



In Brief

Collections Accessioning at the National Museum of Natural History **Report Number A-10-10, November 18, 2010**

Why We Did This Audit

We conducted this audit to assess whether NMNH followed the Institution's and museum's collections management policies and procedures. Specifically, we determined whether NMNH had effective controls in place to (1) align its collecting activities with collecting goals; (2) accession items in a timely manner; and (3) comply with applicable laws and regulations.

Our intent for the first objective was to address the risk that NMNH may acquire and accession items that are not aligned with its collecting goals and priorities, thereby diverting its limited resources away from managing important collections.

What We Recommended

To strengthen the museum's accessioning process and reduce the risk of non-compliance with relevant laws and regulations, we recommended that Smithsonian and museum management strengthen policies and procedures, as well as evaluate opportunities to centralize training and registration for all acquisitions.

Management concurred in whole with our recommendations and proposed corrective actions that will resolve all 13 of our recommendations.

What We Found

Although the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) has effective controls to ensure that its accessioned collection items comply with applicable laws and regulations, we found that NMNH needs to strengthen controls over all acquisitions. Smithsonian Directive 600 on collections management and NMNH policy state that all of the museum's acquisitions must comply with relevant laws. Yet, the museum may not provide adequate review of collections that curators obtain directly or collections that are not intended to be added to the museum's accession collections. Not all items that curators obtain directly pass through control points, and the centralized registration process does not include non-accession collections despite their potential legal risks.

NMNH also may not always provide timely review because the museum does not have required accessioning timeframes. Two divisions did not accession in more than five years. Furthermore, we found that the museum's current method of ensuring that its staff members know the relevant laws and regulations – relying on staff to educate themselves – is inefficient and may be ineffective.

The museum's ineffective controls over all acquisitions are primarily caused by NMNH's lack of written policies and procedures. Inadequate controls over all collections acquisitions increases the risk that the museum may not comply with applicable laws and regulations. Nonetheless, both the Smithsonian's Office of General Counsel and museum collections management staff told us that they have few legal disputes involving NMNH's collections.

Additionally, we observed that collections management resources are unbalanced. Although NMNH is collecting items that align with its collecting goals, these goals are extremely broad and do not serve to focus the museum's collecting activities. The museum's current collections growth, combined with its long-standing staffing shortages, have resulted in NMNH limiting access to parts of its collections, thereby reducing the museum's ability to fulfill the Smithsonian's mission of increasing and diffusing knowledge.

We also observed that NMNH could improve documentation of title in some of its accession files.

For additional information or a copy of the full report, contact the Office of the Inspector General at (202) 633-7050 or visit <http://www.si.edu/oig>.



Smithsonian Institution

Office of the Inspector General

Date November 18, 2010

To Audit and Review Committee, Board of Regents
G. Wayne Clough, Secretary
Cristián Samper K., Director, National Museum of Natural History
Judith Leonard, General Counsel
William G. Tompkins, National Collections Coordinator, National Collections Program

cc Richard Kurin, Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture
Alison McNally, Under Secretary for Finance and Administration
Eva J. Pell, Under Secretary for Science

From  A. Sprightley Ryan, Inspector General

Subject Report on Audit of Collections Accessioning at the National Museum of Natural History, Number A-10-10

This report presents the results of our audit of collections accessioning¹ at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH). Our objectives were to assess whether NMNH followed the Institution's and museum's collections management policies and procedures. Specifically, we determined whether NMNH had effective controls in place to (1) align its collecting activities with collecting goals; (2) accession items in a timely manner; and (3) comply with applicable laws and regulations.

We initiated this audit because our audits² and an internal Smithsonian report³ on collections care have found that at some Smithsonian museums, collections management needs outweigh collections management resources. Furthermore, the Smithsonian has identified strengthening collections as one of the six strategic priorities in its strategic plan.⁴ Our intent was to address the risk that NMNH may acquire and accession items that are not aligned with its collecting goals and priorities, thereby diverting its limited resources away from managing important collections.

Because each of the Smithsonian's 21 collecting units acquire and accession collections independently and maintain separate collections management policies and procedures, we limited our audit to one museum. We selected NMNH because this museum's nearly

¹ Accessioning is the formal process of legally acquiring and adding an item or group of items to a museum's collection with the intention of retaining them for an indefinite period.

² *Physical Security and Inventory Control Measures to Safeguard the National Collections at the National Air and Space Museum*, A-09-04, March 17, 2010; *Physical Security and Inventory Control Measures to Safeguard the National Collections at the National Museum of Natural History*, A-05-06, September 29, 2006.

³ *Concern at the Core, Managing Smithsonian Collections*, April 2005. Smithsonian Institution Office of Policy and Analysis.

⁴ Smithsonian Institution Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2010 – 2015, *Inspiring Generations Through Knowledge and Discovery*.

800 acquisition transactions in fiscal year (FY) 2009 totaling more than 114,000 items⁵ represent 51 percent of the Institution's acquisition transactions and 91 percent of the collection items the Institution acquired during the year. Furthermore, the museum's approximately 126 million collection items, as of the end of FY 2009, constitute more than 92% of the Institution's collections.

We include a detailed description of our scope and methodology in Appendix A.

RESULTS IN BRIEF

Although NMNH has effective controls to ensure that its accessioned collection items comply with applicable laws and regulations, we found that NMNH needs to strengthen controls over all acquisitions. Smithsonian Directive (SD) 600 on collections management and NMNH policy state that all of the museum's acquisitions must comply with relevant laws. Yet, the museum may not provide adequate review of collections that curators obtain directly or collections that are not intended to be added to the museum's accession collections. Not all items that curators obtain directly pass through control points, and the centralized registration process does not include non-accession collections despite their potential legal risks.

NMNH also may not always provide timely review because the museum does not have required accessioning timeframes. Two divisions did not accession in more than five years. Furthermore, we found that the museum's current method of ensuring that its staff members know the relevant laws and regulations – relying on staff to educate themselves – is inefficient and may be ineffective.

The museum's ineffective controls over all acquisitions are primarily caused by NMNH's lack of written policies and procedures. Inadequate controls over all collections acquisitions increases the risk that the museum may not comply with applicable laws and regulations. Nonetheless, the NMNH Director stated that to the knowledge of the museum's Chief of Collections, there have been virtually no ownership disputes, excluding repatriation and permanent loans from decades past, involving the museum's collections in the last eight years. The Smithsonian's Office of General Counsel (OGC) also confirmed that there have been very few legal disputes involving the NMNH collections.

Additionally, we observed that collections management resources are unbalanced. Although NMNH is collecting items that align with its collecting goals, these goals are extremely broad and do not serve to focus the museum's collecting activities. The museum's current collections growth, combined with its long-standing staffing shortages, have resulted in NMNH limiting access to parts of its collections, thereby reducing the museum's ability to fulfill the Smithsonian's mission of increasing and diffusing knowledge.

