

## **MUSM 5051—Collections Management SPRING--2014**

**Professor: Deane Bowers**

**E-mail: deane.bowers@colorado.edu**

**Office: Ramaley N295**

**Phone: 492-5530 (Ramaley), 492-6270 (MCOL), 485-6313 (home)**

**Class Meetings: Tuesday, Thursday, 9:30 – 10:45, MCOL E280**

**Office Hours: TBD, Ramaley N295**

**Or by appointment (you can always set up an appointment with me at a  
time that works for both of us!)**

### **What is this course about?**

Collections management is an area of specialization within the museum profession that encompasses a wide range of activities. It includes conservation, registration, collecting and acquiring material, project management, administration, development of policy and procedures, fundraising, and compliance with local, state, national and international laws, treaties, and regulations. Collection managers and registrars work with directors, curators, educators, students and volunteers to manage collections and integrate collections management with other museum operations.

This course will cover a variety of topics related to collections and the management of collections. We will cover collecting and collection policies, processing of incoming and outgoing material, organization and storage, environment and security, regulations related to collecting, grant writing and evaluation, and databasing and digitization of collections.

### **Readings:**

There are two required textbooks for the class. These books will stand you in good stead whatever your future in the museum world!

1. Buck, R.A. and J. A Gilmore (eds.). 2010. MRM5: Museum Registration Methods 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. American Association of Museums. Washington, D.C. (Designated B&G on readings). This has LOTS of helpful articles and is chock full of information that will be of use to you now and in the future.
2. Malaro, M. and I. DeAngelis. 2012. A Legal Primer on Managing Museum Collections. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C. 3rd edition. The old edition came out in 1998 and this new one has lots of important information about issues like stolen art, copyright and the effects of electronic use—things that have become really important in the last few years for museums.

In addition to readings from these texts, we will have a variety of readings from other books and journals that will be assigned over the course of the semester. These will be posted on D2L. Please read them over before class. I will also have some optional readings that will be posted if you are interested. I have put up reading lists that cover several weeks at a time, but there may be additional readings added as needed.

## **LEARNING GOALS FOR THE COURSE: by the end of this course you will be able to:**

- 1) Know the basics of how museums deal with the collections they house as well as incoming and outgoing material
- 2) Be able to formulate a workable collections management policy or revise an existing one to reflect best practices in collections management.
- 3) Communicate effectively in both written and oral presentations.
- 4) Gain knowledge of funding opportunities in the field of museum studies and have a sense of what goes into a strong grant proposal.
- 5) Understand the legal issues surrounding museum collections and know where to go for needed information.
- 6) Understand the needs of collections and their value for museum teaching, research, outreach, education and exhibits.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE**

There will be 3 major projects over the course of the semester and several smaller ones. For each of the three major projects, you will give an oral presentation (10 minutes) and turn in a written paper. Your grade for each project will be based 1/3 on your presentation and 2/3 on your paper.

### **I. MAJOR PROJECTS (70% of grade):**

1. **Databasing project (20% of grade)**
2. **Grant proposal (20% of grade) and reviews (10% of grade)**
3. **Collections Case Study project (20% of grade)**

### **II. OTHER PROJECTS (30% of grade)**

1. **Short essays (4 at 4% each = 16% of grade)**
2. **Museum in the news (4% of grade)**
3. **Class participation (10% of grade)**

### **I. MAJOR PROJECTS**

#### **1. Databasing project**

*Presentations: March 11 and 13*

*Paper Due March 11*

Being able to understand, use and even design relational databases has become an increasingly important skill for registrars and collection managers. Databases can serve multiple functions, for many different end users. This project will get you started down the road of understanding and designing databases.

First, you will need to locate a set of objects that you are going to design your database for. This can be a part of a museum collection, something in your life (CD collection, basket

collection, or junk drawer in your home (maybe in the kitchen, or in a spare desk drawer). Come up with an organizational scheme (of your own choosing). Think about who will use your database to locate objects and how they might go about searching for items. This will help you with your organization. Figure out what tables you need, what fields, what relationships, what queries, etc. Map it all out (yes, actually draw a map). Topics chosen in the past include: book collection; type specimens in a museum collection; art and craft supplies; education collection; Navaho silver jewelry.

Your presentation will be 10- 12 minutes long, with 2-3 minutes for questions. The paper should be 6-8 pages in length (double spaced, 12 point font), including your database map. Your presentation and paper should include a description of your collection, how you decided to organize the collection and why, a description of your end users, a map of your tables, fields and associated relationships. You should also be able to explain how one would conduct a query. This is a software free, design-oriented project, but you should feel free to use software if that helps you to think about it. If you would like to orient this towards a specific database, you may certainly do that. If you do, please provide some background information about the particular features of that database.

### **IMPORTANT:**

You do not need to actually create a database. Instead, you are building the model that would eventually become your database (in whatever software platform you used). Nobody will have a perfect database design. There will be many times where you could go one way or another. The key is to make a decision and explain why you made that decision. Part of the benefit of the presentations is that you will all be able to learn from each other and see how people dealt with similar problems in different ways. This assignment is about the process, and not about creating the perfect end-product/database.

