# Collections Manager

*This is a general description, and the duties and qualifications may vary depending on the museum’s specific needs. Tailoring the position description to fit your museum's unique requirements is always good.*

Position: Collections Manager

Reports To: Executive Director/Senior Management

Potential Staff Reporting to this Position: Registrar, Conservator, Facilities Manager, Housekeeper, Preservation Program Manager, Collections Assistant, Volunteers

Job Description

The collections manager manages, cares for, and preserves the museum's collections. This includes overseeing the acquisition, accessioning, deaccessioning, disposal, lending, documentation, and exhibition of items and ensuring their safety and accessibility for public and research purposes.

Responsibilities:

* Collections Management: Overseeing cataloging collections, maintaining records, and managing the storage and conservation of collections in the museum's care.
* Exhibition Planning: Collaborating with other staff members to plan, budget, assess collection stability, and install and deinstall exhibitions.
* Acquisition, Accessioning & Deaccessioning: Evaluating potential additions to the collection and managing the acquisition process. Evaluating potential removal of items from the permanent collection and disposition policies and legally deaccessioning if necessary.
* Loan Management: Processing and arranging coordination for incoming and outgoing loans, long-term loans, and traveling exhibitions, including shipping, coordinating with couriers, insurance, and managing lender's restrictions.
* Research & Accessibility: Facilitating access to the collection for research and educational purposes internally and externally.
* Policy Development: Developing and implementing policies and procedures related to collections.
* Object Handling: Establishing policies for object handling. Supervising and training staff, interns, and other authorized personnel in object handling.
* Documentation: Ensuring all collections are thoroughly documented and stored in secure environments. This includes documents outlining legal ownership, condition reports, photographs, correspondence, provenance, and more.
* Risk Management: Creating and following the policies needed to ensure the collection is safely housed, that environmental controls are in place and monitored, and that the collection is insured and in a secure location that is best for preservation and access.

Qualifications:

* Knowledge of working in and implementation of professional practices in collections management.
* A detail-oriented individual with strong organizational and communication skills.
* A degree in museum studies, history, art history, or a related field may be beneficial but is not always necessary.

(Note: Some museums include a statement under the qualifications section encouraging all to apply to incentivize a more diverse set of candidates. Here is an example from the Adventure Science Center in Nashville, TN, “While we’ve listed our ideal qualifications, we value individual competence, experience, and enthusiasm for our mission. We encourage all who think they are a good match for the role to apply.”)

Skills

Consider the following set of essential skills that museum collections managers need. Even without direct experience in a similar position, someone with these skills could accomplish the necessary tasks:

1. Collaboration & Communication: Active listening skills to understand multiple perspectives, the ability to clearly articulate priorities and needs, and foster strong relationships through professionalism, empathy, and adaptability.
2. Interpersonal Skills: Building rapport with diverse stakeholders, asking thoughtful questions, and being open to feedback.
3. Problem-Solving: Understanding how the construction and properties of various materials (e.g., wood, metal, textiles, paint, ceramics, etc.) and their potential vulnerabilities could react in specific environments.
4. Critical Thinking: Asking informed questions and demonstrating adaptability to ensure adherence to policies and professional standards while effectively assessing and addressing object needs. Conducting research, navigating professional standards and practices, and understanding how to write and implement legal and ethical policies and procedures.
5. Technical Proficiency: Familiarity with distinct types of software and database systems used for data management and adapting to new technologies and software updates as needed.
6. Leadership: Experience training and supervising others, including guiding proper procedures and safety protocols.
7. Attention to Detail: Proficiency in assessing items, writing about them, and keeping track of items. Strong organizational skills and attention to detail for conducting thorough inventories, creating, and updating collection records, and maintaining accurate documentation of object provenance, condition, and location.
8. Practical Application: Project planning, coordination, and budget management. Understanding of basic scientific principles.