



Della Hall: Hi Erin!

Erin: Hi Della!

Della Hall: glad you could join. Hi Hayley! Hi Erika!

Hayley Chambers: Hi Della! We are excited for today's webinar

Della Hall: Excellent! Hi Sue! Glad you could all join

Sue Deyoe: hi everyone!

Erika Brown: Morning everyone

Della Hall: Today's topic is found in collections/abandoned property. Welcome Norm, Jackie, and Michael

Michael: Hello!

Della Hall: Amanda, hi!

Jackie: Jackie Sunny Sitka here!

Norm: Greetings TX

Della Hall: Does anyone have any particular question or topic related to FIC to kick off the discussion? Not to put you on the spot, Amanda, but you seemed eager to discuss this when we last talked!

Amanda Lancaster: Yes! Although the attachment you sent about abandoned property really helped me out. Just in general, we have a whole cabinet that I found when I started that don't seem to have much provenance

Della Hall: I have a feeling many others who signed on today have dealt with or are currently dealing with similar situations

Michael: I have the same situation at the Baranov. We have resources in our collections room that are not part of our perm. collection, but have been "kept" here for decades, and there is little more information on them. They fit into our collection, but need to go through a process to become part of the collection... that is where things get a bit grey.

Erin Kirchner: Do you know if there is any documentation on those objects, Michael?

Michael: There is very little.

Erin Kirchner: In my experience, the first step with FIC objects is to search in existing documentation. After that is exhausted, then I would look at the unclaimed property laws the handout.

Sue Deyoe: We just hired a collections manager, and his job, amongst others, will be to figure out the large amounts of FIC here...same thing as Baranov and others. The starting point I think, is just to start somewhere. There is no real beginning.

Michael: I know who originally had the items, but they are now deceased or not even in state any longer. Connecting with their next of kin seems almost impossible.

Michael: Or defunct businesses sent them to us.

Amanda Lancaster: Same with us, Michael. We just have a really hard time getting responses people

Hayley Chambers: I was curious if there are any super sleuths out there who have found good resources for tracking people down. Beyond the typical phone book and internet search.

Sue Deyoe: We are sort of in the same boat. Back in 1972, dozens of people "loaned" items and they stayed loans. Those people are now all dead, for the most part.

Hayley Chambers: We have many old loans too, Sue.

Norm: Reference obituaries for assistance in locating next of kin or extended family members

Erin Kirchner: I believe in the MRM5 handbook, there is a way to work with no responses. I think if you send notices via certified mail (maybe with tracking capabilities), you can use those notices as proof that you have tried to reach these parties. After a certain number of notices, I believe you can move on to the abandoned property laws.

Erin Kirchner: There was a FIC webinar on the connecting to collections website about a month ago that I found very helpful. Handouts and audio of the webinar can be found here:
<https://www.connectingtocollections.org/found-in-collection/>

Della Hall: Yes, Erin, and that ties to the Alaska statute on abandoned property. For those who did not see the attachment, it is Sec. 14.57.210.

Sue Deyoe: I listened to that webinar as well, Erin, it's very helpful!

Hayley Chambers: It was a great webinar, but I only caught the beginning.

Hayley Chambers: Legally speaking, would you need to correspond with the executor of the estate for a potential return?

Sue Deyoe: I DO have a question about loans if we get to it. If someone loaned an item in, say 1985, they've since died. Their children come in and say they'd like to retrieve the item...and its very historically significant, is it acceptable to somehow say there is a storage fee? The item has been in the museum on exhibit and we've made sure it's well cared for.

Della Hall: Sue, that's a sticky one...

Sue Deyoe: I know it's sticky! I just wondered if anyone else had this issue and how to deal with it! (help)

Erin Kirchner: Sue, I would have a hard time with that one without documentation of a storage fee agreement the original loaner/ owner.

Della Hall: I think Hayley is on the right track with corresponding with the executor of the estate. As far as asking them for a storage fee, I don't know that that would go over very well, in my experience.

Erin Kirchner: I believe that some states have "old loan" laws that apply to museums. Maybe that is one way to research this?

Della Hall: I'm curious if anyone has an established process for tackling their found in collections objects, or if anyone has a tentative process they'd like to run by the group for feedback. As Sue said, you have to start somewhere. But where have you all started?

Norm: and making sure that agreement is in writing! Dealt with really LARGE object that was being "stored & exhibited" at the museum for a number of years awaiting completion of restoration and sale with the verbal agreement (previous administration) that the hangar fees would be paid upon sale of said artifact. Museum never saw a dime!!

Amanda Lancaster: My predecessor helped me out by keeping everything in one place at least. So it's really a matter of going in there and tackling each object. It's just so overwhelming.