We also observed that NMNH could improve documentation of title in some of its accession files.

⁵ Item refers to an object or specimen.

To facilitate the museum’s compliance with relevant laws and regulations, we recommended that Smithsonian and museum management strengthen policies and procedures, as well as evaluate opportunities to centralize training and registration for all acquisitions.

BACKGROUND

NMNH maintains the world’s largest collection of natural history and anthropological objects, some of which originated from the National Museum. The Sundry Civil Act of March 1879 established the National Museum to serve as the repository for collections made by federal entities. The museum’s seven scientific departments maintain collections in the fields of anthropology, botany, entomology, invertebrate and vertebrate zoology, mineral sciences, and paleobiology. Each department has its own collecting goals (see Appendix B).

Title 20, United States Code, Section 59 (enacted March 3, 1879) states

“All collections of rocks, minerals, soils, fossils, and objects of natural history, archaeology, and ethnology, made by the National Ocean Survey, the United States Geological Survey, or by any other parties for the Government of the United States, when no longer needed for investigations in progress shall be deposited in the National Museum.”

Acquisition Methods

Although the museum acquires its collections primarily through donations, NMNH uses a variety of other methods as well. During FY 2007 through FY 2009, NMNH acquired and accessioned 382,260 specimens in 1,535 separate transactions. See the chart for a breakdown of these transactions by acquisition method.

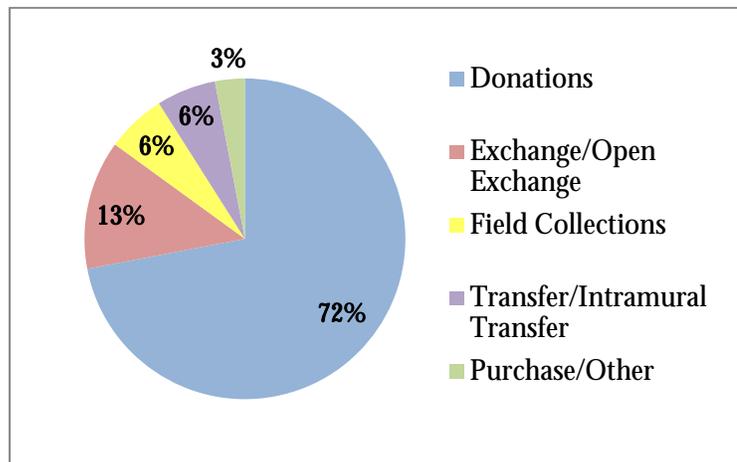


Figure 1. NMNH collections transactions acquired and accessioned between FY 2007 and FY 2009, by acquisition method.

Collections Management Responsibilities

Three types of staff are primarily responsible for acquiring and accessioning NMNH’s collections.

1. Department Collections Management (CM) staff – Each of NMNH’s seven scientific departments has a collections manager and supporting CM staff responsible for managing collections on a daily basis.
2. Department curatorial staff – Each department also has curators who conduct scientific research, use the collections, and collect items in the field.

3. Office of the Registrar (OR) staff – NMNH’s OR is headed by the Registrar, who also serves as the Chief of Collections. The OR’s responsibilities include reviewing accession paperwork for all departments and helping the Director set NMNH collections policy.

Collections Management Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures at the Institution, museum, and department levels guide collections management at NMNH. The Institution sets forth its policy in SD 600, ***Collections Management***, and the accompanying ***SD 600 Implementation Manual***, which require each of the Smithsonian’s 21 collecting units, including NMNH, to develop its own collections management policy. Within the museum, the ***NMNH Collections Management Policy*** (CMP), and in some cases department CMPs, establish policy for the departments’ acquisition and accession process. Departments may establish specific collections management procedures.

NMNH Collections-Related Laws and Regulations

Acquisition is the act of gaining legal title to (ownership of) collection items. Establishing legal title involves various elements, including ensuring that the person giving the items to the museum had the right to pass title or that the collector obtained legal permission to collect the items, and complying with various laws and regulations affecting the specific types of collection items. Three main types of laws affect NMNH’s collections: laws specific to wildlife and plants; laws specific to antiquities, including archaeological sites and objects; and laws specific to Native American and Native Hawaiian remains and sacred objects. For example, U.S. and international laws protecting wildlife and plants require the museum to obtain permits to import or export endangered species, and the museum must report any wildlife it imports to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Other U.S. and international laws may also require the museum to obtain import or export documentation. See Appendix C for a listing of some of the laws and regulations affecting NMNH’s collections.

NMNH Collections Acquisition and Accession Process

The museum acquires collections in a decentralized manner. All seven of NMNH’s scientific departments⁶ have delegated authority to acquire collection items. The main steps of the acquisition process include deciding to acquire the collection items and physically obtaining and registering them in the museum’s collections information system.

Department Staff Decide to Acquire Collections. Generally, curators are responsible for deciding whether to acquire collection items. However, every department⁷ has a collections advisory committee that advises on decisions for proposed acquisitions that meet the department’s criteria for committee review. For example, unusually large collection items, collection items of mixed quality, or items that represent a new area of collecting may require committee review. As part of its review, the committee considers whether the department can establish legal title to the collection items, which may include obtaining permits for collecting, importing, or exporting the items. Final approval to

⁶ Two departments have divisions within them that also have delegated authority to acquire collections.

⁷ Departments that have divisions have collections advisory committees for each of their divisions.

acquire collection items at the department level generally rests with the Department Chairperson.

Department Staff Physically Obtain the Collections. Although the department staff generally obtain collections after deciding to acquire them, in some cases, staff may physically obtain collections before curators make the decision.

According to the NMNH CMP, collection items should arrive or be reported through control points established by the department staff, ensuring that the museum has a record, including documentation of legal title, for every collection item it physically possesses, whether intended for accession or not.

Department Staff Register the Collections in the Museum's Collections Information System. Generally, department CM staff are responsible for creating a record in the museum's Transaction Management (TM) system. Once the record is created, the process for ensuring that the museum has legal title, including that it complied with applicable laws and regulations, differs depending on whether the department intends to add its acquisition to the museum's accession collections. Departments may choose not to accession collections that are in poor condition, duplicate other collection items, lack supporting data, will be destroyed during research, or are more appropriate for other uses.



Accessioned butterfly specimens in the Entomology department.



Obsidian (volcanic glass) specimens in the Mineral Sciences department. The Collections Manager did not plan on accessioning these specimens due to a lack of documentation.

