

# Department of Canadian Heritage – Canadian Heritage Information Network

## CHIN Guide to Museum Standards

### Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Core Standards for Canadian Museums .....	2
Metadata (Data Structure Standards) .....	11
(to define the categories of data that make up a record)	
Vocabulary (Data Value Standards) .....	23
(to govern the words or terms that can be used in a record, and how terms are related)	
Cataloguing Rules (Data Content Standards) .....	41
(to determine the order, syntax and format for entering data values in a record)	
Interchange (Data Format Standards) .....	43
(to define the machine-readable metadata standards that facilitate information exchange)	
Procedural Standards.....	46
(to govern collections management procedures within the museum)	

## Introduction

There are many types of standards used to manage museum collections information. These "standards", which range from precise technical standards to general guidelines, enable museum data to be efficiently and consistently indexed, sorted, retrieved, and shared, both in automated and paper-based systems.

Museums often use [metadata standards](#) (also called data structure standards) to help them:

- define what types of information to record in their database (or card catalogue)
- structure this information (the relationships between the different types of information).

Following (or mapping data to) these standards makes it possible for museums to move their data between computer systems, or share their data with other organizations.

Museums can use [cataloguing rules \(data content standards\)](#) and [vocabulary standards \(data value standards\)](#), (which include classification systems and controlled vocabularies) to ensure consistent cataloguing (using a consistent date format, or using a certain spelling of an artist's name, for example).

- Cataloguing Rules (Content Standards) determine how data are entered in fields (rules for syntax, etc).
- Vocabulary Standards (Data Value standards) such as classification systems, thesauri or authority lists determine the terms used in the fields; they can help cataloguers select the most appropriate term to describe an object, and to apply that term consistently.

Consistency in cataloguing makes retrieval of the data easier and more precise, both in computerized and card-based collections management systems. For example, a researcher can consult an authority file (also called an authority list) or a thesaurus to find the best terms for which to search (possibly including narrower terms, synonyms, or words in other languages) in order to find all the relevant records. If integrated with the search engine, the narrower terms, synonyms, and alternate language terms of a thesaurus can automatically be included in a search of museum data.

[Interchange Standards \(Data Format Standards\)](#) are used for the exchange of automated museum collections information. For example, some commercial collections management systems conform to established standards for data import and export so that museums can more easily share their data.

Museums use their collections data for many purposes (exhibition catalogues, Web access for the public, and curatorial research, etc.), and they may want to share their data with other museums, archives, and libraries in an automated way. This level of interoperability between systems requires standards to work together. Standards enable the interchange of data between cataloguer and searcher, between organizations, and between computer systems.

## Core Standards for Canadian Museums

The standards listed here are those most commonly used by Canadian museums, and recommended by CHIN, both for collections documentation and management within museums, and for collections records contributed to Artefacts Canada.

- For training in collections documentation, see the [Introduction to Documentation of Heritage Collections](#).
- For guidelines on contribution of your museum's collections data and images to Artefacts Canada, see the [Artefacts Canada Contributor Documentation](#).
- For information on the development of museum documentation standards in Canada, see [Making Up the Rules: New Documentation Standards for Canadian Museums](#)
- [Core Standards for Art and Historical Collections](#)
  - [Metadata](#)
  - [Vocabulary and Classification](#)

- [Cataloguing Rules \(Data Content Standards\)](#)
- [Procedural Standards](#)
- [Core Standards for Natural Science Collections](#)
  - [Metadata and Cataloguing Rules](#)
  - [Vocabulary and Classification](#)

## Core Standards for Art and Historical Collections

### *Metadata*

Most museums in Canada use the CHIN Humanities Data Dictionary (or some fully compatible derivation of it) as their metadata standard (defining the units of information to record about their collections). In the 1970s and 1980s, many museums across Canada used a common collections management system, based on the CHIN Data Dictionary and maintained on a central mainframe at CHIN. As a result, there is much commonality in metadata across Canada, even though collections management is now decentralized. As the CHIN Data Dictionary was one of the earliest museum metadata standards, it was consulted during the development of (and is easily mapped to) other standards such as the CIDOC Information Categories.

- **CHIN Data Dictionaries**

The Canadian Heritage Information Network's Data Dictionaries for the Humanities and Natural Sciences have proven to be valuable reference tools for the management of museum and gallery collections information. A data dictionary defines all the categories or types of information in a database. The CHIN Data Dictionaries are not a data structure for use in a collections management system, but they can be used as the basis for such a structure. They can be used by a wide range of museums to help them to identify their institution's information needs and standardize their documentation. Each data field in the CHIN Data Dictionaries is described by a field label, a mnemonic, and a name. Fields include a definition, entry rules, related fields, a data type, examples, a discipline, authority lists, a source, and other information. The CHIN Data Dictionaries are used as the standard for Canadian institutions that contribute collections data to CHIN's Artefacts Canada, as guidelines for institutions which are developing or modifying a collections management system, and to promote the consistent recording of information by cataloguers, or to provide users of collections databases with search strategies.

[Go to "CHIN Data Dictionaries"](#)

### *Vocabulary and Classification*

For classification of their collections, most museums in Canada use some variation of Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging – including the bilingual Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects and the bilingual Info-Muse Classification system for ethnology, history and historical archaeology museums, by the Société des musées québécois (SMQ). Vocabulary needs are diverse. Some of the most commonly-used sources are listed here.

### *Multi-Faceted Vocabularies*

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT)**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the AAT is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. In addition to broader, narrower, and related terms, it contains cross references, alternative terms, French equivalent terms, UK English equivalent terms, source information, and history and scope notes in a thesaurus format. The AAT was developed from numerous existing terminologies, and includes the vocabulary from the Revised Nomenclature, which is widely used in Canadian museums. CHIN has contributed approximately 2600 French terms to the AAT; these are now visible within the AAT as French language equivalents for the most common terms. This bilingual version of the AAT is used to assist with searches in CHIN's Artefacts Canada: Humanities database. CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. Terminology found within the AAT would be appropriate for use in multiple fields of the Artefacts Canada: Humanities database. The AAT includes some French terminology, but the database interface is available only in English.

