Course Description

Museums can be defined as objects organized within a specific intellectual environment. This course is an opportunity for students to analyze and evaluate the range of recordkeeping systems that have been used by museums to document their collections, and the physical and intellectual environment in which records are created, used and maintained. Records of lasting value to museums include both those records that document individual objects in the museum's collection and those that document the business of the museum in acquiring, preserving and interpreting those objects.

Beginning with an overview of the history of museums and the roles of museum staff in creating and using museum records, students will identify the various types of records created by a museum in the course of its business of building, maintaining and using collections of objects. Functional analysis will be used as an archival appraisal technique to examine the organizational structure of a museum, in order to determine what records are created by the museum in the course of its business, which of those records are essential to the museum and where those records are likely to be created and maintained in a given museum. Students will examine internal and external policies governing the activities of the organization, and determine their influence on records creation and retention. The second half of the course will apply this knowledge to a series of "hot topics" which bear directly on the capture, retention and interpretation of records. Examples of these "hot topics" are acquisition and ownership of cultural property, repatriation of cultural objects, provenance research, especially of Nazi-era looted art, detection of forgeries and collaborative online access to images and other collection information. The course will provide an opportunity to apply previously learned archival theories to a specific institutional setting. While all types of museums will be considered, the course will focus on the records of natural history museums, art museums and history museums.
Prerequisites

While direct experience of any type of museum will be helpful in this class, it is not required. If this is your first archives class, you may find it necessary to do additional reading in order to participate in class discussions and to benefit from the assigned readings. If you are in doubt about your background for this class, please contact the instructor to discuss this.

Please note that while this class will help you develop skills to identify, capture and maintain records dealing with museum exhibitions, object description and conservation and educational programs, this class will not teach you to design or mount museum exhibitions, catalog or conserve museum objects.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

As an active and thoughtful participant in this class, you will be prepared to serve as an archivist within a museum and to create, analyze or maintain a museum archives and records management system. These skills will allow you to:

- Identify the historical changes of a museum’s purpose and structure and analyze the impact of those changes on museum recordkeeping systems
- Analyze the recordkeeping issues specific to museums as a particular class of archival system
  - Describe the specific types of records and recordkeeping systems used by museums
  - Apply functional analysis as an appraisal method to the museum’s collections and activities as a means of evaluating its records for retention
- Debate the application of archival theory and practice to the organization and access to museum records
  - Compare the recommendations and rationale for records management in the archival and collection management literature from the point of view of both an archivist and a museum curator
- Examine copyright and intellectual property policies and practices in the museum context, particularly in the electronic information environment
- Formulate maintainable museum archive policies that are consistent with professional best practice and that persuasively employ the specific language of museum recordkeeping systems

Materials

Books and periodical articles listed below as Required Reading are available on reserve in the School of Information Sciences Library on the 3rd floor of the School of Information Sciences building at 135 North Bellefield Avenue or available via E-reserve on Pittcat. You are strongly encouraged to read the periodical articles and book chapters in situ, in order to become familiar with the overall content and style of these journals and essay collections. Books on the Required Reading list can be purchased from the University of Pittsburgh Book
Store or ordered directly from online booksellers such as Amazon (http://www.amazon.com) or from professional societies such as the American Association of Museums or the Society of American Archivists.

Assignments, citations to readings, class notes and websites of organizations discussed in class are included both in the hardcopy syllabus and on its electronic version at http://courseweb.pitt.edu.

Please contact the instructor if you have any difficulty gaining access to any of this material, either in hard copy or in electronic form. Note that periodic updates and additions will be made to the information on the Courseweb site. Courseweb’s email function will be used to send out notices of any changes or updates and may also be used by you to send email to any or all of your classmates or the instructor.

Course Requirements and Grading

In-class participation – 10%
- A discussion question will be posted via Courseweb prior to each class to begin the discussion portion of class.
- Students should make every attempt to attend every class session. If for some reason a student must miss a class, he or she should contact the instructor as soon as possible, but preferably in advance of the class meeting.
- Students should participate in discussions with relevant comments on the readings’ major arguments and importance.
- Students who do not participate in class discussions should expect to get no higher than a B+ in the course.

Class presentation – 20%
Each student will select one of the required readings from weeks 4-11, locate another article or book related in some way to the chosen article and prepare a 15 minute class presentation on the two items, including leading a discussion based on a question posted to the class via CourseWeb in advance. Students should have made their selections by week 3.

As part of the presentation assignment, each student will write a one-page précis summarizing the major arguments of the articles discussed and assess the success or failure of these arguments. Such an assessment might examine sources, clarity of arguments, supporting evidence, competing theories, documentation, organization and writing style. This précis will be due the night of the class presentation.