## **2. Team writing grant proposal.**

*Presentations April 3 and 8*

*Proposals due April 3*

*Reviews due April 10 (5PM, to me by email)*

- a. Collaborate to write a grant proposal for a collection—8 – 10 pages. (20% of grade)
- b. Review 3 of the proposals written by others in the class. (10% of grade)

Part a. Write a grant proposal for a project designed to improve some aspect of the management and curation of a collection. Grant writing is a very important part of the museum professionals' life. Many such grants are written by more than one person and sometimes there are a number of collaborators participating. You will be assigned a partner and together you will write a grant proposal for a project designed to improve some aspect of the management and curation of a collection. For example, the collection may need more storage cabinets, may need databasing, or there may be a large backlog of unaccessioned/uncataloged material, etc. To accomplish your proposed project, you may need to ask for funds to support additional personnel, equipment, computers, and/or space renovation/addition. Or, you may already have gotten your collection in great shape and want to use part of it for educational purposes (exhibits, teaching, travelling exhibits, etc.). The project description should include background, information about the collection, the need for the project, a plan for implementation, a budget, and a budget justification. This should be based on a real collection or portion of a collection. More details

about the parts of a grant proposal will be provided.

Both team members are expected to participate and to present the results to the class. Proposals will be co-authored. Each co-author should provide an extra paragraph, turned in separate, describing their contributions to the project and their collaborator's contribution.

Part b. The next part of this project will be peer evaluations conducted by the whole class of all of the proposals written. Each person will anonymously review three proposals and write a short review of that proposal. I will decide who is reviewing which proposals. The written reviews will be made available to the entire class, including the author of the proposal (the Principal Investigator or "PI"). The class will then act as a panel by discussing each proposal in turn and deciding if each proposal should be funded.

Your presentation will be 12-15 minutes long, with 2 – 3 minutes for questions. Proposals are expected to be 10 - 12 pages in length (double spaced, 12 pt font).

### **3. Collections Case Study**

***Presentations May 7, 4:30 – 7 (This is the time scheduled for the final exam)***

***Papers due May 7***

The goal of this project is to identify a collection (a distinct group of specimens, from within a larger collection – for example: Colombian amber, with the Invertebrate Paleontology collection) early in the semester and to use this as your case study as we learn about the various aspects of collection management. To complete this assignment, you will need to find a collection and collection manager/curator who is willing to help guide your efforts.

You will need to find out what the mission, policies and procedures, registration and conservation issues are that surround your specific collection. What are some of the unique attributes of the collection? How does this specific collection fit into the larger goals of the section's collections and goals of the museum? What are the main concerns and future needs of these materials? You will need to write an assessment report that gives the full background of your collection, assesses the quality and needs of the collection and make recommendations for the future. Be sure to consider the following future avenues for this collection: would additional staffing or funding be of value? How might this collection be used in education, exhibits, outreach, research, etc.?

***Papers*** are expected to be 8-10 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 pt. font). This does not include supporting documents, which may include materials from the collection/institution that help give the context for your case study. Also be sure to cite/acknowledge the people who have given you feedback on this project/collection. Recognizing their contributions will be an important part of describing your process.

Your ***presentation*** should be 10 - 12 minutes long. Imagine that you are presenting this to your museum's board. In this situation your museum has limited resources and is trying to figure out which specific collection should get the priority in terms of resources this year. You want to convey two critical things: the background and great importance of this collection to the

overall mission of the institution and give a factual and detailed account of the needs. So, you want to find that balance of selling this collection as important in the long term, but in dire need of support in the short term. Be sure to describe the collection and give us the specific history and background. Outline any unique registration or conservation issues related to your collection. What is the current state of the collection and what is your assessment of future needs? Again, consider the following future avenues for this collection: would additional staffing or funding be of value? How might this collection be used in education, exhibits, outreach, research, etc.? Finally, was there anything unexpected, or surprising to you about this collection that you discovered as a result of your case study work?

## **II. OTHER PROJECTS**

### **1. Short essays (4 at 4% each = 16% of grade)**

You will write 4, 2 – 3 page essays (double-spaced, 12 pt. font). This write-up will be assigned on a Thursday and will be due at the beginning of class the following Thursday (see class schedule). Each write-up will be based your thoughts about topics we are covering in class. Examples include evaluation of collections management policies, job applications, grant proposal evaluations.

### **2. Museum in the news (4% of grade)**

Everyone will sign up to present 2 “Museums in the news” items (both in one week). These can be taken from the newspaper or on-line. You will give a 2 – 3 minute synopsis of the news items and tell people where you got it. Please provide a short write-up of the items, giving sources and a summary (1 - 2 paragraphs) that you can hand out to the class.

### **3. Class participation (10% of grade)**

Attendance in class is required. If you know you will not be able to attend class, please notify me ahead of time, and I will make sure that you receive any materials that were handed out in class. I know that there can be emergencies—things happen.