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\)"](#)

### Classification and Object Naming

- **Nomenclature 4.0 for Museum Cataloging: Fourth Edition of Robert G. Chenhall's System for Classifying Cultural Objects**

Nomenclature 4.0 is a function-based classification system and vocabulary for cultural objects in museum collections. Many Canadian museums use Nomenclature to assist with vocabulary control for object naming and classification (e.g. CHIN fields Object Name, Category, etc.). Nomenclature is the basis for the Parks Canada Classification System, as well as the Objects Facet of the Getty's Art & Architecture Thesaurus and the Info-Muse Classification System for ethnology, history, and historical archaeology museums. CHIN and Parks Canada representatives were part of the Nomenclature Task Force responsible for the publication of Nomenclature 4.0. More user friendly and better designed than its predecessors, this fourth edition is available in print, in English only.

[Go to "Nomenclature 4.0 for Museum Cataloging: Fourth Edition of Robert G. Chenhall's System for Classifying Cultural Objects"](#)

- **Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects (Parks DVD)**

Parks Canada and CHIN have collaborated to create this online version of the Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects. The Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects is a bilingual museum classification system and vocabulary standard used in Canada for humanities collections. It helps museums cataloguing collections to identify, name, and classify objects using definitions and illustrations. This classification system is based on an object's original function (the purpose for which the object was created). Museums can consult the Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects online, navigating through the hierarchical classification structure, or searching for definitions of categories, classes or object terms. Images and descriptions of many terms are included.

[Go to "Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects \(Parks DVD\)"](#)

## Classification systems

- **The Info-Muse classification system for ethnology, history and historical archaeology museums**

The Info-Muse classification system for ethnology, history and historical archaeology museums is based on the Parks Canada Classification System, which is itself based on Chenhall's Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging. This system is the result of collaboration between Parks Canada, the Musée de la civilisation and the Société des musées québécois. The definitions of terms are drawn mainly from the Parks Canada Classification system. Like the Parks and Nomenclature systems, the Info-Muse classification groups objects by their original function. Hierarchical organization is by Category and Sub-Category. This classification system is appropriate for use in the Category and Class fields of Artefacts Canada: Humanities database. Available in English and French.

[Go to "The Info-Muse classification system for ethnology, history and historical archaeology museums"](#)

- **The Info-Muse classification system for fine arts and decorative arts museums**

The Info-Muse classification system for fine arts and decorative arts museums is based on the Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT), and research by Thérèse Labbé. Representatives from a broad range of museums and associations also contributed to the development of this work. The two subdivisions of the AAT's "Art" subgroup, namely "Fine Arts" and "Decorative Arts," correspond to the categories in the Info-Muse classification system. This classification system is appropriate for use in the Category and Class fields of Artefacts Canada: Humanities database. Available in English and French.

[Go to "The Info-Muse classification system for fine arts and decorative arts museums"](#)

## Object Naming

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) Objects Facet**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. The Objects Facet of the AAT is based on terminology from Revised Nomenclature, which is widely used in Canadian museums. The Objects Facet contains terminology for "tangible or visual things that are inanimate and produced by human endeavor", arranged according to the "item's original purpose or origin or its primary context of development". CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. The terminology found in the AAT Objects Facet is appropriate for use in the Object Name and Object Type fields of Artefacts Canada: Humanities database.

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\) Objects Facet"](#)

- **Le thésaurus de la designation, (oeuvres architecturales et mobilières), Direction des musées de France**

A hierarchical thesaurus of 1135 terms used for the designation of architectural works and of 2529 terms used for the designation of furnishings. Browse Edifices or Mobilier, hierarchically or alphabetically (Description translated from the website). Available in French only. Available at <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/inventai/patrimoine/> (select "vocabularies").

[Go to "Le thésaurus de la designation, \(oeuvres architecturales et mobilières\), Direction des musées de France"](#)

## Materials and Techniques Terminology

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) Materials Facet**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the AAT is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. The Materials Facet of the AAT contains terminology for "physical substances, whether naturally or synthetically derived. These range from specific materials to types of material designated by their function, such as "colorants", and from raw materials to those that have been formed or processed into products that are used in fabricating structures or objects". CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. The terminology found in the AAT Materials Facet is appropriate for use in the Materials, Medium, and Support fields of the Artefacts Canada: Humanities database.

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\) Materials Facet"](#)

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) Processes and Techniques Hierarchy**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the AAT is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. The Processes and Techniques Hierarchy of the AAT contains terminology for "actions and methods performed physically on or with materials and objects, and for processes occurring in materials and objects." CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. The terminology found in the AAT Processes and Techniques Hierarchy is appropriate for use in the Technique and Decorative Technique fields of the Artefacts Canada: Humanities database, as well as some Condition fields within museum collections management systems.

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\) Processes and Techniques Hierarchy"](#)

## Disciplines Terminology

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) Disciplines Hierarchy**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the AAT is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. The AAT Disciplines Hierarchy (a section of the Activities Hierarchy) contains terminology for "branches of learning, areas of specialization, and professions and professional specialties." CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. The terminology found in the AAT Disciplines Hierarchy is appropriate for use in the Discipline field of the Artefacts Canada: Humanities database.

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\) Disciplines Hierarchy"](#)

### Styles, Periods, and Cultures Terminology

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) Styles and Periods Facet**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the AAT is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. The Styles and Periods Facet of the AAT "encompasses styles, chronological periods, nationalities, and cultures." CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. The terminology found in the AAT Styles and Periods Facet is appropriate for use School/Style, Culture, and Period fields of the Artefacts Canada: Humanities database.

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\) Styles and Periods Facet"](#)

### Geographical Locations Terminology

- **Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN)**

Created by the J. Paul Getty Trust, the TGN is a "structured vocabulary containing "names and associated information about places. Places in TGN include administrative political entities (e.g., cities, nations) and physical features (e.g., mountains, rivers). Current and historical places are included". Geographical coordinates are also included. The terms in the TGN are multilingual, but the database interface is available only in English.

[Go to "Thesaurus of Geographic Names \(TGN\)"](#)

- **Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB)**

The Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB) is maintained by Natural Resources Canada to store names for Canadian geographical features, including populated places, administrative areas, and water and terrain features (such as lakes, mountains). Museums may use the CGNDB to help with the consistent naming of Canadian geographical names in their collections databases. The CGNDB sometimes provides Canadian place names to a more detailed level than Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN); museums may wish to use it in parallel with TGN. Available online, in English and French.