Accession Acquisitions

Both the department staff and the OR staff review documentation for acquisitions intended for the accession collections. For each accession transaction, two different individuals in the department – at least one of whom is usually CM staff – sign an accession memo, indicating that they have reviewed the documentation to ensure that the department has legal title, and the transaction complies with applicable laws and regulations. Department CM staff then forward the documentation to the OR, where two additional individuals from that office, including the Registrar, perform a similar review of the documentation and then complete the accessioning by archiving the transaction in the TM system.

Non-accession Acquisitions

Because the museum does not have a centralized registration process for acquisitions not intended for the accession collections, the departments' processes for ensuring that these non-accession acquisitions comply with applicable laws and regulations vary. In some departments, CM staff would still review the transaction to ensure the department has documentation to establish legal title, including necessary collecting and import or export permits. In other departments, no one besides the curator who acquired the collections may review the transaction at all.

RESULTS OF AUDIT

NMNH Needs to Strengthen Controls over All Collections Acquisition Transactions

Although NMNH has effective controls to ensure that its accessioned collection items comply with applicable laws and regulations, the museum needs to strengthen controls over all acquisitions. Specifically, the museum may not adequately review all collection items that curators obtain directly, collection items that are not intended to be added to the museum's accession collections, or collections that staff did not accession promptly. Furthermore, the museum's current method of ensuring that its staff members know the relevant laws and regulations is inefficient and may be ineffective.

Not All Items that Curators Obtain Directly Pass Through Control Points

Not all incoming collection items the museum acquires pass through designated control points as required by NMNH policy. Specifically, curators may not report to their department's CM staff all items that they collect in the field or items that visiting colleagues donate, resulting in less accountability over these items and an increased risk that the museum may not be complying with applicable laws and regulations. For example, CM staff reported to us that they found several specimens stored in curators' storage areas while the department was preparing to move the collections to the museum support center. None of these specimens had been recorded in the TM system.



Example of a control point in the Entomology department. All incoming specimens must pass through a freezer for tracking and pest control purposes.

Because CM staff are generally responsible for recording transactions in the TM system, the system would only include items directly obtained by curators if the curators provide information about the transaction to the CM staff. Curators do not always promptly tell CM staff about items they receive directly. CM staff told us that they are only aware of a few such transactions each year. However, they did not know the extent of unreported collection items.

The *SD 600 Implementation Manual* requires NMNH to establish entry points for collection items and to record entry of these items in a timely manner. NMNH's CMP requires that all collection items entering a unit pass through a control point. Additionally, the museum's TM system user manual states that all collection items must be recorded in the TM system as they are acquired, even if they are not ultimately accessioned.

Not all collection items that the curators obtain directly pass through designated control points because the museum's policies and procedures did not adequately address this requirement. For example, the NMNH CMP does not require that its staff record all collection items in the TM system promptly. Furthermore, not all departments have policies or procedures that direct staff how to take collection items through established control points for all methods in which items enter the departments.

According to management, department procedures should direct staff to send incoming collection items through control points. Not all departments have developed these written procedures, but where they have, their procedures did not always address sending collection items through control points because museum upper management had not reviewed those procedures. NMNH CMP only requires that upper management review and approve department policies, not procedures.

When collection items do not pass through control points, there is a wide range of potential effects on the museum, including an increased risk that the museum may not comply with applicable laws and regulations, reduced accessibility of the collection items, lowered accountability over the items, improper storage, and interruption to staff's work flow.

- Collection items that do not pass through designated control points increase the risk that the museum may not comply with relevant laws and regulations. Department CM or OR staff can only review documentation for collection items that pass through the control points and are recorded in the TM system. Because department CM and OR staff would not review the documentation for unrecorded collection items, there is an increased risk that the museum may not have adequate documentation to establish title and may not comply with U.S. or international wildlife and other laws. Furthermore, because these transactions are not subject to review, curators could collect items illegally without detection or consequences.
- Unrecorded collection items that curators obtain directly and store in their offices are not accessible for the public's benefit. According to the Smithsonian strategic plan for FYs 2010 – 2015, digitizing the collections and making them accessible online are major Institutional priorities. The museum would not be able to digitize collection items for which it does not have a record.

- Having items unrecorded increases the risk that if someone stole them the theft would go undetected.
- Collection items that do not pass through designated control points may not be stored properly. Furthermore, if collection items do not pass through a required process at the control point, such as fumigation, the items could infest other museum collections.
- When curators who possess unrecorded collection items leave the Smithsonian, department staff would have difficulty identifying and processing the unrecorded collection items stored in their offices. For example, the curators may no longer have important documentation associated with the collection items, or contacts with donors to obtain the necessary documentation to establish ownership of the collection items. The museum would be embarrassed to request a deed of gift from donors years after the donation.

Recommendations

To ensure that the museum has complete and accurate records of all acquisitions, we recommend that the Director, NMNH:

1. Develop and enforce procedures that explain how department staff should promptly report all collection items through established control points.
2. Revise the NMNH CMP to require that a) museum management review and approve department procedures regarding collections, and b) department staff enter all collection items in the system as they are acquired.

NMNH's Centralized Registration Process Does Not Include Non-Accession Acquisitions Despite Their Potential Legal Risks

NMNH's centralized registration process generally only includes accession acquisitions, not non-accession acquisitions, even though both transaction types pose the same legal risks. Specifically, the OR usually does not review and preserve documentation for non-accession acquisition transactions.

According to the NMNH CMP, the OR is responsible for ensuring documentation of legal title and provenance of collection items acquired, consistency of documentation, and preservation of records. Furthermore, Office of Management and Budget Circular A-123, *Management's Responsibility for Internal Control*, states that managers should perform risk assessments to identify areas in which to place internal control. Risk assessment is a critical step in determining the extent of controls, as management must balance internal controls and risk.

NMNH's centralized registration process does not include non-accession acquisitions because historically, the Smithsonian and NMNH have focused policy on the accession collections, which are more important. Furthermore, the *SD 600 Implementation Manual* makes conflicting statements about whether collecting units should register and maintain

documentation for non-accession acquisitions,⁸ and NMNH used SD 600 to establish the museum's CMP.

OR not reviewing and preserving non-accession acquisition documentation resulted in NMNH holding non-accession acquisitions to a lower standard than accession acquisitions even though both types of acquisitions pose the same legal risks. For example, the museum may not have adequate documentation of legal title or may not comply with applicable laws for non-accession acquisitions. Neither OR nor museum upper management provide oversight of the departments' review and preservation of non-accession acquisition documentation. As a result, departments may not be performing adequate review of these transactions for compliance with laws, or may not be permanently preserving the documentation, as required by SD 600. For example, in one of the four departments we reviewed, we found that only the curators who acquire the collection items are responsible for reviewing documentation for acquisitions not intended for accessioning. Furthermore, the museum's lack of oversight over these transactions may allow department curators to collect items illegally without detection or consequences.

