

APPENDIX B.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) study team examined the organizational structure of collections management at the Smithsonian to consider whether it supports or detracts from sound collections management. Overall, the collecting units have primary responsibility for carrying out collections management functions, but how they do so is strongly influenced by the central Smithsonian administration and external professional associations. The Board of Regents, Office of Management and Budget, and the Congress are also strong influences.

The study team looked at current organizational charts to see where the different collections management responsibilities are located and which offices and positions are involved. Interviews probed decision making; the linkages between collections management and other programs; cross-unit and pan-Institutional interactions; and the structure of accountability. The findings describe the organizational structure of collections management at the unit, central administration, and pan-Institutional and external organization levels, and then present some issues that emerged from the interviews and the literature.

unit-level findings

Title to Smithsonian collections resides with the individual collecting units. At most of the museums, the curatorial/scientific research office has overall responsibility for collections management functions, and the collections themselves are organized

according to the specializations of the curatorial/scientific research divisions, such as a scientific discipline (vertebrate zoology); topic (military history); historical period (19th century); or medium (photography).¹ At the time the research phase of this study was being completed, at least one Smithsonian museum was looking at an intellectual reorganization along thematic or story lines (for example, immigration into the United States), which would require collaborative collecting by multiple divisions, but the museum would retain its current structure for other collections management functions. A few non-Smithsonian museums have already adopted a cross-disciplinary approach for all or parts of their collections, examples being the thematic structure at the Henry Ford Museum and the centers for biodiversity conservation at several natural history museums.

At the Smithsonian Institution Libraries (SIL), collections management responsibilities come under the Division of Management and Technical Services and the Division of Research Services, both reporting directly to the head of SIL. The bulk of SIL's collections are managed by branches located in the various museum and research units. These branches, along with other central SIL ones, are under the Research Services Division, which reports to the director.

At the Archives of American Art (AAA), collections management responsibilities fall to both the assistant director for archival programs and the curator of manuscripts, both of whom report to the director. At the Smithsonian Institution Archives (SIA), the split is across the Technical Services Division and Archives Division, both reporting to the director.

How the specific functions of acquisitions and disposals, stewardship, and access are handled within the overall organizational structures described above is discussed in the next sections. Accountability for those functions at the unit level is also addressed.

¹ This information derives in part from organization charts the collecting units provided to OP&A prior to the writing of this report. The report does not reflect changes that collecting units have made since completion of the data gathering.

acquisitions and disposals

As discussed in Chapter 5, proposals for acquisitions and disposals typically originate with curators/scientists. Depending on the nature of the acquisition or disposal, proposals are reviewed and approved at different levels of the collecting unit and, in some cases, by the central Smithsonian administration and Board of Regents. Factors that trigger the need for review at higher levels include the cost of the transaction and exceptional circumstances (such as special maintenance or space requirements, political sensitivity, or questionable provenance).

A key player at the unit level is the collections committee, composed largely of curators/scientists, but also including the museum director (or another senior manager) and often the head or a representative of the collections management staff. In general, a collecting unit has only one collections committee; however, the individual scientific research departments at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) all have their own collections committees. Proposed disposals generally go before the collections committee, although NMNH waives that requirement where disposal is necessitated by destructive analysis of specimens. Some collecting units, such as the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (HMSG), and AAA must get approval from their advisory board of directors for both disposals and acquisitions, and the boards of most collecting units require that their units report annually on their collections development activities.

Archival offices within a collecting unit follow more or less the same organizational pattern for acquisition and disposal decisions. One difference is that much archival material originates with an acquiring curator as part of an object acquisition and is subsequently given to the archives. The stand-alone AAA has an added category of staff: regional collectors (either staff or contract) who identify and solicit collections, working in consultation with the curator of manuscripts and the director. SIA uses a

strict set of criteria for the Institutional archival materials that it collects from Smithsonian units.

In the case of SIL, most requests for acquisitions originate with curators/scientists or other users from the various units, who submit these requests to their branch librarians. The central library administration makes the final decisions on what to acquire and handles the purchases. Because some library materials, such as standard texts, routinely deteriorate from heavy use and have to be replaced, their disposal does not follow special procedures, but exceptional materials such as rare books are subject to the same procedures as museums use for objects.

stewardship

At over half the museums, responsibility for all stewardship functions comes under the curatorial/research office, within which specific subunits and staff carry out the various collections care activities. At the National Museum of American History (NMAH), National Air and Space Museum (NASM), and National Portrait Gallery (NPG), umbrella entities such as a collections management division or department of collections management services report to the head of the curatorial department. Within those entities, separate offices (for example, conservation and registrar) carry out specific functions, with staff assigned to the curatorial departments.