[Go to "Canadian Geographical Names Data Base \(CGNDB\)"](#)



## Artist Names

- **Artists in Canada**

Artists in Canada, compiled and maintained by the National Gallery of Canada Library, is a bilingual union list that identifies the location of documentation files on Canadian artists. Libraries and art galleries across Canada have contributed biographical information and lists of their documentation files to create this resource which contains information for more than 55,000 artists. Each record includes: biographical information on the artist, artist technique, name variants, and file location. Available in English and French.

[Go to "Artists in Canada"](#)

- **Union List of Artist Names (ULAN)**

Created by the J. Paul Getty Trust, the ULAN is a structured vocabulary that "includes proper names and associated information about artists. Artists may be either individuals (persons) or groups of individuals working together (corporate bodies). Artists in the ULAN generally represent creators involved in the conception or production of visual arts and architecture". The coverage of the ULAN is from Antiquity to the present, and it has a global scope. ULAN includes names, relationships, locations (for birth, death, and activity), important dates, and notes. The ULAN can include the vernacular, English, other languages, natural order, inverted order, or nicknames. There is no "preferred" name identified in the ULAN; instead, many variants of the name are provided. The artist names in ULAN are multilingual, but the database interface is available only in English.

[Go to "Union List of Artist Names \(ULAN\)"](#)

## *Cataloguing Rules (Data Content Standards)*

Most museums in Canada are using locally-defined cataloguing rules that are based on the entry rules found in the CHIN Humanities Data Dictionary. In many cases, cataloguing rules are dictated to some extent by the collections management system in use by the museum. CHIN Data Dictionary was updated in 2008 by a CHIN Standards Working Group to bring it into line with developments in international standards, specifically the Cataloging Cultural Objects standard.

- **CHIN Data Dictionaries**

The Canadian Heritage Information Network's Data Dictionaries for the Humanities and Natural Sciences have proven to be valuable reference tools for the management of museum and gallery collections information. A data dictionary defines all the categories or types of information in a database. The CHIN Data Dictionaries are not a data structure for use in a collections management system, but they can be used as the basis for such a structure. They can be used by a wide range of museums to help them to identify their institution's information needs and standardize their documentation. Each data field in the CHIN Data Dictionaries is described by a field label, a mnemonic, and a name. Fields include a definition, entry rules, related fields, a data type, examples, a discipline, authority lists, a source, and other information.



The CHIN Data Dictionaries are used as the standard for Canadian institutions that contribute collections data to CHIN's Artefacts Canada, as guidelines for institutions which are developing or modifying a collections management system, and to promote the consistent recording of information by cataloguers, or to provide users of collections databases with search strategies.

[Go to "CHIN Data Dictionaries"](#)

- **Cataloging Cultural Objects (CCO) A Guide to Describing Cultural Works and Their Images**

CCO is a data content standard which is designed for cataloguing works of art, cultural artifacts, and their visual surrogates; cataloguing original objects may require some additional, specialized guidelines. CCO helps control the choice of terms, and defines order, syntax, and form for data values for cataloguing cultural objects. It can be used in the development of in-house cataloguing rules. The primary emphasis of CCO is on descriptive metadata; it excludes administrative and technical metadata. Controlled vocabularies and thesauri are recommended. CCO is a "manual for describing, documenting, and cataloging cultural works and their visual surrogates. The primary focus of CCO is art and architecture, including but not limited to paintings, sculpture, prints, manuscripts, photographs, built works, installations, and other visual media. CCO also covers many other types of cultural works, including archaeological sites, artifacts, and functional objects from the realm of material culture." CHIN's "CCO Assessment Working Group" (one of CHIN's Standards Working Groups) completed a project in 2008 to assess the CCO for use in Canadian museums. After examining the implications of using CCO within their own institutions, developing a set of sample records, and completing a test using CCO rules to catalogue a new collection, they have recommended CCO for use within Canadian museums with humanities collections. CHIN has enhanced the CHIN Humanities Data Dictionary with the addition of CCO rules. CCO is a project of the Visual Resources Association (VRA). Available in English only.

[Go to "Cataloging Cultural Objects \(CCO\) A Guide to Describing Cultural Works and Their Images"](#)

- **Documenting Your Collections - Info-Muse Network Documentation Guide**

The Info-Muse Network documentation system is based on museum practices in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. It was developed in close collaboration with various bodies and museums in Quebec and the rest of Canada, and with many experts from the different scientific validation committees for the tools designed by the Network. The standards proposed by the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) since the 1970s served as the starting point for developing the system, meaning that it is in line with the main national and international standards for documenting museum collections.

[Go to "Documenting Your Collections - Info-Muse Network Documentation Guide"](#)

- **Comment gérer vos collections? Le guide de gestion du Réseau Info-Muse - Deuxième édition**

This guide developed by the Réseau Info-Muse of the Société des musées québécois (SMQ) includes a description of museum processes such as acquisition, loans in and out, and deaccessioning, and the fields required to document these processes. Includes fields for documentation of photographic reproductions, digital images, and rights. Available in French only. This document is currently out of print, but it may be available through a library or bookstore.

[Go to "Comment gérer vos collections? Le guide de gestion du Réseau Info-Muse - Deuxième édition"](#)

### *Procedural Standards*

- **SPECTRUM (Standard ProcEdures for CollecTions Recording Used in Museums)**

Created by Collections Trust, SPECTRUM is a guide to "good practice for museum documentation, established in partnership with the museum community. It contains procedures for documenting objects and the processes they undergo, as well as identifying and describing the information which needs to be recorded to support the procedures". As such, it is both a metadata standard for museum collections documentation, and a procedural standard. It includes information on the minimum UK standard for museum documentation. A simplified version, called SPECTRUM Essentials, is available for smaller museums. SPECTRUM is a well-respected standard internationally, and is increasingly used as the basis for international interchange of museum data. An XML DTD has been produced for SPECTRUM which serves as a system-neutral interchange format for museum data that is based on SPECTRUM. Available in English only.