Recommendations

We recommend that the National Collections Coordinator, National Collections Program (NCP), in coordination with the General Counsel:

3. Revise the *SD 600 Implementation Manual* to establish clear documentation requirements for non-accession acquisitions.

We recommend that the Director, NMNH:

4. Perform a risk-based evaluation to determine whether all acquisition transaction documentation should be reviewed and preserved by OR.
5. Establish and implement procedures to ensure that NMNH adequately reviews and preserves all acquisition transaction documentation, including documentation of transactions not intended for accessioning.

Two Divisions Did Not Accession in More Than 5 years

Two divisions within one of NMNH's departments have not accessioned any collection items in more than five years. In the past six years, these divisions acquired over 26,000 specimens in 232 transactions, most of which were intended for the accession collections; yet, the division staff only accessioned one of these transactions. The newly appointed Associate Director for Research and Collections is working with these divisions to resolve this issue.

⁸For example, although the manual requires each collecting unit to ensure documentation of legal title for all collection items acquired, other statements in the manual imply that collecting units need to formally document title only for those acquisitions intended for accessioning. According to chapter 11, page 23 of the manual, original documentation of title should be maintained and preserved among the unit's accession records. The following page states that it is not necessary for a unit to accession every collection item it acquires and that non-accession acquisitions may still require registration for accountability and use. (Emphasis added.)

SD 600 Implementation Manual requires that every collection item the museum decides to retain should be formally registered and documented in a timely manner. It goes on to state that collection items acquired for the collecting unit's accession collections must be formally accessioned, and that accessioned records should be timely made.

These divisions have not accessioned collection items because they had not established accessioning processing timeframes, as required by the ***SD 600 Implementation Manual***. However, NMNH's CMP does not require the departments to set accessioning timeframes, and none of the departments we surveyed had established written accessioning timeframes.

The effects of not promptly accessioning collection items are similar to those of collection items not passing through control points and the museum's registration process holding non-accession acquisitions to a lower standard. Unaccessioned collection items do not receive OR staff review and may not receive department CM staff review, increasing the risk that NMNH could unknowingly possess items for which it lacks legal title, or that do not comply with applicable laws and regulations. Furthermore, not promptly accessioning items may result in the museum losing important documentation associated with the collection items, or losing contacts with donors to obtain the necessary documentation to establish ownership of the collections. When NMNH does finally accession the items, the museum may be embarrassed by having to approach donors for additional documentation long after receiving a donation. Moreover, according to the department's management, unaccessioned collection items are generally unavailable for use by researchers.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Director, NMNH:

6. Modify the NMNH CMP to include an accessioning schedule, or require departments to establish accessioning schedules, and enforce compliance with the schedule.

NMNH Relies on Staff to Educate Themselves on Laws and Regulations

NMNH relies on its staff to educate themselves on laws and regulations relevant to their collections duties. For example, staff may subscribe to and participate in scientific and museum community listservs, or hold discussions with individuals from the Smithsonian and other organizations. Relying on staff to educate themselves increases the risk that the museum may not comply with all applicable laws and regulations because staff may not be aware of or correctly interpret all applicable legal requirements.

Both the ***SD 600 Implementation Manual*** and NMNH CMP state that the museum Director is responsible for aligning staff training with the requirements of unit strategic plans, professional standards, job descriptions, delegated authority, and assigned responsibilities. Furthermore, according to its draft strategic plan for FYs 2010 – 2015, the museum will continue to educate and train the next generation of scientists and CM staff, as well as develop and implement a training program to continually strengthen staff skills to support NMNH programs and priority initiatives.

Museum staff must learn about collections-related laws and regulations on their own because NMNH does not have a central staff person who can train museum staff and answer staff questions on these issues. According to NMNH management, the museum used to have a Collections Officer who answered staff questions about permitting as well as provided mandatory training for staff proposing to collect, import, or export biological materials. However, NMNH has not filled her position since she left the museum in 2008. Furthermore, neither SD 600 and its *Implementation Manual* nor the NMNH CMP require that all staff with collections responsibilities receive training. Collections managers from all seven departments stated they would welcome centralized training.



Items in the Anthropology Collections Lab at the Museum Support Center in Suitland, MD. Items in the background are pending accession.

Relying on individuals to educate themselves rather than providing centralized training on legal requirements is inefficient and may result in staff having inconsistent knowledge of relevant laws and regulations. The museum's 15 collections managers and approximately 100 curators may be duplicating each other's efforts in researching and applying for permits. For example, collections managers from several departments may be simultaneously researching and obtaining a European Union import permit to send specimens to the British Museum. Similarly, staff from various other Smithsonian units may be replicating each other's efforts. For example, the museum's Chief of Collections believes that in addition to NMNH, laws pertaining to wildlife specimens could affect the National Zoological Park, the National Museum of the American Indian, and art museums where the artwork may contain biological materials.

Furthermore, relying on individuals to educate themselves may be ineffective because they may not discover all applicable legal requirements on their own, which could result in the museum not complying with all applicable legal requirements. CM staff and curators may not always have the time or take the effort required to keep abreast of all recent legal developments in their field. Consequently, NMNH may possess collection items that curators obtain directly and fail to report to control points and therefore may not comply with all applicable requirements. The museum faces this same risk for non-accession acquisition transactions that may have been reviewed only by the curator.

Finally, by not providing training, we believe that NMNH management sends staff the message that current knowledge of relevant laws and regulations is not a priority, and staff

may be frustrated by NMNH's expectation that they educate themselves on legal requirements as these requirements continue to grow and change.

Recommendations

To ensure that all staff with collections acquisition responsibilities receive adequate training on relevant laws and regulations in the most efficient and consistent manner, we recommend that the National Collections Coordinator, NCP, in coordination with General Counsel and the Under Secretaries as necessary:

7. Revise the ***SD 600 Implementation Manual*** to require that all staff with collections acquisition responsibilities receive collections-related legal training.
8. Evaluate how to most effectively train staff on laws and regulations pertinent to collections.

In the interim, to ensure that NMNH staff stay abreast of all laws and regulations relevant to their collections acquisition responsibilities, we recommend that the Director, NMNH, in coordination with NCP and OGC as necessary:

9. Provide periodic training on applicable laws and regulations to all museum staff with collections acquisition responsibilities, including curators, until the Smithsonian makes a determination about centralized training.

We recommend that the Director, NMNH:

10. Update the NMNH CMP to require all staff with collections acquisition responsibilities to take training on compliance with pertinent laws and regulations.
11. Evaluate whether NMNH has adequate resources to provide a central resource to NMNH staff on legal and regulatory issues.

