

Deaccessioning in a Post-Pandemic World

Deadline: Jun 30, 2020

www.museumsetc.com

Graeme Farnell, Edinburgh

MuseumsEtc invites international submissions for essays and case studies to be included in the forthcoming book, *Deaccessioning in a Post-Pandemic World*, edited by Stefanie Jandl, Mark Gold, and Julia Courtney.

Museums regularly deaccession objects to trim, edit and, using the proceeds, grow their collections, a practice that is supported by the profession. Occasionally, however, museums undertake deaccessioning and disposal of objects to accomplish different goals. These museums - usually art museums - draw swift criticism from professional organizations for deviating from the standard practice and current ethical codes of the field. Often the public and art critics vocally oppose such plans as well.

The most common scenario of “improper” deaccessioning is a museum that deaccessions objects from its collection to ensure the survival of the museum (or its parent organization). Some commentators will say that museums in deep financial trouble ought to close rather than sell any objects to stabilize, while others will prioritize the survival of the museum.

Laura Lott, President of the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), fears that one-third of U.S. museums will close if the present coronavirus-induced financial crisis continues. The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) recently issued a statement indicating, among other things, that for two years it would not sanction museums that use the proceeds of deaccessioning for direct care, or use income from the proceeds of deaccessioning for operating expenses, both significant changes from their existing standards.

It is possible that some museums will use the opportunity presented by AAMD’s statement to undertake deaccessionings very different from the past.

AIMS

Deaccessioning in a Post-Pandemic World seeks to:

- Contribute to an objective and balanced discussion of deaccessioning and identify what can be learned from past experiences.
- Identify the effects that proposed or actual deaccessioning - frequently high-profile and sometimes controversial - can have on the institution.
- Compare the results of completed deaccession processes, and/or revised institutional planning, against the stated aims.
- Consider the effect that the practice of deaccessioning has on the museum community.
- Consider how deaccessioning in response to the current pandemic may impact future trends

and practice in the museum community.

SUBMISSIONS

Proposals are welcome for essays and case studies from museum, gallery and heritage professionals, academics, researchers and students. Proposals for case studies are particularly welcome from individuals who have been directly involved in a deaccessioning process.

Essays:

Aspects of interest include - but are not limited to - the following:

- Thought pieces on the philosophical issues around deaccessioning, especially in a post-pandemic world.
- Consideration of cases that arise in response to the financial needs engendered by the pandemic.
- Consideration of issues of broad implication such as public trust, or the effect of deaccessioning on subsequent financial support, especially in a post-pandemic world.
- Advocacy pieces either for or against the loosening of professional standards around deaccessioning and the use of proceeds.
- Exploration of how the pandemic might affect museum deaccessioning decisions and community guidance going forward.

Case studies:

Case studies can examine both museums which have proposed deaccessioning but halted the process, and museums which have completed the deaccessioning process. They may include subjective assessments and anecdotal evidence from reliable individuals, but in the context of a balanced and fair overall review. An indicative list of a range of possible US case studies is attached as Appendix A - case studies from the UK, Europe and other countries are warmly welcomed.

Case studies should include - but not be limited to - the following:

- Background on the museum, its mission, collections, funding, staffing, programming and audience.
- An account of the decision-making process within the institution (including the board process) as it relates to deaccessioning.
- The museum's rationale and goals for deaccessioning.
- An account of the deaccessioning process, from initial announcement to how the proceeds were spent, including any PR issues, and the form and beneficiaries of the disposition.
- The relationship between the museum's deaccessioning process and the collections management plan.
- The form and effect of any opposition to deaccessioning, whether local, national or in the museum community.
- A comparison of the goals of the deaccessioning with the results.
- How the process has changed the museum's mission, operations, exhibitions, programming, attendance, community engagement (including membership).

How the process has changed the museum's finances, foundation and government support, fundraising (cash, objects, annual fund, endowment and capital giving), etc.

- The impact of any sanctions, including the loan of items to or from the collection and collaboration on exhibitions.

- The important takeaways and implications of the case, especially in a post-pandemic world. An editorial chapter will identify the broad principles revealed in the case studies as a whole and the implications for post-pandemic deaccessioning.