[Go to "SPECTRUM \(Standard ProcEdures for CollecTions Recording Used in Museums\)"](#)

- **SPECTRUM Digital Asset Management**

Sets out a methodology by which digital asset management can be integrated alongside the existing curatorial and management functions of the organization to ensure that they are widely adopted and sustained as a core element of practice. Provides information and guidance on the development of a Digital Asset Management Strategy (DAM Strategy), associated DAM Policies, the implementation of a Digital Asset Management System (DAMS) and the integration of Digital Asset Management Workflows (DAM Workflows) alongside the existing SPECTRUM Collections Management processes (Description taken from the Website).

[Go to "SPECTRUM Digital Asset Management"](#)

### Core Standards for Natural Science Collections

#### *Metadata and Cataloguing Rules*

CHIN Natural Sciences Data Dictionary can be useful to museums in defining categories of information to record about their collections, and in defining data entry rules to standardize cataloguing.

- **CHIN Data Dictionaries**

The Canadian Heritage Information Network's Data Dictionaries for the Humanities and Natural Sciences have proven to be valuable reference tools for the management of museum and gallery collections information. A data dictionary defines all the categories or types of information in a database. The CHIN Data Dictionaries are not a data structure for use in a collections management system, but they can be used as the basis for such a structure. They can be used by a wide range of museums to help them to identify their institution's information needs and standardize their documentation. Each data field in the CHIN Data Dictionaries is described by a field label, a mnemonic, and a name. Fields include a definition, entry rules, related fields, a data type, examples, a discipline, authority lists, a source, and other information. The CHIN Data Dictionaries are used as the standard for Canadian institutions that contribute collections data to CHIN's Artefacts Canada, as guidelines for institutions which are developing or modifying a collections management system, and to promote the consistent recording of information by cataloguers, or to provide users of collections databases with search strategies.

[Go to "CHIN Data Dictionaries"](#)

### *Vocabulary and Classification*

- **Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS) - Taxon based biological information system**

ITIS is a database created by an international partnership of agencies and taxonomic specialists. ITIS provides information on species names and their hierarchical classification; it includes "documented taxonomic information of flora and fauna from both aquatic and terrestrial habitats". For each scientific name, ITIS includes "the authority (author and date), taxonomic rank, associated synonyms and vernacular names where available, a unique taxonomic serial number, data source information (publications, experts, etc.) and data quality indicators". Available in French and English.

[Go to "Integrated Taxonomic Information System \(ITIS\) - Taxon based biological information system"](#)

## **Metadata (Data Structure Standards)**

- [Introduction to Metadata Standards for Museums](#)
- [Metadata Standards for Museum Collections Documentation](#)
  - [Management and Documentation of Humanities Collections](#)
  - [Management and Documentation of Art Collections, Visual Resources, or Architecture](#)
  - [Management and Documentation of Digital Art and Variable Media Art](#)
  - [Management and Documentation of Ethnological and Archaeological Collections](#)
  - [Management and Documentation of Archaeological Sites/Monuments](#)
  - [Management and Documentation of Natural Science Collections](#)
  - [Description for Object Identification and Security](#)

- [Collection-level description](#)
- [Resource Discovery](#)
- [Metadata Standards for Libraries and Archives](#)
- [Intellectual Property Rights Metadata Standards](#)

## Introduction to Metadata Standards for Museums

Museums use metadata extensively to manage and document their collections, and to share information about their collections. Metadata can be defined as "structured data about data"; the most obvious example in the museum context is the museum catalogue record (structured data about an object in the museum's collection).

Museums use metadata standards to assist them with collections documentation, management, and resource discovery. Metadata standards generally have the following objectives:

- enhancing information retrieval (particularly automated retrieval)
- promoting consistency within and between databases
- ensuring that important information is recorded
- improving the security of collections
- accounting for museum collections
- enabling the collection and knowledge about the collection to be shared and used
- facilitating exchange of information between databases
- facilitating the migration of data to new systems

These metadata standards outline the units of information that need to be recorded in order to properly document a collection (e.g. materials, artist, origin) and/or the processes that collections and objects undergo (e.g. loans, conservation treatments, exhibitions). Some of them also include rules and conventions for data entry (data content standards) and terminology sources (data value or vocabulary standards).

Metadata standards usually define:

- a limited number of elements used to describe a resource
- the name and meaning of each element
- rules for the use of each element (for example, whether a controlled vocabulary is used with the element).

Museums use metadata for activities such as:

- Documenting collections (data about the object's materials, dates, creator, etc.)
- Managing collections (information about rights, access, use, location control, etc.)
- Resource discovery (information used to find and identify digital or physical resources)
- Establishing structure within or among resources (for viewing and using the metadata)
- Preservation (data about condition of objects, or preservation of digital resources, etc.)

In addition to metadata about their physical collections, museums use metadata to document, manage, use, and preserve their digital resources, such as:

- Images and other multimedia files which document their physical collections
- Digital collections (digital art, digital archival materials, etc.)

Metadata issues can become very complex as "surrogates" of the information object are produced - various versions of images (e.g. for web display vs. publication), copies or reproductions of originals, and new versions of documents all have associated (and inter-related) metadata. Each of these versions or copies may have associated dates, use restrictions, associated people, and other metadata that must be managed. There are various levels of granularity of metadata. For example, there can be inter-related metadata about:

- Individual objects (physical or digital objects) in a museum's collection
- artists, geographical locations, and other information that is linked with objects in the museum's collection
- sub-sets of the museum's collection
- the museum's collection as a whole ("collection-level description")
- an exhibit (physical or virtual)

Metadata can be stored separately from the information object, or can be embedded within the information object.

- in the case of physical museum objects, the "metadata" would be stored separately, in a database.
- For digital images and other multimedia files, some metadata may be stored in a database, while other metadata may be stored as part of the multimedia file during the digitization process.
- For Web sites, metadata is often embedded in the HTML header at the top of the page; search engines sometimes use this embedded metadata to index the site.

## Metadata Standards for Museum Collections Documentation

Many different types of metadata standards are available for use by museums. Metadata standards help museums to define the types of information to record about their collections and processes, and to structure this information. For example, a museum metadata standard may specify the units of information needed to properly document a collection for security purposes, and provide precise definitions for each unit of information. It will also explain how the various units of information relate to one another. It may also sometimes provide guidance on how the data are to be recorded (e.g. proper date formats, standards for person names, etc.)