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

Collections Management Resources Are Unbalanced

SD 600 directs the Board of Regents, acting through the Secretary, the Under Secretaries, and each collecting unit director, to be responsible for assuring that collections growth is balanced with available resources. We believe NMNH's collections growth is not balanced with available staff resources. As a result, the museum is not able to provide access to all of its collections and related information, thereby reducing NMNH's ability to fulfill the Smithsonian's mission of increasing and diffusing knowledge.

Several factors contribute to the imbalance between NMNH's collections growth and staff resources to manage the collections, including declining staff levels, the museum's broad collecting goals and new initiatives, and NMNH's historical role as the National Museum. First, according to the Smithsonian report on collections care, NMNH's collections care staff levels fell approximately 56 percent from 1994 to 2003 – the greatest decline among all Smithsonian collecting units. Since then, CM staff levels declined another 16 percent, from 158 in FY 2003 to 133 in FY 2009. As a result, CM staff workloads have increased

and departments increasingly rely on volunteers, interns, and contractors for managing the collections.

Second, each of the museum's seven scientific departments has broad collecting goals that do not focus the departments' collecting activities. Instead, departments have flexibility in acquiring collections that are of interest to curators and their research areas. NMNH's most recent draft strategic plan aims to increase the size of the museum's collections and embarks on six interdisciplinary priority initiatives to utilize the museum's collections. Between FY 1994 and FY 2009, NMNH's collections increased from approximately 122 million items to 126.7 million items. Finally, because of the museum's historical role as the National Museum, NMNH staff believe the museum has a responsibility to accept important collections even if it does not have adequate staff to manage those collections.

Because of the museum's imbalance between its collections growth and staff resources, NMNH is unable to provide adequate access to all of its collections. For example, one department does not loan out specimens for a large portion of collections it deactivated. CM staff from another department stated that they cannot ensure efficient on-site access to physical specimens and associated data. This department also cannot ensure useful remote access to digital specimen information online. Yet another department reported that it may take staff a couple of years to remove specimens from shipping boxes and that it is difficult and time consuming to provide access to specimens that are still in boxes.

We met with the Smithsonian Collections Advisory Committee and discussed the challenge of balancing collections growth with resources. We hope that as the Smithsonian continues its long-term collections planning effort that it can make addressing this challenge a higher priority.

NMNH Could Improve Documentation of Title in Some of its Accession Files

NMNH could improve the documentation of title in some of its accession files. Specifically, three of the 16 accession files we reviewed did not include documentation that we believe⁹ should be included to defend a potential legal claim. Improved documentation would also be helpful for other reasons, such as conducting research and strengthening provenance.

- 150 lots and 700 specimens of unsorted mixed invertebrates and 13 lichens transferred from NOAA and BLM, respectively – These files should include documentation that the transferor was authorized to transfer the specimens to the Smithsonian. The National Marine Fisheries Service within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which has staff located in the museum's Natural History Building on the National Mall, transferred 150 lots and 700 specimens of unsorted mixed invertebrates to the museum. The Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service's Systemics Laboratory signed the transfer letter, but the file did not contain documentation that the Director was authorized to transfer the specimens on behalf of NOAA. Similarly, a State Office Botanist from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) transferred 13 lichens to the

⁹ Our conclusion is based on consultation with OGC regarding the adequacy of these three accession files if the Smithsonian ever faced legal claims over these transactions.

museum. The transfer letter did not indicate that this individual was authorized to transfer specimens on behalf of BLM.

- 5,000 shore flies collected in the Western U.S. – This file should include details of where the shore flies were collected, how they were collected, and that permits and permission to collect from the landowner were not required. The accession file for this transaction only stated that the employee collected the shore flies in the western United States. Without additional information, no one could tell from the file that the collector did not need permission to collect, or that he did not collect the shore flies on National Park lands.¹⁰



Pinned and mounted shore flies accessioned by the Entomology department.

SD 600 Implementation Manual requires that the museum ensure transparency by documenting all decisions and transactions as fully as possible. The manual states that the museum must ensure documentation of legal title. As we have already noted, establishing legal title involves various elements, including ensuring that the person giving the items to the museum had the right to pass title or that the collector obtained permission to collect the items. The manual also requires that staff and research collaborators conducting field collecting be authorized in advance. Furthermore, the museum's TM system user manual states that permits from all agencies that manage resources, and collecting agreements from private landowners or other entities, are essential.

Accession files did not contain all such documentation because the accession documentation checklists that the museum uses are incomplete and unclear. For example, although the checklists that are included in the TM system user manual state that the files must contain copies of permits required to meet U.S., state, local, and international laws, the checklists do not explicitly state that the files should contain permissions to collect from private landowners or that the documentation indicate that no applicable permits were required. Likewise, for acquisitions obtained through transfer, the checklist does not require documentation of the transferor's authority to transfer the collection items. The ***SD 600 Implementation Manual*** also lacks clear guidance on these issues.

Recommendations

We recommend that the National Collections Coordinator, NCP, in coordination with the General Counsel:

12. Revise the ***SD 600 Implementation Manual*** to establish clear documentation standards for each major acquisition method.

¹⁰The National Park Service (NPS) does not currently permit the Smithsonian to accession any collection items collected on NPS land.

To improve documentation in the accession files, we recommend that the Director, NMNH, in coordination with NCP and OGC:

13. Revise the accession documentation checklists and incorporate these documentation requirements into the NMNH CMP.

MANAGEMENT COMMENTS

The Director of the NMNH provided formal written comments to our October 8, 2010 draft report. On November 5, 2010, we issued a revised draft report to the National Collections Coordinator and the General Counsel based on preliminary comments provided by NCP and OGC. The National Collections Coordinator and the General Counsel provided formal written comments to our revised November 5, 2010 draft report.

NMNH Management Comments

In his October 26, 2010 response to our draft audit report, the Director of NMNH generally agreed with our findings and concurred with all nine of our recommendations addressed to the museum.

The Director offered three comments, which we summarize below:

First, in response to our observation that the museum's collections management resources are unbalanced, the Director noted that the museum does not accept all potential acquisitions, and other factors besides collections growth contributed to the staffing issues that have resulted in limiting access to parts of the museum's collections. The Director stated that the museum declines items that are not consistent with its mission, have inadequate legal documentation, or have curation requirements exceeding its resources. He also provided some examples of other factors contributing to the staffing shortage, such as new Institution initiatives and increased standards for collections care.

Second, the Director suggested that we modify our statement that the museum has "few legal disputes involving NMNH's collections," to state that, excluding repatriation and permanent loans from decades past, there have been virtually no ownership disputes involving the museum's collections in the last eight years to the knowledge of the Chief of Collections.