By contrast, the National Postal Museum (NPM), Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM), and NMAI have separate deputy/associate/assistant directors for research/curatorial and for registration/collections management. At NPM, separate collections and curatorial units both report to the director. At NMAI, distinct offices for registration, conservation, archives, and curatorial/research all come under an umbrella entity, the Division of Cultural Resources, which reports to the museum director.

Where the conservation function is located appears to relate to the size of the collecting unit and type of collection. The art museums, which tend to have homogeneous collections, often have a single conservation office. The conservation office at the National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) and SAAM's conservation laboratory, for example, are both under the curatorial office. At the larger museums, individual curatorial/scientific departments might have their own conservation specialists; this is necessary because of the differences in their collections. At NMNH, for example, many scientific departments have their own collections management staffs, who report to a departmental collections manager. Those collections managers and a collections information system (CIS) unit report to a single collections services manager, who in turn reports to the associate director for research and collections. Under consideration at NMNH is a proposal to establish a new position of senior collections manager.

Because its collections are living, the structure at the National Zoological Park (NZIP) is somewhat different. Under the Animal Programs Directorate are a separate Office of the Registrar and two animal departments whose responsibilities include collections management activities other than registration and conservation. Conservation — which at the Zoo means animal health — comes under the Animal Health Department, which reports directly to the director.

Information technology (IT) offices, which provide technical support for CISs, tend to come under the administrative operations side of the collecting units.

In all cases, an office of the registrar is responsible for managing the flow of information concerning collections, the movement of collections, and the official records of ownership. The registrar is responsible for monitoring and enforcing both the Institution's and the unit's collections policies and procedures. In some Smithsonian units, the registrar reports directly to a curatorial officer; in others, reporting is through another layer, the head of a collections management unit.

access

Most information on collections — whether basic catalogue documentation or enriched documentation for public or scholarly use — comes from the curatorial/scientific research staff, although in some units volunteers have played a significant role in cataloguing materials. The curatorial/scientific research staff also has had the lead role in exhibitions (and access to open storage areas), in consultation with collections management staff on the condition of materials and related conservation requirements.

For outgoing loans, curators/scientists typically communicate with borrowers regarding what is available for lending, while the collections management and conservation staff, in consultation with curators, assess the condition of requested loan items and the physical and security conditions at the requesting facility, to determine if these permit lending. For loans to affiliates, coordinators in the Office of Affiliations are assigned to each museum to facilitate transactions. Some large museums designate a collections staff member as the point person for affiliate loans. The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) negotiates directly with the units for loans for its exhibitions, and assumes collections management responsibilities once it receives the items; both SITES and the lending units verify the suitability of conditions at the venues taking the exhibitions.

accountability

According to Smithsonian Directive 600 Collections Management (SD 600) (Smithsonian Institution 2001), accountability for collections management performance rests with the collecting unit directors. Day-to-day accountability is delegated to those senior managers with collections responsibilities who report directly to the director. However, collections-related policy and planning documents

provided to OP&A for the most part did not indicate a clear structure for accountability or provide indicators that could be used to measure performance.

The draft SD 600 Implementation Manual (Smithsonian Institution, Smithsonian Institution Archives, National Collections Program 2003b) calls on collecting unit directors to designate, in writing, a staff person to monitor compliance with collections management policy and to recommend policy changes to the director. This person is also to determine when the unit should conduct a formal review of collections management (at intervals of no more than five years) and recommend policy changes to the director.

central administration

The central administration and certain pan-Institutional programs, offices, and committees carry out a variety of collections management functions and responsibilities, as described below.

The central administration is involved in collections management in five primary areas: issuing Smithsonian-wide policy; defining collections-related strategic objectives and performance indicators; approving certain acquisitions or disposals; reviewing collections activities and related financial information; and holding units and senior management accountable for sound collections management.