Some metadata standards (such as Dublin Core) are very general, and can be used for any type of collection or resource; others have been developed for specific museum collection types (e.g. biological collections, digital media collections), or for specific purposes (e.g. collection-level description or object identification). Important metadata standards for museum collections management and documentation include:

### *Management and Documentation of Humanities Collections*

The following metadata standards have been developed for museums with humanities collections (historical, ethnological, art collections, etc.)

- **CHIN Data Dictionaries**

The Canadian Heritage Information Network's Data Dictionaries for the Humanities and Natural Sciences have proven to be valuable reference tools for the management of museum and gallery collections information. A data dictionary defines all the categories or types of information in a database. The CHIN Data Dictionaries are not a data structure for use in a collections management system, but they can be used as the basis for such a structure. They can be used by a wide range of museums to help them to identify their institution's information needs and standardize their documentation. Each data field in the CHIN Data Dictionaries is described by a field label, a mnemonic, and a name. Fields include a definition, entry rules, related fields, a data type, examples, a discipline, authority lists, a source, and other information. The CHIN Data Dictionaries are used as the standard for Canadian institutions that contribute collections data to CHIN's Artefacts Canada, as guidelines for institutions which are developing or modifying a collections management system, and to promote the consistent recording of information by cataloguers, or to provide users of collections databases with search strategies.

[Go to "CHIN Data Dictionaries"](#)

- **SPECTRUM (Standard ProcEdures for CollecTions Recording Used in Museums)**

Created by Collections Trust, SPECTRUM is a guide to "good practice for museum documentation, established in partnership with the museum community. It contains procedures for documenting objects and the processes they undergo, as well as identifying and describing the information which needs to be recorded to support the procedures". As such, it is both a metadata standard for museum collections documentation, and a procedural standard. It includes information on the minimum UK standard for museum documentation. A simplified version, called SPECTRUM Essentials, is available for smaller museums. SPECTRUM is a well-respected standard internationally, and is increasingly used as the basis for international interchange of museum data. An XML DTD has been produced for SPECTRUM which serves as a system-neutral interchange format for museum data that is based on SPECTRUM. Available in English only.

[Go to "SPECTRUM \(Standard ProcEdures for CollecTions Recording Used in Museums\)"](#)

- **International Guidelines for Museum Object Information: The CIDOC Information Categories, 1995**

Developed by the International Committee for Documentation (CIDOC) of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the Guidelines include information categories for collections management as well as object description. The Guidelines make recommendations for syntax or format, and controlled vocabularies. The CHIN Humanities Data Dictionary was among many documents consulted in the creation of the CIDOC Guidelines. The CIDOC Guidelines are recommended as the basis for an international standard, as the basis for new national standards if there are no current standards in a country, and as an intermediary when comparing (mapping between) existing museum information standards. An object-oriented model called the CIDOC

Conceptual Reference Model, or CIDOC CRM) based on the CIDOC Guidelines has been developed to facilitate interchange of museum information.

[Go to "International Guidelines for Museum Object Information: The CIDOC Information Categories, 1995" \(PDF version, 329 KB\)](#)

- **Documenting Your Collections - Info-Muse Network Documentation Guide**

The Info-Muse Network documentation system is based on museum practices in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. It was developed in close collaboration with various bodies and museums in Quebec and the rest of Canada, and with many experts from the different scientific validation committees for the tools designed by the Network. The standards proposed by the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) since the 1970s served as the starting point for developing the system, meaning that it is in line with the main national and international standards for documenting museum collections.

[Go to "Documenting Your Collections - Info-Muse Network Documentation Guide"](#)

- **Comment gérer vos collections? Le guide de gestion du Réseau Info-Muse - Deuxième édition**

This guide developed by the Réseau Info-Muse of the Société des musées québécois (SMQ) includes a description of museum processes such as acquisition, loans in and out, and deaccessioning, and the fields required to document these processes. Includes fields for documentation of photographic reproductions, digital images, and rights. Available in French only. This document is currently out of print, but it may be available through a library or bookstore.

[Go to "Comment gérer vos collections? Le guide de gestion du Réseau Info-Muse - Deuxième édition"](#)

- **Introduction to Metadata, Version 3.0**

Published by the Standards Program of the J. Paul Getty Trust and edited by Murtha Baca, this publication provides an overview of metadata and related issues. Available in English and Spanish.

[Go to "Introduction to Metadata, Version 3.0"](#)

### *Management and Documentation of Art Collections, Visual Resources, or Architecture*

The following metadata standards are recommended for museums with art and visual collections. They are similar to the standards for humanities collections (above), but with a narrower focus.

- **Categories for the Description of Works of Art (CDWA)**



The CDWA is a product of the Art Information Task Force (AITF) and funded by the J. Paul Getty Trust. The Categories describe the content of art databases by articulating a conceptual framework for describing and accessing information about objects and images. They identify vocabulary resources and descriptive practices that will make information residing in diverse systems both more compatible and more accessible. They also provide a framework to which existing art information systems can be mapped and upon which new systems can be developed...The Categories advise the use of controlled vocabularies, authorities, and consistent formatting of certain information to ensure efficient end-user retrieval. (Description taken from the website). Available in English only.

[Go to "Categories for the Description of Works of Art \(CDWA\)"](#)

- **VRA Core 4.0**

Created by the Visual Resources Association (VRA) Data Standards Committee, the VRA Core Categories are an extension of certain portions of the Categories for the Description of Works of Art (CDWA). Whereas CDWA is comprehensive and includes all elements needed to describe museum objects, VRA Core takes a sub-set of CDWA and extends these elements for the description of images documenting works of visual culture, especially architecture and site-specific works. VRA Core was originally based on CDWA, but more recent versions have been influenced by Dublin Core. There are 17 Core categories, but these core elements can be expanded as needed. VRA Core 4.0 works together with the Cataloguing Cultural Objects (CCO) content standard, and provides an XML encoding. The VRA Core Categories are available in English only.

[Go to "VRA Core 4.0"](#)

- **Le catalogage des estampes - Capsule documentaire no 1**

Developed by the Société des musées québécois (SMQ), this document offers guidelines for cataloguing prints. Available in French only.