Third, the Director expressed that having an individual provide advice at the central Smithsonian level would be the best method of ensuring that Smithsonian units receive consistent legal information about collections across the Institution.

The Director proposed the following actions to address our recommendations:

By December 31, 2011, NMNH will have revised its Collections Management Policy ready for Institutional review, incorporating changes recommended in this audit.

In the mean time, by December 31, 2010, NMNH will issue guidance instructing department staff on how to promptly report all collection items through established control points.

By January 1, 2011, NMNH will announce the requirement for all staff with collections acquisitions responsibilities to take training on compliance with pertinent laws and regulations.

By March 31, 2011, NMNH will begin offering mandatory training on relevant laws and regulations, which will continue on a quarterly basis until all staff with collections responsibilities have fulfilled the attendance requirement. By this same date, NMNH will complete its first cycle of training to its departmental chairs and collections managers to ensure that they adequately review and preserve the museum's acquisition transaction documentation. Furthermore, by March 30, 2011, NMNH, with guidance from the NCP and the OGC, will evaluate whether OR should review and preserve all acquisition transaction documentation. On an ongoing basis, NMNH will include acquisition transaction documentation in the Office of the Registrar's electronic and physical files.

By June 1, 2011, as part of its hiring and promotion discussion process, NMNH will evaluate whether it has adequate resources to provide a central resource to museum staff on legal and regulatory issues.

We have included the full-text of NMNH's response in Appendix D.

NCP and OGC Management Comments

In their November 16, 2010 response to our revised draft audit report, the National Collections Coordinator and the General Counsel concurred with all four of our recommendations addressed to NCP, in coordination with OGC.

NCP and OGC proposed the following actions to address our recommendations:

By March 31, 2011, NCP, in coordination with OGC, will revise the SD 600 Implementation Manual's documentation requirements for non-accession acquisitions.

Also, by March 31, 2011, NCP, in coordination with OGC as necessary, will present the following to the Under Secretaries for their concurrence, and establish timelines for these actions:

- A proposal to evaluate the training needs of collecting unit staff to determine how to most effectively train staff on the laws and regulations pertinent to collections management.
- Proposed revisions to the SD 600 Implementation Manual requiring that all staff with collections acquisitions responsibilities receive training on the laws and regulations pertinent to collections management.

By December 31, 2011, NCP and OGC will revise the SD 600 Implementation Manual to incorporate clear documentation requirements for each major acquisition method.

We have included the full-text of NCP and OGC's joint response in Appendix D.

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL COMMENTS

We appreciate the courtesy and cooperation of Smithsonian representatives during this audit. We offer the following comments to the NMNH as well as NCP and OGC responses.

OIG Comments Regarding NMNH's Response

NMNH's planned actions are generally responsive to our recommendations and we consider the recommendations resolved. However, we believe NMNH could improve its proposed actions in three ways.

First, given that NMNH does not plan to complete its CMP revision until December 31, 2011, we believe the museum should incorporate in its December 2010 guidance the requirement to enter acquisitions in the system promptly.

Second, to ensure that staff are aware of the new procedures proposed in response to Recommendation 5, we believe that NMNH should incorporate these new procedures in the current CMP revision.

Third, we believe that NMNH should continue its proposed periodic training until NCP and OGC complete their training evaluation and determine how to proceed with training all staff with collections acquisitions responsibilities. NCP and OGC plan to establish a timeline for this training evaluation by March 31, 2011.

In response to the Director's comments, we agree that many factors other than collections growth affect staffing resources. However, we focused on the imbalance between staffing resources and collections growth because our audit was limited to NMNH's collecting activities. Similarly, while we understand that the museum declines certain acquisitions, we believe the imbalance remains.

We incorporated the Director's suggestion to modify the statement regarding risk.

OIG Comments Regarding NCP and OGC's Response

NCP and OGC's planned actions are responsive to our recommendations and we consider the recommendations resolved. We believe that collections staff at the Smithsonian units will greatly benefit from having concise instruction on documentation requirements and training expectations, and urge NCP to communicate these revised standards to the affected units as soon as the revisions are completed.

APPENDIX A. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Our objectives were to assess whether the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) followed the Institution's collections management policies and procedures. Specifically, we determined whether the museum had effective controls in place to (1) align its collecting activities with collecting goals; (2) accession items in a timely manner; and (3) comply with applicable laws and regulations.

Because each of the Smithsonian's 21 collecting units acquire and accession collections independently and maintain separate collections management policies and procedures, we limited our audit to one museum. We selected NMNH because this museum's nearly 800 acquisition transactions in fiscal year (FY) 2009 totaling more than 114,000 items¹¹ represent 51 percent of the Institution's acquisition transactions and 91 percent of the collection items the Institution acquired during the year. Furthermore, the museum's approximately 126 million collection items, as of the end of FY 2009, represent more than 92% of the Institution's collections.

To accomplish our objectives, we interviewed NMNH management, as well as staff from the museum's Office of the Registrar (OR) and four judgmentally selected NMNH scientific departments. We also interviewed management and staff from the Smithsonian's National Collections Program, the Office of Policy and Analysis, and the Office of General Counsel (OGC). We reviewed previous reports on collections management at the Smithsonian, as well as the Smithsonian's and NMNH's collections management policies and procedures, strategic plans, and other documents related to collections management. We also reviewed relevant collections management industry standards, audit reports on collections management from other Offices of the Inspector General, as well as collections management policies and procedures from other public and private museums.

Because the museum acquires collections in a decentralized manner, we surveyed collections management staff from all seven of the museum's scientific departments to understand the different departments' controls related to our three audit objectives. We verified the responses with department staff for four judgmentally selected departments by walking through their processes and the controls they identified in the surveys.

To test whether the museum has effective controls to ensure that it complies with applicable laws and regulations, we obtained a listing from the museum's Transaction Management (TM) system as of May 2010 of those transactions for which the museum acquired and accessioned collections between FYs 2007 and 2009. We did not include accession transactions for earlier acquisitions to avoid the museum's historical accession backlog. From our population of 1,535 collections transactions, we selected a judgmental sample of 16 accession transactions, representing each of the five main acquisition methods (collected for museum, gift, exchange, transfer, and purchase) and seven scientific departments. For each selected transaction, we reviewed the accession file to determine whether the museum's controls were effectively functioning. Specifically, we reviewed each file to verify that it contained an accession memorandum with the

¹¹ Item refers to an object or specimen.

appropriate signatures by department and OR staff, and that the file contained adequate documentation to establish ownership and compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

For the same sample of 16 accession transactions, we compared the accessioned collection items to the department's stated goals to confirm that the museum is collecting items that align with its goals.