The Board of Regents, which has ultimate responsibility for collections management, has delegated its oversight responsibility to the Secretary. An important responsibility of the Secretary is the *formulation of overall Institutional policy* on collections management, through documents such as SD 600. In addition to setting policy, the Secretary *establishes collections-related strategic objectives and related performance indicators* in a five-year strategic plan and an annual performance plan, which go to

the Office of Management and Budget. Collecting units must align their individual strategic and operating plans with those at the Institutional level.

As noted, *decisions about acquisitions and disposals* that exceed a certain value or have other unusual features are reviewed by the Under Secretaries, the Secretary, and Board of Regents as required. On such matters, senior management typically consults with the National Collections Program (NCP) for information on relevant policies, procedures, and laws.

With respect to Smithsonian-wide *reporting on collections*, the central administration requires that the official collecting units submit certain data to NCP annually. The units report on the status of their collections and collections transactions over the fiscal year; on their compliance with SD 600 and unit collections management policies; and on problems with policy implementation. Each year NCP issues two reports based on the information provided by the units: a statistical summary of the size, growth, and use of the national collections (which also discusses key collections developments); and a report on the status of collections management that reviews accomplishments and problems. One issue that came up in interviews was the inconsistency — in terms of both definitions used and collections covered — in the various units' reports to NCP.

The Smithsonian must also account for expenditures on collections management and collections transactions in its annual financial reports, which are subject to audit. NCP collects financial data on acquisitions and disposals and provides it to the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO); the collecting units report their overall collections-related expenditures directly to OCFO through the Smithsonian's new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) financial reporting system. In the past, there were significant differences in how the units reported their financial data, a problem ERP is intended to address.

Accountability for performance against Smithsonian policy, standards, strategic objectives, and performance indicators rests with the central administration, as well as the unit

directors.² The Under Secretaries are responsible for providing budget support; ensuring that unit collections planning is consistent with Institutional strategic and performance plans; monitoring collections management activities against SD 600 and the units' own policies; following up on noncompliance; and measuring progress against targets and milestones. The Under Secretaries are accountable to the Secretary. NCP supports the central administration's oversight role by reviewing the data that the units self-report, and communicating its observations on compliance and other issues to both the Under Secretaries and the unit directors. However, it has no responsibility for following up on reported deficiencies. For the most part, monitoring and accountability are based on the units' self-reported data.³

The Office of the General Counsel reviews and makes recommendations on the legal aspects of collections management issues, such as disposals and bequests. Collecting unit policies must have the approval of the General Counsel.

pan-Institutional entities

A number of pan-Institutional entities at the Smithsonian provide consultative or support services to the collecting units and central administration, or facilitate networking and information exchange.

In addition to **NCP's** responsibilities described above, it has several others, including:

² From 1880 to 1975, the Smithsonian central administration included the Office of the Registrar. As the National Museum of the Smithsonian's early years was divided into different units, and other units were added to the Smithsonian, collections management functions devolved to the units holding collections. Because of this shift in responsibilities, in 1976 the Office of the Registrar was reconstituted as an oversight unit with responsibility to review unit collection management policies and assure compliance. The registrar served as permanent chair of the pan-Institutional Council of Registrars and the Collections Policy and Management Committee (the latter group offered advice). In 1993 the Office of the Registrar was abolished because its diminished functions did not justify the staffing, and NCP was set up under SIA.

³ As noted in Chapter 4, the Smithsonian Office of the Inspector General used to audit limited aspects of collections management, but has not done so for several years.

- Supporting the units in developing and implementing collections management policies and procedures, and consulting with them on specific issues and projects;⁴
- Reviewing unit collections management policies for consistency with SD 600 (collecting units must get NCP approval of their policies);
- Disseminating collections management information from Institutional and external sources (the NCP coordinator is very active in the major professional associations and other organizations involved with collections matters);
- Conducting collections management training for both Smithsonian and external collecting unit staff; and
- Advocating for Institutional support of collections management.

The mission of the **Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education (SCMRE)**, another pan-Institutional support organization, is, according to its website, “research and education in the conservation, preservation, technical study, and analysis of museum collection items and related materials.” Its work encompasses all types of collections. SCMRE’s primary constituencies are Smithsonian staff and units, but it also works with other national and international collecting units and has partnerships with international organizations such as the Conservation Information Network.

