

Acquisition 1: Discussion Summary

The acquisition process is highly collaborative—internal and external

Trigger event was a purchase or a gift—a work for consideration or a donor offering it—there is a series of yes/nos – if decision is made to accept we move into analysis—conservator

What do we need to know:

- To acquire
- To display
- To preserve
- To loan

What gets produced:

- word docs
- spread sheets

Work typically goes for review by accessions committee, when you get the yes from accessions committee you finalize a set of legal documents, at this stage a conservators involvement may consist of contributing to those formal documents

If it goes to formal approval, after that acquisition moment, there may be a whole set of processes that kicks into gear –more analysis, how do we display, transportation (sometimes things are transported before or after board approval).

In the category of gifts, keep in mind that sometimes, things will just show up in the mail. In the category of “just turned up” you decide whether to put it through the process. If it is accepted it goes through the work process.

There may also be audio/video of the work that you also want to preserve and make accessible (which has its own issues).

What happens to data about stuff you reject-and also the tier of objects acquired for “study collection” objects?

Other considerations, acquisitions can happen as a result of

1. a records schedule process and/or
2. deaccessions from other organizations.

Some things need curatorial approval with conservation sign off, some objects require a different type of process, a higher up acceptance.

The workflow does **not** cover

- fractional gifts which stay in people's collections
- joint ownership of works of art

Pre-Acquisition work considerations. Example: An object loaned to the museum for consideration, you might do quite a lot of work pre-acquisition, there might be things said and reported that are internally confidential...there are different permissions and access. It's the dangers or risks, or the need for controlled release of some material, also confidentiality issues.

Related issues of rights (particularly with archives) and reproductions issues—you can own the physical object without the ability to do anything with it. All sorts of split off issues.

“orphan works” and how to accommodate them into the workflow

Conservators might be asked to decide about what objects might be worth keeping if conserved. Can that be reflected in the workflow?

You may go pretty far down this process and decide not to acquire it—what do you do with all the documentation? Is that then an acquisition event?

We discussed artist's intent. We need to think about cultural intent as well. An example might be Hindi paintings or sculptures—as a museum we would like to preserve them, but in truth they are temporary. As conservators do we do anything with these? Maybe the “no treatment” is the option in this case and the documentation.