Note on Writing Assignments

Because so much of your interaction with others in this profession will be through written communications, these assignments are opportunities to practice your writing skills. Reminders of assignments and their due dates will appear on the Courseweb site and on the following Course at a Glance page. Assignments can be turned as hard copy handed to the instructor or via the Courseweb Drop Box by 6 PM on the day the assignment is due. No
assignments will be accepted after the class period for which they are assigned without prior approval by the instructor.

Please do not hesitate to discuss these assignments with the instructor in class, via email or in person outside class. You are encouraged to meet with the instructor at least once during the course to discuss your work on the assignments.

**Policy paper and cover memo – 30%**
This paper, due in week 8, June 29, will be a total of 8-15 pages and will concern museum policies dealing with some aspect of recordkeeping systems. You are to create a policy document and write an accompanying document summarizing the practical and theoretical literature dealing with this policy. Additionally, you will write an accompanying memo explaining the policy, such as might be used to justify the policy to the museum’s director or as a cover letter accompanying the policy to the museum’s staff. Sample policies might include requests for permission to use the archives, requests for permission to publish archival material from the collection, policies on staff collecting and consulting, ownership of personal papers created within the context of the museum, donations, digitization on demand or deaccessioning.

Assignment statement for the policy paper:
Your assignment is to select a single museum archives activity or service, then
- Write a policy statement and its accompanying procedure document that presents the museum's official position on this activity or service and the procedures used to achieve the policy’s desired outcome. (2-4 pages)
- Write the cover memo for the policy that would introduce and explain the new policy to museum staff. (no more than 2 pages)
- Write the benchmarking document, a literature survey that supports your policy decision as representative of prevailing best practice. (4-8 pages)

The purpose of this paper is to give you practical experience in designing and communicating a recordkeeping policy. *This paper will be due in week 8.*

**Final Research Paper – 40%**
The second paper, due in week 11, 20 July, will be 20-25 pages and be a more extensive investigation of one of the "hot topics" discussed in class or another controversial issue of your choosing that illustrates the purpose and value of museum recordkeeping systems. Appropriate topics could include the identification and restoration of looted art, donor relations, management of personal papers (of museum staff), deaccessioning, conservation and art fraud, or cooperative access to electronic image collections.

*A 1-2 page summary of the research paper will be due to the instructor in week 7. The final form of the paper will be due in week 11.*

Doctoral Students. Doctoral students have the option of either all three assignments as described above or a major research paper of publishable quality that develops one of the
themes discussed in this class as it relates to their thesis research. Students choosing this option should discuss their plans with the instructor by the second week of class.

Style Manual

Students should adhere to the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* in the preparation of their papers. Papers should use at least 1.5 line spacing. Papers not using this style will be lowered half a letter grade.

**Academic and Other Student Issues**

Academic Integrity

Students will be expected to comply with the University’s Policy on Academic Integrity at [http://www2.sis.pitt.edu/~wadmin/academics/information/sisacint.html](http://www2.sis.pitt.edu/~wadmin/academics/information/sisacint.html)

Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. If there is clear evidence of your presenting another's work as your own, including not citing published material or electronic resources, your final grade will be lowered a full letter grade.

Incompletes

No incomplete grades will be given for this course, unless there were emergency circumstances affecting a student's ability to meet course requirements.

Special Accommodations

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890 or 412-383-7355 (TTY) as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for the course. For further information see [http://www.drs.pitt.edu](http://www.drs.pitt.edu).
## Course At A Glance

The first day of this class is May 11, 2005; the last day of this class is July 27, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Assignments in addition to assigned readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>11 May Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction to the course and to museum history</td>
<td>Identify phases of historical change in museum practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 May Week 2</td>
<td>Relationship of museum archives to collection management</td>
<td>Analyze the language and purpose of collection management and museum archives</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 May Week 3</td>
<td>Functional analysis of museums</td>
<td>Describe the types of museum records and their recordkeepers</td>
<td>Policy paper assigned</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 June Week 4</td>
<td>Museum policies and practices</td>
<td>Review the types of museum policies and their associated records that affect appraisal</td>
<td>Class presentations begin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 June Week 5</td>
<td>Access and research use of archives and associated objects</td>
<td>Considers strategies of integrating access to archives and the objects they relate to</td>
<td>Research paper assigned. Policy paper discussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 June Week 6</td>
<td>Acquisitions, donors and deaccessioning</td>
<td>Identify the major concerns of documenting acquisitions, including donor relations</td>
<td>David Grinnell, guest speaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 June Week 7</td>
<td>Provenance research and repatriation</td>
<td>Identify the resources and methodologies for provenance research and processes of repatriation</td>
<td>Research paper outline due</td>
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<td>29 June Week 8</td>
<td>Collaborative online access to image collections</td>
<td>Survey the changes in attitudes towards ownership and cooperative access to image collections</td>
<td>Ed Galloway, guest speaker. Policy paper due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 July Week 9</td>
<td>Rights management</td>
<td>Identify issues dealing with ownership and access to cultural heritage materials held in museums and archives</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 July Week 10</td>
<td>Conservation and exhibition records</td>
<td>Identify the tensions between preservation, access and use</td>
<td>Ellen Baxter, guest speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 July Week 11</td>
<td>Authenticity onsite and online</td>
<td>Examine strategies for determining if documentation is real or forged</td>
<td>Research paper due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 July Week 12</td>
<td>History Wars</td>
<td>Examines effects of the History Wars on museum records</td>
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Weekly Readings

