

## Research and Access

Research provides a foundation for the intellectual control of museum collections and is the basis for accurate museum interpretation and programs. In addition, museums, through their collection, are sources of valuable and unique information for a variety of researchers.

### Museum Research

Museums need to approach research in different ways - all of which support the operations and programs of the museum. Research should be performed on the various subject areas related to museum and collections. They should also research specific areas of their collections and develop individual artifacts records. Museums should also take part in museological research which allows them to develop areas of their museum operations such as conservation techniques, exhibit design, program development and administration.

### Public Research

The knowledge and objects collected by museums are sources of valuable information for the public, and it is the responsibility of museums to provide access to this information. In addition, their exhibits and education programs, museums will need to provide access to their research and collections for individual research purposes. Naturally, as the museum is also responsible for the preservation of this resource policies and procedures that facilitate access and preserve the collections are also required.

It is important that museum establish research and access policies and procedures to prioritize research activities and protect museum collections. Based on these facts, museum research policies and procedure should address the following:

- A statement of commitment to research activities by the museum and the provision of access to the public for research purposes. This will include a commitment to any resources that these activities require.
- A definition of the types of research that will be conducted by the museum, who will conduct the research and any special issues related to that research.
- Policies and procedures regarding public access to the collections that define when access is available, what areas can be accessed, who will have access and for what purposes. These decisions will involve issues such as physical preservation and availability of resources and staff, as well as current completeness of documentation, copyright and privacy issues.
- Policies and procedures regarding publication of information researched whether it be in print or digital formats
- Policies and procedures regarding general public inquiries for information. This should identify who will respond and how they will be addressed.

**For more information on this topic see:**

*Guidelines for the Operations of Community Museums in Newfoundland and Labrador*

Research – Page 46

Inquiry Services – Page 73

## **Templates for Research and Access Policy and Procedure Documents**

Western Australia Museums – Access

<http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/services/map/documents/accessdoc.pdf>

reCollections – Access to Collections

<http://archive.amol.org.au/recollections/5/pdf/access.pdf>

Ontario Museum Notes # 7 - Developing a Research Policy For Museums

<http://www.culture.gov.on.ca/english/heritage/museums/munote7.htm>

Ontario Museum Notes # 12 – The Community Museum and the Disabled Visitor

<http://www.culture.gov.on.ca/english/heritage/museums/munote12.htm>

## **Examples of Research and Access Policies and Procedures**

The San Bernardino County Museum Access and Use Policy

[http://www.sbcounty.gov/museum/search/help/access\\_use\\_policy.asp](http://www.sbcounty.gov/museum/search/help/access_use_policy.asp)

Historic St. Mary's City Exhibit/Facility Access and Use Policy

<http://www.stmaryscity.org/Forms%20for%20rentals/Exhibit%20Facility%20Use%20Rental%20Policies%20&%20Procedures.pdf>

Fleming Museum Use Policy

[http://www.uvm.edu/~fleming/smarty/templates/visiting/Fleming\\_Museum\\_Use\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/~fleming/smarty/templates/visiting/Fleming_Museum_Use_Policy.pdf)

University of Alaska Museum Policy for access to archaeology collection

<http://www.uaf.edu/museum/depts/archaeo/pages/p&p/colacc.html>

Sound Archives of New Zealand Access Policy

<http://www.soundarchives.co.nz/Policy-Documents/access.asp>

Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture, Middlesex University Learning & Access Policy

<http://www.moda.mdx.ac.uk/docs/corpdocs/learning%20&%20access%20policy%202005.pdf>

## **Examples Available Offline**

Museum of Health Care at Kingston Research Policy and Procedures  
Museum of Health Care at Kingston Research Standards

<http://www.museumofhealthcare.ca/>

The Provincial Archives of Alberta Access Policy

<http://www.tprc.alberta.ca/archives/policiesprocedures/accesspolicy.aspx>

Marine Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston  
Research Policy and Procedures

<http://www.marmuseum.ca/ResearchPol2002.html>

Greater Sudbury Heritage Museum Research Policy

[http://www.sudburymuseums.ca/index.cfm?app=w\\_vmuseum&lang=en&secid=565&type=doc](http://www.sudburymuseums.ca/index.cfm?app=w_vmuseum&lang=en&secid=565&type=doc)

Michigan Traditional Arts Program Use Policy

Michigan Traditional Arts Program Research Request Form

<http://museum.msu.edu/s-program/mtap/Collections/MTAPpolicies.pdf>