We did not perform any transaction testing related to the museum's timeliness in accessioning collections because the museum generally did not have formal processing schedules for accessioning collections.

We obtained collections acquisition and accession data from the museum's TM system. We performed limited IT system controls to ensure that the data on which we based our audit work is reliable. Specifically, we examined whether: NMNH properly restricts access to the TM system to the appropriate staff, the system required user authorization, and NMNH maintained appropriate segregation of duties. We also examined the departmental controls to ensure that staff enters all acquisition and accession transactions, and that the data are accurate.

We did not review the overall internal control structure of NMNH collections management. We limited our review to those controls related to the collections acquisition and accession processes as they pertained to the three audit objectives.

We conducted our audit in Washington, D.C. and Suitland, MD between April and August 2010 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence we obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

APPENDIX B. DEPARTMENTAL COLLECTING GOALS

Department	Collecting Goal
Anthropology	NMNH anthropologists seek to understand humanity in all of its complexity within a framework of broad cultural, social, linguistic, and biological theories. They work to document the full range of human cultural and biological diversity, from the emergence of the first humans to the present.
Botany	To be a comprehensive repository of the world's plant diversity including morphological, ecological, and temporal variation of the world's flora.
Entomology	To improve the world's largest and most comprehensive terrestrial arthropod collection. Also, to build on our strengths and fill in representative gaps of taxa when possible in order to have as comprehensive as possible representation of the global insect and arachnids.
Invertebrate Zoology	Primarily a research collection, which contains type ¹² specimens as well as others to document distribution in time and space, intraspecific variation, and developmental stages of invertebrate species.
Mineral Sciences	Petrology & Volcanology Division: To have specimens from every historically active volcano known to man, and from every mantle rock location known. Mineralogy Division: To have specimens from every known mineral species from every known locality for that species. Meteorology Division: To have meteorites or subsamples from every fall or field worldwide.
Paleobiology	To develop reference collections representing all taxa as nearly completely as possible for modern taxonomic research unrestrained by geographic or stratigraphic limitation. Also, to be the central repository for all type specimens or other specimens referenced in the paleontological literature and originating from strata in the United States.
Vertebrate Zoology	To be a comprehensive vertebrate collection, and adding to the comprehensive collections as necessary to insure the most complete holdings possible.

¹² A type specimen is the original specimen from which the description of a species is made.

APPENDIX C. EXAMPLES OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS AFFECTING NMNH COLLECTIONS

Fish, Wildlife, and Plants

- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, 50 C.F.R. Part 23
- Lacey Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 3371-3378)
- Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 1531-1544)
- Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 U.S.C. § 1361 et seq.)
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 703-712)
- Bald Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 668-668d)
- Wild Exotic Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 4901- 4916)
- African Elephant Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. § 4201 et seq.)
- Antarctic Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 2401-2413)
- Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations (Wildlife and Fisheries)
- Animal Welfare Act (7 U.S.C. §§ 2131-2159)
- Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. § 201 et seq.)

Antiquities, Archaeological, and Ethnographic Material

- Antiquities Act of 1906 (16 U.S.C. §§ 431-433)
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 470aa-470mm)
- National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. § 470 et seq.)
- National Stolen Property Act (18 U.S.C. §§ 2314 & 2315)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property; Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act (19 U.S.C. § 2601 et seq.)
- Regulation of Importation of Pre-Columbian Monumental or Architectural Sculpture or Murals (19 U.S.C. §§ 2091-2095)

Native American and Native Hawaiian Human Remains and Objects

- National Museum of the American Indian Act (20 U.S.C. § 80q et seq.)
- Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 (25 U.S.C. § 305 et seq.)
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (25 U.S.C. §§ 3001-3013)

APPENDIX D. MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of Natural History
Office of the Associate Director for Research and Collections

Date: October 26, 2010

To: A. Sprightley Ryan, Inspector General

CC: Carol R. Butler, Chief of Collections, NMNH
Jonathan A. Coddington, Associate Director for Research and Collections, NMNH
Susan Fruchter, Associate Director for Operations, NMNH
Richard Kurin, Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture
Judith Leonard, General Counsel
Alison McNally, Under Secretary for Finance and Administration
Eva J. Pell, Under Secretary for Science
William Tompkins, National Collections Coordinator, National Collections Program

From: Cristián Samper K., Director *CSamperK*

Subject: Response to Draft Report on Audit of Collections Accessioning at the National Museum of Natural History, Number A-10-10

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Draft Report on Audit of Collections Accessioning at the National Museum of Natural History, Number A-10-10. In general, we concur with findings and recommendations although we have a few clarifications to offer regarding interpretations of findings. This response will address the sections in the draft report, each recommendation designated for NMNH, and provides proposed corrective actions and target dates.

Regarding RESULTS IN BRIEF

We recognize that the audit was initiated with the intention of strengthening collections, a goal we heartily embrace. The National Museum of Natural History is steward for a significant portion of the Institution's total collections, so it is not surprising that our activities were selected for this audit. We are well aware that the richness and diversity of collections necessary for high quality scientific research and education require resources and compliance with associated regulations and policies. For this reason, the museum strives to provide the best possible stewardship of the collections, developing them in a manner consistent with our and the Institution's missions.

We wish to note that many factors, not simply collections growth, have contributed to the staffing issues that result in limiting access to parts of the collections. Expectations for digitization, imaging and web accessibility and the associated need for increased technical skills, recent significant moves of collections and the work associated with them, rising standards for physical care, and increasing complications in shipping and packing of collections for loan are all elements that now must be satisfied.

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APPENDIX D. MANAGEMENT RESPONSE - Continued

We also wish to note that the museum declines acquisitions that were not consistent with our mission, have inadequate legal and other documentation, or had curation requirements that exceeded our resources. Three recent examples are a large biological collection held by a federal agency, a ceramic vessel with unclear provenance offered by an individual, and a large ice sample with physical needs that eclipsed its research and educational value. These examples, and others like them, are indicative of our responsible actions and prudent decision-making.

As the report notes, until 2008, NMNH had a designated collections staffer whose primary responsibilities included permits management, and providing mandatory permits training. Filling that staff function is a high priority for the museum. NMNH is not the only Smithsonian unit that could benefit from expertise regarding legal and permit issues regarding collections. We believe that the best scenario would be to have a central service or staffer who can provide consistent advice and information across the Institution.

We agree that control over acquisitions should be strengthened to be the same as the control over accessions, and that what has been an informal expected time frame for accession processing should be formalized. We wish to clarify one statement regarding risk: rather than "...few legal disputes involving NMNH's collections", the report should say that there have been virtually no ownership disputes over the past eight years that the Chief of Collections is aware of, other than those associated with repatriation or disputes related "permanent loans" created decades ago. The lack of such disputes and unsatisfactory relationships or findings from permit granting bodies has been part of what supported the museum's practices regarding collections acquisition and accessioning. Although our collections have not been the subject of controversy (repatriation activity notwithstanding), we agree that improving our training, and integrating processing and documentation improvements to the policy revision already underway will result in a better record for future users of collections and lessened risk in the present.