Editors

Stefanie S. Jandl is an independent museum professional with over twenty years of museum experience that includes exhibition planning, academic outreach, and collections management. Stefanie has written on academic museums, the Mellon Foundation College and University Art Museum program, deaccessioning, among other topics. She has a BA in Political Science from the University of Southern California and an MA in the History of Art from Williams College. She is the former Andrew W. Mellon Associate Curator for Academic Programs at Williams College Museum of Art, and co-author of a recent article in *The Art Newspaper* entitled "Why the Association of Art Museum Directors's move on deaccessioning matters so much."

Mark S. Gold is a partner in the law firm of Smith Green & Gold, LLP, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, USA. He holds a Master's in Museum Studies from Harvard University, degrees in Economics and International Studies from The American University, and a law degree from Georgetown University. His practice includes business law and nonprofit and museum law. Mark has authored numerous articles and essays on deaccessioning, legal issues for museums, nonprofit governance, and museum compensation issues. Mark served as legal counsel to Berkshire Museum in connection with its recent deaccessioning and sale and is and co-author of a recent article in *The Art Newspaper* entitled "Why the Association of Art Museum Directors's move on deaccessioning matters so much."

Julia Courtney is a curator and educator with more than twenty years of experience in the museum field. She is the Collections Curator for the Art Complex Museum in Duxbury, Massachusetts and the Curator of Art emeritus for the Springfield Art Museums in Springfield, Massachusetts. She's edited and contributed to both *The Legal Guide for Museum Professionals* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015) and *Is it Okay to Sell the Money: Museums and Deaccessioning* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018). Julia is an adjunct faculty member for the Graduate Museum Studies Program at Tufts University and for the Masters in Museum and Gallery Management Program at Western Colorado University.

SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL

You can propose to submit either an essay or a case study. Proposals for ESSAYS should be 500-700 words in length. Proposals for CASE STUDIES should be 250-500 words. Both should be accompanied by a biography of 100-300 words. All submissions should be in Microsoft Word format.

ESSAYS will be 3000-6000 words in length; CASE STUDIES will be 2000-4000. The inclusion of images is encouraged. Please prepare your proposal with these parameters in mind. The work should not have been published elsewhere. All contributions must be submitted in English - translation services will not be provided.

The deadline for proposals is 30 June 2020. Please email your proposal to both the editors [DXSEditors@gmail.com] and the publishers [DXSPublisher@museumsetc.com]. Any queries in advance of submission should be sent to the editors.

You can download the full Call for Papers from: https://bit.ly/DXS_CFP.

As a service to the field in the context of the pandemic, MuseumsEtc is making its entire catalog available for free online until 1 November 2020, and chapters of this book will be made freely available online as part of that initiative.

Deaccessioning in a Post-Pandemic World will be published by MuseumsEtc in print and digital editions. Contributors will receive a complimentary copy of the publication and a discount on more.

KEY DATES

PROPOSALS DUE: 30 June 2020

CONTRIBUTORS NOTIFIED: 13 July 2020

COMPLETED PAPERS DUE: 14 September 2020

APPENDIX A

Examples of museum deaccessioning in the USA that could be the subject of case studies

Metropolitan Museum of Art (controversial sales in 1970s)

Philips Collection

Barnes Foundation

Holyoke Public Library and Museum

Fuller Museum of Art (1992) (now the Fuller Craft Museum)

Everhart Museum (1992)

Reading Public Museum and Art Gallery

New-York Historical Society

Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation (shifting of proceeds to endowment pledged as collateral, 2001)

Fisk University (Stieglitz Collection)

National Academy Museum

Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University (1991 and 2009)

Brooklyn Museum

Fresno Metropolitan Museum of Art and Science

Higgins Armory Museum

Corcoran Gallery of Art

American Textile History Museum

La Salle University Art Museum

Baltimore Museum of Art

Case studies on Maier Museum of Art at Randolph University, Detroit Institute of Arts, Delaware Art Museum, and Berkshire Museum have already been assigned.

Reference:

CFP: Deaccessioning in a Post-Pandemic World. In: ArtHist.net, May 27, 2020 (accessed Dec 17, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/23148>>.