[Go to "Le catalogage des estampes - Capsule documentaire no 1"](#)

- **A Guide to the Description of Architectural Drawings**

Guidelines, conventions, and standards for describing architectural drawings and documents, with examples and recommendations for authority files and controlled vocabularies. (Description taken from the website). Available in English only.

[Go to "A Guide to the Description of Architectural Drawings"](#)

### *Management and Documentation of Digital Art and Variable Media Art*

"Media art" or "digital art" (including Internet art, installations, software art, conceptual art, performance art, etc.) is increasingly collected by museums, yet the traditional forms of museum documentation and preservation are not always effective. Procedural guidelines and documentation standards for these art forms are rapidly developing.

- **The Cataloguing Guide for New Media Collections**

The Cataloguing Guide for New Media Collections is aimed primarily at people who manage new media art collections, such as registrars, collection archivists and museum curators. This guide will also prove useful to the extended community of creators, researchers, presenters and collectors. The Cataloguing Structure Committee for the Documentation and Conservation of the Media Arts Heritage (DOCAM) Project sought to answer the questions and meet the needs of practitioners responsible for describing, explaining, exhibiting and documenting works of art. This guide presents the methodology used, the tools developed and the results obtained to provide these practitioners with sufficient knowledge to soundly manage, conserve and exhibit new media artworks.

[Go to "The Cataloguing Guide for New Media Collections"](#)

- **The DOCAM Documentation Model**

The DOCAM Documentation Model provides a framework for organizing the documentation relating to a media artwork. Documentation throughout the lifecycle of the artwork is supported, including "the work's documents, producers, lifecycle steps, successive iterations, and components", as well as the links among these elements. Available in English and French.

[Go to "The DOCAM Documentation Model"](#)

- **Matters in Media Art: Collaborating Towards the Care of Time-based Media**

This web site provides guidelines for care of time-based media works of art, such as video, film, audio and computer based installations. It is a project of an international consortium of curators, conservators, registrars, and media technical managers at major art institutions. The resource includes two main sections for dealing with time-based media works of art: acquisition and loans. The acquisitions section outlines the units of information and processes needed to make informed decisions during pre-acquisition, accessioning, and integration of the work into the collection. Includes templates for installation specifications, structure and condition reports, cost assessment, and copyright agreement. The loans section assists with planning and research, negotiation, and implementation of a loan transaction. Provides templates and process guidelines. Available in English only.

[Go to "Matters in Media Art: Collaborating Towards the Care of Time-based Media"](#)

- **Media Art and Museums: Guidelines and Case Studies**

Various international research groups have been formed to facilitate the acquisition and long-term management of media artworks. Based in Montreal, the DOCAM Research Alliance (Documentation and Conservation of the Media Arts Heritage) is made up of researchers in cultural organizations and universities. In collaboration with the DOCAM Research Alliance, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) has developed documentation and conservation methods adapted to media artworks in museums and identified the ethical issues associated with them.

[Go to "Media Art and Museums: Guidelines and Case Studies"](#)

- **Methodological Report (Case Studies of the Cataloguing Structure Committee, DOCAM)**

This report is published by the DOCAM (Documentation and Conservation of the Media Arts Heritage) Alliance, as part of the Cataloguing Structure Committee. DOCAM is an international research alliance on the documentation and the conservation of the media arts heritage. The report summarizes work to develop new methodologies and tools for conservation and documentation of media art, based on three case studies of works at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal and the National Gallery of Canada. Through the three case studies, cataloguing practices and tools for media art are identified, and recommendations are made for improvements to these practices and for the development of a new set of tools for documentation and preservation of media art. This study will be the basis for a practical guide to cataloguing media art, which will be produced by DOCAM in 2009. Available in French and English.

[Go to "Methodological Report \(Case Studies of the Cataloguing Structure Committee, DOCAM\)" \(PDF version, 67.9 KB\)](#)

### *Management and Documentation of Ethnological and Archaeological Collections*

The following metadata standards are recommended for museums with ethnology or anthropology collections. They are similar to the standards for humanities collections (above), but with a narrower focus.

- **International Core Data Standard for Ethnology/Ethnography**

Prepared by the Ethnology Working Group of CIDOC, the CIDOC International core Data Standard for Ethnology/Ethnography provides data categories to assist museums with ethnological or anthropological collections. The standard aims to "facilitate communication between national and international bodies responsible for the recording and protection of the ethnological /ethnographical objects, to assist countries at an early stage in developing record systems for the recording and protection of the ethnographical objects and to facilitate ethnographical and ethnological research at an international level". Available in English only.

[Go to "International Core Data Standard for Ethnology/Ethnography" \(PDF version, 422 KB\)](#)

- **International Core Data Standard for Archaeological Objects**

Created by the Archaeological Sites Working Group of CIDOC, this standard provides minimum categories of information to be recorded about archaeological objects. Includes fields for identification, institution, references, object name, title, iconography, description, material, technique, dimensions, form, archaeological context, author and cultural milieu, inscriptions and marks, date/epoch, acquisition, and state of conservation. Currently available only in English.

[Go to "International Core Data Standard for Archaeological Objects"](#)

- **La documentation des ensembles - Capsule documentaire no 6**

Developed by the Société des musées québécois (SMQ), this document offers guidelines for cataloguing objects with multiple parts. Available in French only.

[Go to "La documentation des ensembles - Capsule documentaire no 6"](#)

- **Handbook of Standards: Documenting African Collections**

Published by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), these standards were developed to facilitate collections management, identify and ensure security of objects, and facilitate information exchange. Available in French and English.

[Go to "Handbook of Standards: Documenting African Collections"](#)

### *Management and Documentation of Archaeological Sites/Monuments*

- **International Core Data Standard for Archaeological Sites and Monuments**

Created by the Archaeological Sites Working Group of CIDOC, working in collaboration with the archaeological and architectural working parties contributing to the Council of Europe's Cultural Heritage Committee. This standard "defines the minimum categories of information required to assess an archaeological site or monument, for planning, management, academic or other purposes". Available in English only.