Michael: Since our building is essentially an artifact, we do have a process for found on site resources if they pertain to, or originated the building (we find toys, fabric scraps, bottles, etc. embedded in the walls for example). These items are in a "found on site" collection, and lack some of the normal

necessary documentation, but things found in the collections themselves are outside the scope of this collection.

Erin Kirchner: Amanda, I agree. Keeping objects in situ is a good starting point. I would say that having a documented/ photographed inventory (by object) in a given area or space is also a helpful tool for keeping objects sorted.

Della Hall: Michael, that is interesting! I've not heard of that, but it seems like a good system for the specific circumstances

Erin Kirchner: If your museum has a large number of FIC, assigning temporary numbers (ex: TEMP001) with tags may also be helpful during the inventory process.

Michael: Since our building is so unique, the collection came about during remodels and updates. It came into existence organically. Although it differs slightly objects found in the collection, it is a possible model that could be reworked.

Amanda Lancaster: That's a great idea Erin, thanks!

Hayley Chambers: We number and photograph as best we can all FICs. In a recent collections move, we have endeavored to corral as many of the old loan items together. Our tentative plan is to be reviewing these items at our collections meetings- what paperwork do we have? is this something we would like for the collection? if not, are there other good venues for it?

Hayley Chambers: I should add that we do create database records for FICs too

Sue Deyoe: Our plan is a bit like Hayley's. Take the easiest ones (we believe to be) first. Accession it and then deaccession. Then there is a record. Maybe there is another museum in which it belongs. Or other nonprofit entity?

Erin Kirchner: Hayley, when you are able to reconcile FIC objects with paperwork, do you assign the object a permanent collection number? If so, do you use the current year to catalog the object, or the original donation year?

Hayley Chambers: We have not gotten to the point of reconciling...yet! There's been a variety of things done in the past but going forward we will be developing a more consistent system.

Erin Kirchner: Okay, good to know. Thanks!

Della Hall: I agree that consistency is key, whichever system you choose, Erin. But you know that - that's why you work in a museum! We all love to put things in order...

Hayley Chambers: For us, too, being consistent is key and also recording our rationale for decisions. There are so many times I wish I could go back in time and ask a predecessor why they did what they did. We are trying to make it easier on ourselves and the people who will come after us.

Erin Kirchner: Just curious, has anyone had experience working within the abandoned property laws?

Della Hall: I'm curious if anyone has had an instance of abandoned property in the sense of a "drop off" - objects left outside the museum door when it is closed, that sort of thing. How have you handled those?

Della Hall: in answer to your question, Erin, I have not.

Sue Deyoe: Well, as far as stuff left in a bag on the porch...yes. Since we have no idea who had it and where it came from, we use it as props, generally. Say, a pair of mukluks...we may use for educating kids. Any other thoughts?

Norm: Yes on the Drop Off routine. Would arrive at the museum in the morning and find objects and pieces/parts leaned up against the door.

Della Hall: And what would you do with those, Norm?

Norm: We did the very same thing. No information on the WWWH so we used those objects to provide "scenes and backdrops" for exhibits. The part that really fumed me was months later I would hear through the grapevine that the midnight depositors would take LARGE tax deductions for their donations to the museum. Likely the IRS has really closed the loopholes on that nonsense. We did "broadcast" that folks were no longer welcome to drop stuff off. If we needed or wanted something we would seek it out specifically and the "donations" stopped.

Della Hall: Yes, it is important to have a "no drop off" policy in place.

Della Hall: Well, we have about 13 minutes left. Does anyone have anything else to introduce or run by the group?

Norm: An integral part of your collections & collections management policies and procedures.

Erin Kirchner: I think one way to go about unsolicited donations is to have a policy in place. You can make it know on your museum's donations page or the entry way where things are left that you do not encourage anonymous donations.

Erin Kirchner: Policies could list a retention period before disposal or acquisition of unwarranted objects.

Erin Kirchner: That way you are covered in some sense legally whether you choose to move forward with acquiring the object or not.

Norm: absolutely

Erin Kirchner: As with all collections issues, keeping records of what happens to these objects once they are abandoned at the museum is important.

Della Hall: retention period - excellent idea, Erin.

Della Hall: Well, with 8 minutes left, if no one has anything else on this topic, do you have any suggestions for future topics?

Erin Kirchner: Here are some useful guidelines: http://obs-traffic.museum/sites/default/files/ressources/files/CT_Disposing_Objects_Youmaynotown.pdf

Della Hall: excellent resource! thanks for sharing

Della Hall: Next month we will have a guest host. Freya Anderson, the state librarian, will be talking about copyright. As always, Scott and I welcome suggestions for future topics/hosts!

Erin Kirchner: Thank you for hosting, Della!

Amanda Lancaster: That will be helpful!

Amanda Lancaster: Thanks everybody!

Michael: Thank you!

Norm: Cheers

Della Hall: Thanks for joining everyone