We may have to make slight modifications to our schedule as the semester progresses, as guest speakers sometimes have last minute conflicts or as new opportunities to delve into topics arise. Therefore, it is very important to attend class to keep abreast of any changes that might occur.

Your participation is necessary for the success of this course. You are expected to participate and come prepared for discussion. This includes having questions prepared for your peers and for our guest speakers.

### **Use of D2L**

D2L is an online course organizer that can be used to post assignments, provide reading material, and even allow for discussions. I have registered this course with D2L, so there is a course page. I have posted the syllabus and will periodically post assignments, readings, announcements, etc. To access the course page do the following:

## PROJECTS, PAPERS AND ORAL PRESENTATIONS

***\*\*\*Each paper is due on the first day of the oral presentations\*\*\****

- For each of these projects, you may want to talk with me about what you are planning to do so that we can be sure that a variety of different museums and collections are represented.
- Please use these projects as opportunities to learn about a variety of different kinds of museums/collections. For example, if your main interest is in history museums, please do at least 1 project on a completely different kind of museum/collection.
- You will need to contact people at various museums or collections to make the arrangements for these projects. In addition to using your own expertise and contacts, please tap into the resources available through other members of the class and the faculty and staff of the Museum. We all have a variety of contacts in local museums.
- Please respect the fact that other people are as busy as you. Be as flexible as possible when trying to arrange meetings with registrars, collection managers, and curators.
- These contacts are important for future jobs or internships, as well as for the experience that they afford you. Take advantage of these opportunities.

## ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION

### **Disability Services:**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to your professor a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu).

If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Injuries under Quick Links at Disability Services website (<http://disabilityservices.colorado.edu/>) and discuss your needs with your professor.

### **Religious Observances:**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, I will need you to inform me in writing (by email or letter), at LEAST ONE WEEK PRIOR, of any conflicts of which you are aware, so that we may make arrangements in advance. See full details at [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html)

### **Appropriate Classroom Behavior:**

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status,

sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at

[http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code)

### **Discrimination and Harassment:**

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. The University of Colorado does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities. (Regent Law, Article 10, amended 11/8/2001). CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this CU-Boulder policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or veteran status. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at

<http://hr.colorado.edu/dh/>

### **Honor Code:**

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://honorcode.colorado.edu>

### **In Class Use of Electronic Devices:**

All cell phones are required to be TURNED OFF during class. Exceptions to this policy: 1) if you are a parent and primary caregiver and/or 2) primary caregiver for a sick or ailing friend or family member.

**Collections Management—Schedule (Subject to change)**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
1	Jan. 14	Introduction, Organization, Importance of collections in all aspects of museums	
	Jan. 16	Discussion about importance of collections; Mission Statements	
2	Jan. 21	The job of collection manager; types of collections, Collection Management Policies	
	Jan. 23	Collection Management policies cont. Why collect?	<b>Essay #1 due</b>
3	Jan. 28	Why collect? Lecture and discussion	
	Jan. 30	Acquiring and accessioning I	
4	Feb. 4	Acquiring and accessioning II	
	Feb. 6	Databasing and Technology I—Information management	<b>Essay #2 due</b>
5	Feb. 11	Databasing and Technology II—Digitization	
	Feb. 13	Databasing and Technology III—Rob Guralnick	
6	Feb. 18	Databasing IV—work flow—Talia Karim	
	Feb. 20	Processing outgoing material I	<b>Essay #3 due</b>
7	Feb. 25	Processing outgoing material II	
	Feb. 27	Ethics, deaccessions, sale discussion	
8	Mar. 4	Funding and grant writing	
	Mar. 6	Regulations about collecting I—NAGPRA—Jan Bernstein	<b>Essay #4 due</b>
9	Mar. 11	<b>Databasing presentations (Databasing paper due)</b>	
	Mar. 13	<b>Databasing presentations</b>	
10	Mar. 18	Libraries I	
	Mar. 20	Libraries II	
11	Mar. 23-29	<b>SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS</b>	
12	Apr. 1	Field trip to National Eagle and Wildlife property repository	
	Apr. 3	<b>Grant proposal presentations. Proposals due</b>	
13	Apr. 8	<b>Grant proposal presentations</b>	
	Apr. 10	Regulations about collecting II—Paleo and Biology—Toni Culver & Deane <b>Reviews due to me by 5 PM via email. I will distribute to the class by April 10.</b>	
14	Apr. 15	<b>Grant panel</b>	
	Apr. 17	<b>Grant panel</b>	
15	Apr. 22	Pest Control—Christy Cain and Deane	
	Apr. 24	Environment and Security, Moving and disaster planning—Christy Cain	
16	Apr. 29	Organization and Storage	
	May 1	Catch up (Art Museum?)	

**May 7, 4:30 – 7:00 Case Study presentations and papers due. THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM**  
**There may be some changes depending on scheduling**