

1.7 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Museums collect and generate a large amount and variety of information in their day to day operations. It is essential that the information be collected, stored and shared in an ethical and legal manner. Therefore, the museum must ensure that information management systems are in place to facilitate not only the collection and safe storage of information, but also the efficient retrieval of information. Moreover, policies must be in place to ensure information is shared in a fair and unbiased way. This includes how technology can be used to manage information.

1.7.1 Corporate Records

1. The museum uses an established information management system to maintain the records generated in the day to day operation of the museum.

Tip: Corporate records include not only financial records but also the incorporation documents, grant applications, follow-up reports, membership records, exhibit development files, contracts, etc.

2. The museum has retention and disposal policies and practices in place.

3. The museum ensures the disposal of all records containing personal information leave no recoverable trace of personal data.

Tip: All financial records should be stored for a minimum of 7 years. Risk Management records should be stored indefinitely.

1.7.2 Research

Research – General

1. The museum has a written research policy.

2. The museum has a code of ethics to guide the conduct and practice of researchers.

3. The museum supports ongoing research as an intrinsic aspect of museum work at all levels, including summative, applied and basic research.

Tip: Some research may be conducted as part of the cataloguing process. Research related to artifacts can take the form of independent, scholarly or publication based research.

4. The museum has a general knowledge of the laws and regulations that apply to the museum as well as the various industry and professional standards that guide their work. The museum seeks advice from professional consultants when needed.

5. The museum is committed to creating new knowledge by conducting basic research when documenting the collection as well as when developing programs and services.
6. The museum takes a multi-disciplinary approach to basic research in order to ensure the benefits of a diversity of perspectives.
7. The museum ensures that the results of internal research are made publicly accessible.
8. The museum has a written policy defining who holds copyright and the right of publication when a staff member carries out independent research, especially for publication.
9. The museum maintains a reference library and/or reference files of materials related to various aspects of museum work.
10. The museum provides space to accommodate visiting researchers in a safe, secure manner.
11. The museum permits visiting researchers physical access to artifacts at the discretion of the curator, or other designated person, and only under supervision.
12. When outside researchers are given physical access to artifacts, a record of the researcher's name, contact information and the artifacts used during the research is kept.
13. The museum ensures that each artifact used by the researcher is checked and noted before the researcher leaves the premises.
14. Where a museum is housed in an historic building, research into the building's history and prior use is conducted, recorded and noted for the public.

Research - Oral History and Fieldwork

15. The museum has an oral history and fieldwork policy or oral history and fieldwork activities are included in the museum's research policy.

Tip: Collections research can take the form of first hand or primary research that uses oral history accounts from individuals and field observations to gain information and knowledge about the collection. Knowledge of research methodology and sensitivity to issues of privacy are critical for this type of research.

16. Oral history projects are based on current principles and standards developed by professional associations and practitioners and the museum ensures that they are conducted in the spirit of critical inquiry and social responsibility.

Tip: Consideration should be given to ensuring informed consent, copyright, moral rights, confidentiality and disclosure, freedom of information, defamation, data protection, and children

when planning an oral history project.

17. The museum ensures that interviewees understand the nature and scope of the project; how their interview will contribute to the project as a whole as well as, possible uses of their information in the future.

18. The museum obtains signed release forms from each oral history interviewee ensuring the museum has the rights to use the information for public purposes and strives at all times to comply with both the letter and spirit of the release form.

19. The museum ensures that the interviewees' rights to privacy, confidentiality, freedom from abuse and the ability to withdraw from the research are respected and protected.

20. The museum treats any recordings produced as part of an oral history or fieldwork project as acquisitions and they are catalogued accordingly.

21. The museum's oral history or fieldwork research projects are conducted by an individual who has training and experience in conducting research within the specific discipline or field

22. The museum ensures that all members of the oral history or fieldwork project team are trained in the appropriate research methodology.

23. The museum is sensitive to the diversity of social and cultural experience and balances the needs of the interviewee with the goals of the project.

1.7.3 Privacy

1. The museum is familiar with federal and provincial privacy laws and has policies and procedures in place to ensure appropriate collection, use and storage of personal information.

Tip: Privacy Rights are related to Human Rights. For more information go to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Saskatchewan and / or the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. Refer to the Bibliography – On-line Resources for addresses.

2. The museums ensures that all personal information is collected, used and disclosed for the sole purpose for which is was originally collected unless express consent is given to do otherwise.

3. The museum conducts a regular audit of the information it collects to ensure that they are in compliance with federal and provincial privacy legislation.

Tip: Consider the following questions when conducting a Museum Information Audit: What personal information is collected? Look at every field on every form! Why is the information collected? Consider your need to know! What is the information used for? Where is personal information kept and how is it secured, (physically, organizationally and technologically)? Who has access to personal information collected? What happens to personal information when the museum no longer needs it?

4. The museum provides a clear statement of purpose when collecting information and an opportunity for individuals to opt-out if they so choose.

1.7.4 Evaluation

1. The museum implements a regular and systematic evaluation of its operations including, all management systems, board and staff performance as well as public programs and services by implementing where applicable front-end, formative, and/or summative evaluation methods.

Tip: The value of museums is increasingly based on the concept of Public Value and the organization's relevance to individuals and communities. In their quest for public support museums must demonstrate their value not only to governments and sponsors but also to the general public.

2. The museum uses systematic evaluation processes gathering both qualitative and quantitative information.

3. The museum collects, analyses, and uses the community input they generate to enhance the quality of its operations, programs and services as it strives for excellence in the organization.

Tip: Information includes attendance figures, age, gender and other demographic information and can be collected with such tools as face-to-face, mail or telephone interviews. Opinions may be collected through comment books, sticky-note walls in exhibition spaces and evaluation sheets after program activities. The analysis of attendance and attitudes contribute to audience development and are indicators of how well the museum is serving its community.

4. The information obtained from the program evaluation is used in the development of programs and services that are targeted to the needs of specific audiences.