Within SCMRE is the Research, Libraries, and Archives Collections Conservation Task Force (RELECT), a collaboration of SCMRE, SIA, and SIL. RELECT educates Smithsonian staff on the preservation of paper-based collections. Its activities include training staff on issues relating to paper-based materials; assisting

⁴ For example, NPM included NCP as part of a working group on the disposal of revenue stamps; NCP took on specific tasks to support the project and advised the central administration on it.

with conservation projects; and providing access to SCMRE's paper-related laboratory facilities. RELACT regularly exchanges information with the Library of Congress, National Archives, and National Park Service.

The **Collections Information System Management Committee (CISMC)**

advocates on CIS matters to Smithsonian central and unit management. Among CISMC's other functions are advising and making recommendations to senior Smithsonian management on CIS issues. It also tracks present and future CIS needs; promotes cooperation and information sharing on CIS issues across the Smithsonian; and promotes interoperability across CISs within and outside the Institution. All collecting units have representatives on the CISMC, which was meeting monthly.

The **ArtCIS Committee** consists of representatives of the art museums, all of which use the same CIS software package, The Museum System (TMS), and thus face similar technical issues.⁵

The **Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)** has been the focal point for the planning and development of IT systems at the Smithsonian — including collecting unit CISs, with respect to which it works closely with CISMC. OCIO develops Institutional policy relating to IT (such as Smithsonian Directive [SD] 910, Information Technology Planning; and SD 940, Acquisition of Information Technology Products). However, while OCIO sets guidelines for IT equipment and software (in the interests of efficiency in support functions and interoperability), it mainly relies on voluntary cooperation of the units. OCIO provides technical support for SIRIS and for units that use TMS as their CIS software.⁶ The collecting units using other systems contract for technical support through the software

⁵ TMS is a database designed specifically for museums, although it is also used for corporate and other collections. Nine fully integrated modules maintain all aspects of collections management in one comprehensive, relational database. TMS manages exhibitions, catalogues, events, shipments, and records and publishes complete information on cataloguing, conservation, location, documentation, provenance, and more. The program provides an intuitive interface for querying any field in the database.

⁶ Except NASM, which contracts for technical support through the software provider.

provider. OCIO makes annual awards to collecting units for CIS projects from a pool of funds that in FY2003 came to slightly under \$1 million. It sets the criteria for awards and makes the final decision on projects reviewed and recommended by a subcommittee of CISM.

Under OCIO is the **Information Technology Review Board (TRB)**. TRB's main objectives are to "improve the overall level of project success, system quality, productivity" and to minimize risk to an acceptable level (Smithsonian Institution, Office of the Chief Information Officer 2003b). To these ends, it reviews all major information technology projects on a quarterly basis.

The goal of the **Smithsonian Institution Capital Planning Board (CPB)** (formerly the Capital Program Planning Board) is integrated planning, approval, and implementation of capital initiatives, particularly in the areas of facilities and IT. The board's primary objectives are to provide strategic direction and set priorities for all capital programs; monitor progress against approved budgets and schedules; and standardize management of capital projects. In reviewing proposed projects, the board looks at compatibility with strategic plans and resource availability. Among the collections-related projects that have come before CPB are collections information systems such as ArtCIS and SIRIS, and the Suitland Collection Center Interim Master Plan of April 2003.

Among other functions, the **Office of Facilities Engineering and Operations (OFEO)** is responsible for operations and maintenance of most Smithsonian facilities; renovation of existing facilities; and construction of new ones, including all space for collections-related activities. OFEO also handles some rented space, although units may lease space on their own. (OFEO is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.)

Two pan-Institutional offices — the **Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives** and the **Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program** — occasionally provide

advice to collecting units on acquisitions relating to ethnic populations in the United States, and may refer donated materials to the appropriate collecting unit.

The draft SD 600 Implementation Manual calls for a Smithsonian Institution Collections Advisory Committee that would advise on and assist NCP and the central administration in coordinating collections-related planning and priority setting. Other functions would include recommending “long-term collections priorities, funding, policies, plans, and practices.” This committee, which would consist of senior staff representing collections management, research, education, and administration, had not been established as of this writing.

external organizations

Collections and their management are also significantly influenced by external organizations, particularly the Congress and professional associations. As noted in Appendix A, periodically the size of Smithsonian collections has jumped significantly when the **Congress** has enacted legislation adding new museums to the Institution. It has also occasionally designated a Smithsonian unit as the national collecting agent for a particular purpose — for example, NMAH for 9/11 artifacts. In addition, congressional appropriations make up the bulk of the funding for collections management activities, although trust funds account for most purchased acquisitions.