Recommendation 1

Develop and enforce procedures that explain how department staff should promptly report all collection items through established control points.

NMNH Response: We concur with this recommendation. We will issue a guidance memorandum by December 31, 2010, and incorporate this guidance in the revised Collections Management Policy (CMP).

Recommendation 2

Revise the NMNH CMP to require that a) museum management review and approve department procedures regarding collections, and b) department staff enter all collection items in the system as they are acquired.

NMNH Response: We concur with this recommendation. We anticipate completing the revision of the CMP and having it ready for the Institutional review process by December 31, 2011.

(Recommendation 3 is directed to the National Collections Coordinator)

APPENDIX D. MANAGEMENT RESPONSE - Continued

Recommendation 4

Perform a risk-based evaluation to determine whether all acquisition transaction documentation should be reviewed and preserved by OR [the NMNH Office of the Registrar].

NMNH Response: We concur with this recommendation. We propose using guidance from the National Collections Program and the Office of General Counsel to perform the evaluation, to be completed by March 30, 2011.

Recommendation 5

Establish and implement procedures to ensure that NMNH provides adequate legal review and preservation of all acquisition transaction documentation, including documentation of transactions not intended for accessioning.

NMNH Response: We concur with this recommendation. We propose to provide adequate legal review through a combination of cyclical training for Departmental Chairs and Collections Managers, and inclusion of acquisition transaction documentation in the OR's electronic and physical files. We propose to complete the first cycle of training by March 30, 2011. Inclusion of records will be on-going.

Recommendation 6

Modify the NMNH CMP to include an accessioning schedule, or require departments to establish accessioning schedules, and enforce compliance with the schedule.

NMNH Response: We concur with this recommendation. As a part of the revision to the CMP, we will establish accessioning schedules and monitor compliance through our existing CMP compliance procedures.

(Recommendations 7 and 8 are directed to the National Collections Coordinator and the General Counsel.)

Recommendation 9

Provide periodic training on applicable laws and regulations to all museum staff with collections acquisition responsibilities, including curators, until the Smithsonian makes a determination about centralized training.

NMNH Response: We concur with this recommendation. We will update the training module delivered in the past, and will offer this mandatory training on a quarterly basis until all staff with collections responsibilities have fulfilled the attendance requirement. Training sessions will begin by March 30, 2011.

Recommendation 10

Update the NMNH CMP to require all staff with collections acquisition responsibilities to take training on compliance with pertinent laws and regulations.

NMNH Response: We concur with this recommendation. The requirement for training will be announced by January 1, 2011, and will be included in the revision to the CMP.

APPENDIX D. MANAGEMENT RESPONSE - Continued

Recommendation 11

Evaluate whether NMNH has adequate resources to provide a central resource to NMNH staff on legal and regulatory issues.

NMNH Response: We concur with this recommendation. We will evaluate this need during upcoming hiring and promotion discussions, to be completed by June 1, 2011.

(Recommendation 12 is directed to the National Collections Coordinator)

Recommendation 13

Revise the accession documentation checklists and incorporate these documentation requirements in the NMNH CMP.

NMNH Response: We concur with this recommendation. Revised checklists will be incorporated into the revision to the CMP.

Again, NMNH appreciates the intention of the audit and the opportunity to provide this response to the draft report. Ms. Carol R. Butler, Chief of Collections, will be working with her staff in the Office of the Registrar and will departmental staff to ensure that NMNH acts upon the report's recommendations.

If you have questions or concerns about NMNH's proposed actions, I am available at a mutually convenient time to discuss them with you.

APPENDIX D. MANAGEMENT RESPONSE - Continued



Smithsonian Institution

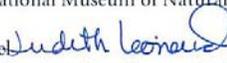
Memo

Office of General Counsel

Date November 16, 2010

To A. Sprightley Ryan
Inspector General

cc Richard Kurin, Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture
Alison McNally, Under Secretary for Finance and Administration
Eva J. Pell, Under Secretary for Science
Cristián Samper K., Director, National Museum of Natural History

From Judith Leonard, General Counsel  William Tompkins, National Collections Coordinator, National Collections Program 

Subject Draft Report on Audit of Collections Accessioning at the National Museum of Natural History, Number A-10-10

Thank you for the opportunity to respond and provide comments to the Draft Report on Audit of Collections Accessioning at the National Museum of Natural History, Number A-10-10. We recognize and appreciate the careful consideration and attention which has been given to this important topic. As demonstrated below, we concur with the findings and recommendations of the report applicable to our respective offices.

Specific Recommendations

Recommendation 3

Revise the SD 600 Implementation Manual to establish clear documentation requirements for non-accession acquisitions.

Response: We concur with this recommendation. The National Collections Program (NCP), in coordination with the Office of General Counsel (OGC), will revise the documentation requirements for non-accession acquisitions by March 31, 2011.

Recommendation 7

Revise the SD 600 Implementation Manual to require that all staff with collections acquisitions responsibilities receive collections-related legal training.

Response: We concur with this recommendation. NCP, in conjunction with OGC and the

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APPENDIX D. MANAGEMENT RESPONSE - Continued

Under Secretaries as necessary, will propose revisions to SD 600 requiring that all staff with collections acquisitions responsibilities receive training on the laws and regulations pertinent to collections management. These revisions will be presented to the Under Secretaries for their concurrence and a timeline will be established for the revisions to SD 600 by March 31, 2011.

Recommendation 8

Evaluate how to most effectively train staff on laws and regulations pertinent to collections.

Response: We concur with this recommendation. NCP, in coordination with OGC and the Under Secretaries as necessary, will evaluate the training needs of the various collecting units to determine how to most effectively train staff on the laws and regulations pertinent to collections management. The proposal for this evaluation will be presented to the Under Secretaries for their concurrence and a timeline will be established by March 31, 2011.

Recommendation 12

Revise the SD 600 Implementation Manual to establish clear documentation requirements for each major acquisition method.

Response: We concur with this recommendation. NCP and OGC will revise the documentation requirements in the SD 600 Implementation Manual by December 31, 2011.

APPENDIX E. CONTRIBUTORS TO REPORT

The following individuals from the Smithsonian Office of the Inspector General contributed to this report:

Daniel R. Devlin, Assistant Inspector General for Audits
Brian W. Lowe, Supervisory Auditor
Michelle S. Uejio, Auditor
Mary B. Stevens, Auditor