[Go to "International Core Data Standard for Archaeological Sites and Monuments"](#)

- **MIDAS Heritage: The UK Historic Environment Data Standard**

Developed by English Heritage on behalf of the Forum on Information Standards in Heritage (FISH), the updated and expanded version of MIDAS provides a framework data standard for recording all types of heritage assets, their management related activities, map depiction (GIS) and information sources. MIDAS Heritage is heavily influenced by the CIDOC Draft International Core Standard for Archaeological Sites and Monuments and SPECTRUM. It includes checklists to assist inventory managers with decision-making, units of information to be recorded, along with definitions for each unit of information. It also includes indexing tools which provide advice on "finding or compiling wordlists or thesauri to use in indexing inventory entries". Available in English only.

[Go to "MIDAS Heritage: The UK Historic Environment Data Standard"](#)

### *Management and Documentation of Natural Science Collections*

- **CHIN Data Dictionaries**

The Canadian Heritage Information Network's Data Dictionaries for the Humanities and Natural Sciences have proven to be valuable reference tools for the management

of museum and gallery collections information. A data dictionary defines all the categories or types of information in a database. The CHIN Data Dictionaries are not a data structure for use in a collections management system, but they can be used as the basis for such a structure. They can be used by a wide range of museums to help them to identify their institution's information needs and standardize their documentation. Each data field in the CHIN Data Dictionaries is described by a field label, a mnemonic, and a name. Fields include a definition, entry rules, related fields, a data type, examples, a discipline, authority lists, a source, and other information. The CHIN Data Dictionaries are used as the standard for Canadian institutions that contribute collections data to CHIN's Artefacts Canada, as guidelines for institutions which are developing or modifying a collections management system, and to promote the consistent recording of information by cataloguers, or to provide users of collections databases with search strategies.

[Go to "CHIN Data Dictionaries"](#)

### *Description for Object Identification and Security*

- **Object ID: Protecting Cultural Objects in the Global Information Society**

Object ID is an international documentation standard for the information needed to identify cultural objects. It was "developed through the collaboration of the museum community, police and customs agencies, the art trade, insurance industry, and valuers of art and antiquities". The project, initiated by the Getty Information Institute, "helps to combat art theft by encouraging use of the standard and by bringing together organisations around the world that can encourage its implementation". Among other things, Object ID encourages museums to record information about "Inscriptions & Markings" and "Distinguishing Features" of items in their collection that would help to identify the item. Museums that are designing collections management systems or procedures should consult Object ID to ensure that they are recording information that can identify an object in case of theft. The SPECTRUM standard is compatible with Object ID. Also available in French, Arabic, Chinese, Czech, Dutch, German, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Persian, Russian, and Spanish.

[Go to "Object ID: Protecting Cultural Objects in the Global Information Society"](#)

### *Collection-level description*

Some metadata standards have been developed for describing museum collections at a broad level (such as a general description of a museum's collection for inclusion in a directory of museums).

- **RSLP Standard for Collection-level description**

The Research Support Libraries Programme in the UK has developed a standard to enable consistent and machine-readable collection description. This standard is based on Dublin Core, but has additional elements which enable more complete description of museum collections. In addition to the RSLP Collection Description Schema, the RSLP site also offers a Web-based collection description tool (which

provides the metadata in RDF) and a set of data entry guidelines. This tool can be used to describe museum collections at a general level (not object-by-object). Available in English only.

[Go to "RSLP Standard for Collection-level description"](#)

### *Resource Discovery*

Some metadata standards have been developed for general "resource discovery". They are designed to provide a metadata vocabulary of "core" properties able to provide basic descriptive information about any kind of resource, regardless of the format (electronic, paper, etc.) or area of specialization (museum, library, educational institution, publisher, etc.) The use of these general standards enables organizations to share or combine data that would otherwise be incompatible, in order to facilitate "resource discovery" at a general level.

- **Dublin Core**

The Dublin Core (DC) is the most widely used metadata standard for resource discovery. Dublin Core is intended to be simple to use, and general enough to be applied to resources in any discipline. The Dublin Core defines the categories of information to record about a resource (such as a Web page, a document, or an image) in order for the resource to be easily 'discovered'. It has been approved as an ANSI standard (Z39.85-2001), an ISO standard (15836), and has been adopted within the Canadian, Australian, and UK governments among others. The Dublin Core Metadata Element Set consists of 15 elements, which include Title, Creator, Subject, Description, Publisher, Contributor, Date, Type, Format, Identifier, Source, Language, Relation, Coverage, and Rights. These 15 elements are designed for simple resource discovery. However, in some applications, it may be necessary to refine or qualify the meanings of the Dublin Core metadata. A model called the Qualified Dublin Core has been developed to refine the meanings of simple Dublin Core elements through the use of element qualifiers or encoding schemes. For example, the DC.Date element can be refined to DC.Date.Created. Qualifiers can refine the meanings of Dublin Core elements, but not extend them. It is recognized that the Dublin Core will not cover the potential needs of all users, and will not be sufficient for purposes other than simple resource discovery (for example, Dublin Core will not handle all of the information needed for museum collections management or documentation, rights management, etc.). However, it is intended that local implementations or communities of users (such as the museum community) will use Dublin Core as the "core", and develop their own extensions to meet their discipline-specific or local needs. In practice, this often happens the other way around - the museum will use a discipline-specific standard (such as the CHIN Data Dictionaries or SPECTRUM) in order to document and manage their collections, and extract a subset of their collections records which map to the Dublin Core Elements. These Dublin Core records can then be used for purposes of data exchange and simple resource discovery. This is particularly important for sharing data across disciplines, or in collaborative projects. Available in English and French.

[Go to "Dublin Core"](#)

- **CDP Dublin Core Metadata Best Practices**

Created by the Collaborative Digitization Program at the University of Denver and supported by The Institute of Museum and Library Services, this document is intended to "provide guidelines for creating metadata records for digitized cultural heritage resources". It uses the Dublin Core element set, but is specifically designed to meet the needs of cultural heritage institutions such as museums, libraries, archives, etc. Provides explanation of terms and concepts in the cultural heritage context, and provides examples cultural heritage institutions. Available in English only.

[Go to "CDP Dublin Core Metadata Best Practices" \(PDF version, 502 KB\)](#)

### *Metadata Standards for Libraries and Archives*

Many museums have archival or library holdings as part of their collections. The following standards may be useful for multi-level description of these special collections (from fond level to individual items), as well as for data exchange.

