposal Catalogue in the case of the CRRC.

4.5 Record keeping

All signed documentation and supporting information relating to deaccessioning and disposal must be permanently retained. Digital copies must be attached to the relevant Vernon record (if one exists) or the Disposal catalogue in the case of the CRRC. If no database record exists, hard copies must be kept in the relevant 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).

4.6 RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsible officers:

- Collection Managers
- Curators relevant to the collection material concerned
- Senior Conservator
- Librarian
- Program Head

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
V1.0	20071022	Draft document for comment
V1.1	20071121	Draft document including comments by CM Forum
V1.2	29 th March 2011	Reviewed and updated



V1.3	13 th February 2013	Reviewed and updated in light of recommendations from Disposal of Collections Audit report Jan. 2013.
V1.4	16 th August 2013	Updated with new Branding information.
V1.5	16 th April 2014	Updated to include newly automated Vernon procedure.
V1.6	Dec 2014	Biannual review and update
V1.7	March 2016	Updated to include CRRC

7.0 AUTHORISATION

Approved by:	Prof. Suzanne Miller
Title:	CEO, QMN
Signature:	
Approval date:	29 th March 2016

8.0 FURTHER INFORMATION

Procedure owner/creator:	Head, Collection Services
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9.0 REVIEW PROCESS (When will this procedure change?)

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.