The items listed below and chosen for each week’s readings represent a portion of the available literature on this topic. Students should also browse the selected organizational websites for general information about these organizations and their services, as well as the increasing number of online publications mounted at these sites.

The following are strongly recommended for purchase:


Online Resources, including Professional Societies

American Association of Museums (AAM), especially their website’s Hot Topics section which deals with aspects of museum law and cultural property. Major professional society and significant publisher of books in this field. *Museum News* is the Society’s bi-monthly journal. [http://www.aam-us.org/](http://www.aam-us.org/)


Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN). Free access to resources dealing with collection management, intellectual property and creating and managing digital content in museums. Includes training tools, online publications, directories and databases. [http://www.chin.gc.ca/](http://www.chin.gc.ca/)


Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies (SECMS). Includes Museum Studies Bibliographies. http://museumstudies.si.edu/


Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPHNC). Includes research on ethnographic collections as well as biological and geological collections. Indexes for and the full text of some issues of the Society’s journal, Collection Forum, are also available online. http://www.spnhc.org/


Course schedule

Week 1 – Introduction to the course and to museum history

How have museums institutionalized the basic human impulse to collect? How has the relationship of museums to their public changed over time and what impact have these changes had on museum recordkeeping systems?

Required reading


Recommended reading


Week 2 – Relationship of museum archives to collection management

What are the main themes affecting recordkeeping in the professional collection management literature? What the tensions in museum archives between collection records and administrative records?
Required readings


Recommended readings


Week 3 – Functional analysis of museums

Do different types of collections generate different types of records? Which museum staff create and use what records – and how? How can functional analysis be used to predict the likelihood of records and their creators?

Required readings


**Recommended Readings**


**Week 4 – Policies and Practices**

In addition to the usual concerns of archives use, what circumstances peculiar to museums are covered in museum archives policies?

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Week 5 – Access and research use of archives and associated objects**

How does the combination of objects and records distinguish museum archives? How does this combination affect the audience served by museum archives and the issues surrounding access to museum records?

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Week 6 – Acquisitions, Donors and Deaccessioning**

What are the common expectations of donors and how can gift policies clarify the conditions under which gifts are accepted and subsequently handled?

Guest Lecturer – David Grinnell, Acquisitions Archivist, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


**Week 7 – Provenance Research and Repatriation Practices**

What records are necessary and adequate to prove ownership of objects? How are museum archives used to authenticate objects or prove ownership? What cooperative resources have been developed to assist with repatriation?

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


**Week 8 – Multi-media records and intellectual property. Collaborative online access to image collections**

*Note: Policy paper due*

Guest Lecturer: Ed Galloway, University of Pittsburgh, Digital Research Library

Who controls access to the multi-media records of cultural property, especially electronic images and machine-readable collection information and online exhibitions?

**Required Reading**

Please review the Historic Pittsburgh Image collections website at http://images.library.pitt.edu/pghphotos prior to this class and scan the associated project documents also on the site.


**Recommended Reading**


**Week 9 – Rights management**

Who wields the power to control cultural identity, particularly over material housed in museum archives? How is the concept of ownership culturally biased and how has it changed over time?

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Week 10 – Conservation and exhibition records**


Are the responsibilities of preservation and access mutually exclusive? What are the ethics of “invisible” restoration – and who keeps the records of conservation treatment? Is it real?

**Required Readings**


“Conserv O Grams: Procedures, Techniques and Materials to Care for Your Museum Objects.” See the National Parks Service list of publications in their Museum Management Program at http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/


**Recommended Readings**


**Week 11 – Authenticity Onsite and Online**

Where is the line drawn between facsimile and forgery? How does the use of a new technology used to create a surrogate, such as digitization, affect the validity of the original?

**Note: Research Paper Due**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Week 12 – History Wars**

What are the social influences, resulting in the “History Wars,” which influence how a museum selects and presents exhibitions and other public programs? How are these changes in position documented?

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**