As described in earlier chapters, Smithsonian policy and standards on collections management draw significantly on the guidance and standards issued by **professional museum, library, and archives associations** — as well as the standards of the **Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB)** in the area of financial reporting. In addition, some museums have chosen to participate in the American Association of Museums’ (AAM) accreditation program, one requirement of which is that museums either meet, or have firm plans to meet, AAM’s collections

management standards. Failure to meet those standards or to carry out plans to address noncompliance may result in a museum not receiving full accreditation.

NZP is a member of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA), which in 2003 gave it a provisional one-year accreditation and subsequently fully accredited it. The US Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and agencies of the US Departments of Commerce and Agriculture regulate and enforce laws intended to protect wildlife and their habitats. FWS also issues permits that allow zoos to acquire and hold endangered species. Largely because of concerns about the recent deaths of some endangered species at the Zoo, FWS in 2003 issued NZP only a one-year permit, rather than the usual three-year permit.

SIL is a member of the American Library Association (ALA) and follows that organization's collections management guidelines; SIA does the same with the Society of American Archivists (SAA).

From time to time, the Smithsonian administration or the Congress has asked outside organizations or groups to study major problems at the Institution and provide recommendations. Examples are the recent study of animal care issues at NZP by the National Academy of Sciences; a study of facilities maintenance by the National Academy of Public Administration in 2001; and the ongoing efforts of the Smithsonian Institution Council, which in 2003 focused on collections.

organizational issues

One conspicuous organizational issue raised by interviewees and in some of the literature on collections management is the dominant voice of curators/scientists in collections management. The point being made was that curators and scientists tend to have a greater interest in acquisitions and research than in collections care, and

this often leads to a lack of emphasis on, and deferral of, long-term maintenance of collections. Julian Spalding, a museum director and noted museum expert, recognizes this division between curators and conservators and offers one solution: give conservators total control over the physical collections, and encourage curators to view the collections not as their “property,” but as means of communicating with the public (Keene 2002, 27).

A second organizational issue described by Smithsonian interviewees was that the Smithsonian’s stovepiped organizational structure contributed to insularity on three fronts:

- Weak communications and collaboration across curatorial departments in some units, with each department operating largely autonomously when it comes to acquisitions and access. Proposed acquisitions appear to move along a departmental track — they tend to be reviewed against a department’s needs or interests, rather than those of the collecting unit and its programs as a whole. One reason posited at some units was that funding for acquisitions went through the departments rather than the unit’s central administration. (This point did not seem to apply as much to scientific research departments, where collaboration was more the norm.)
- Interviewees described weak linkages among collections, research, and exhibitions at some units — despite the primary role of curators/scientists in all three. An interviewee at one unit commented, for example, that curatorial staff did little or no research on the collections. Another commented that collections sometimes lay untouched for decades after the person who brought them in left the museum.
- A number of interviewees described intra-Smithsonian borrowing by museums as more difficult than with external museums. One interviewee commented that a Smithsonian museum had declined a loan request from another Smithsonian museum because of concerns that the standard of

care at the borrowing unit was insufficient. Outside borrowing units, especially affiliates, were said to experience problems with requested loans, particularly lengthy delays in processing them.

A third observation made by a number of interviewees concerned the blurring of the distinct responsibilities of collections managers and curatorial/scientific research personnel (see also Chapter 6). A typical comment was that “Because of the way [the museum] had to bring in people, some curators are actually collections managers, and some collections specialists are actually doing curatorial work.” Another interviewee said,

The way curators and specialists work together used to be different. In the past, curators made the decisions about the collections and the specialists took care of the collection management. Specialist offices were actually inside the collection rooms, and they took care of the objects but did not do acquisitions or research. But since we lost so many curators, specialists are now involved in the subject. They have to have an understanding of everything. They are answering all the inquiries in many cases, and they have to have . . . knowledge.

The concern raised by this situation is that stewardship requires special skills that curatorial/scientific research staff might not have.