

Position Statement on Deaccessioning Objects in Collections From Cultural Institutions

[Adopted March 2013; Reviewed March 2016;

Reviewed and Revised in February 2021; Reviewed and Revised in February 2026]

Platform: RELATIONSHIPS

Cultural institutions, including but not limited to museums, schools, libraries, archives, and community centers that collect art, artifacts, and cultural materials, are all important community resource centers. The objects under their care

- often are rare and precious examples of human creativity, knowledge, and history;
- are essential for high-quality and well-rounded educational opportunities; and
- must be maintained, protected, and accessible to honor the public trust.

As such, deaccessioning objects from a collection must be guided by the highest standards of professional practice. Preserving and providing access to the historic art, artifacts, and cultural materials of these collections is to offer valuable learning opportunities for all people, today and in the future, who may lose insights from historic and contemporary institutional collecting practices if the deaccessioning of objects is misused.

Organizations that collect art, artifacts, and cultural belongings, including but not limited to museums, schools, libraries, archives, and community centers, that collect art, artifacts, and cultural belongings are all important community resource centers, stewards of our shared past. The collections they house are repositories of our collective human creativity, knowledge, and history in all its diversity. Collections should be viewed as resources that are essential to the education of future generations, rather than as disposable assets, and as such should be protected and maintained to honor the public trust. Deaccessioning, or removing, objects from a collection must be guided by the highest standards of professional practice. Organizations with collections provide an essential component to a high quality and well rounded education. By preserving, providing access to, and interpreting art, artifacts, and cultural belongings, they offer valuable learning opportunities for all visitors, today and in the future.

Deaccessioning, or removing, objects from an organization collection(s) must be guided by the highest standards of professional practice. These organizations, including but not limited to museums, schools, libraries, archives, and community centers, that collect art, artifacts, and cultural belongings are stewards of our shared past. The collections they house are repositories of our collective human creativity, knowledge, and history in all

its diversity. Organization collections should be viewed as resources that are essential to the education of future generations, rather than as disposable assets, and as such should be protected and maintained to honor the public trust. Organizations with collections provide an essential component to a high-quality and well-rounded education.

This Position Statement was formerly titled “Position Statement on College and University Art Museums” [Adopted April 2010; Reviewed and Revised March 2013 when it was also retitled as part of the rewriting to “Position Statement on Deaccessioning Objects in Art Museum Collections.” In 2021, the meaning and the title were reworked to have a broader meaning for collections in a more general sense than in art museums, with a new title, “Position Statement on Deaccessioning Objects in Collections.”]

Resources for Art Museum Policies:

Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) Professional Practices in Art Museums
https://cms.aamd.org/sites/default/files/document/Professional%20Practices%202011%20rev%202.2.23_0.pdf

Association of Art Museum Directors’ (AAMD) Policy on Deaccessioning:
<https://cms.aamd.org/sites/default/files/document/AAMD-Policy-on-Deaccessioning.pdf>