- **Library and Archives Canada – Cataloguing and Metadata**

This document contains information regarding the cataloguing standards, practices and policies of Library and Archives Canada.

[Go to "Library and Archives Canada – Cataloguing and Metadata"](#)

- **Rules for Archival Description (RAD)**

RAD is the Canadian standard for archival description. It provides a set of rules which "aim to provide a consistent and common foundation for the description of archival material within fonds, based on traditional archival principles" It contains information on the units of information to be recorded about archival collections, as well as rules for consistent cataloguing of all types of material, at multiple levels (fonds, series, files and item levels). Item level rules are based on AACRII. Maintained by the Canadian Committee on Archival Description of the Canadian Council of Archives. Available in English and French.

[Go to "Rules for Archival Description \(RAD\)"](#)

- **Encoded Archival Description (EAD)**

EAD is a metadata schema for XML encoding of multi-level (fond, group series, and individual items) archival descriptions. EAD is widely used internationally. Available in English only.

[Go to "Encoded Archival Description \(EAD\)"](#)

- **SEPIADES (SEPIA Data Element Set)**

SEPIADES provides a metadata schema for describing archival photographic collections. It is based on standards for archival description (following a multi-level approach). Available in English only.



[Go to "SEPIADES \(SEPIA Data Element Set\)"](#)

- **Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR)**

FRBR is a conceptual model that relates the tasks undertaken by users of bibliographic records (retrieval and access) to the units of information required to support these functions. FRBR has been harmonized with the CIDOC CRM (Conceptual Reference Model) which deals with cultural heritage information; a harmonized model called FRBRoo (FRBR-Object-Oriented) is the result. Available in English only.

[Go to "Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records \(FRBR\)"](#)

### *Intellectual Property Rights Metadata Standards*

As information technology is increasingly used to create, manage, use, and deliver intellectual content, standards are needed to describe and facilitate these transactions. The following standards can support the management of intellectual property rights for digital content:

- **Creative Commons Rights Expression Language (ccREL)**

ccREL provides a framework for expressing rights information for open access web resources. The ccREL metadata record includes simple Dublin Core elements to describe the resource, and additional elements to describe the Creative Commons licence that is associated with it. Available in English only.

[Go to "Creative Commons Rights Expression Language \(ccREL\)"](#)

- **Digital Object Identifier (DOI)**

Developed by the International DOI Foundation, the Digital Object Identifier (DOI) is a "system for identifying and exchanging intellectual property in the digital environment. It provides a framework for managing intellectual content, for linking customers with content suppliers, for facilitating electronic commerce, and enabling automated copyright management for all types of media". A DOI identifies an object (a particular piece of intellectual property), not the place where the object is located (e.g. a URL). DOI is currently used primarily in the electronic publishing industry, but it can be used by rights holders (such as museums) regardless of the type of intellectual property. There is a fee for the DOI service. Available in English only.

[Go to "Digital Object Identifier \(DOI\)"](#)

## **Vocabulary (Data Value Standards)**

- [Introduction to Vocabulary and Classification](#)
- [Classification Systems](#)
- [Vocabulary Standards](#)
  - [Multi-Faceted Vocabularies](#)
  - [Object Classifications/Vocabularies \(Humanities\)](#)

- [Subject Classification/Vocabulary \(Humanities\)](#)
- [Artist Names Authority](#)
- [Creator Roles Classification/Vocabulary](#)
- [Place Names Classification/Authority](#)
- [Time Periods, Styles, and Cultures Classification/Vocabulary](#)
- [Materials and Techniques Vocabulary \(Humanities\)](#)
- [Archaeology and Architecture Classification/Vocabulary](#)
- [Species Classification/Vocabulary \(Natural Sciences\)](#)
- [Physical Attributes Classification/Vocabulary](#)
- [Disciplines Vocabulary](#)
- [Standards for Thesaurus Construction](#)

## Introduction to Vocabulary and Classification

Vocabulary standards (such as authority files and thesauri) and classification systems can assist in both cataloguing and retrieval of museum collections. They may be used to:

- help a cataloguer find precisely the right term to describe an object
- ensure consistent use of terminology and categories in cataloguing
- link a museum's collections data with rich authoritative sources
- provide context for terminology used in museum records (e.g. relationships to broader, narrower, or related terms)
- make automated or manual retrieval of records more efficient.

There are hundreds of data value standards available, varying in scope from the general to the very specific. Museums will need to select vocabulary standards and classification systems that are appropriate for the scope and discipline of their collections.

## Classification Systems

Classification systems provide ways to separate concepts into relatively broad topics – for example, "Furnishings" or "Communication Artifacts". Many classification systems also include specific terminology to be used (for example, object names such as "chair" or "poem"), so vocabulary standards and classification systems often work together.

## Vocabulary Standards

For many data fields, especially those most commonly used for searching the data, strict application of a vocabulary standard within your museum's collections database will greatly improve your ability to query the data, ensuring a complete and relevant search result. This is important within individual collections databases, but it becomes even more important in collaborative projects, such as when museums share their data in Artefacts Canada.

Vocabulary Standards include authority lists and thesauri. Sometimes vocabulary lists are included as part of classification systems (e.g. object names are situated within a classification system in Nomenclature and Parks Canada Classification).

- Authority lists (also called authority files) are lists of terms that can be used by a museum to control the terms or variants that are used in their collections documentation. For example, a museum may use an authority list for artist names during data entry, in order to ensure that the name is spelled consistently, or to

ensure that a certain version (such as married name) is consistently used. There may or may not be a "preferred" variant of the term, but all variants are linked in the authority list so that the term can be found. Some authorities include rich supplemental information (e.g. an artist name authority with information on the artist's dates, technique, biography).

- Thesauri usually provide synonyms, broader and narrower terms, and "preferred" terms for concepts. Some thesauri also include scope notes to advise cataloguers of the precise meaning and usage of particular concepts found in the thesaurus. Thesauri may be used in a similar way as a search assistant - people can use the thesaurus to find the most effective search terminology for a particular concept.

Thesauri or authority lists that exist in electronic format can also be used as automated search assistants or tools for browsing the data in computer applications.

Authority lists and thesauri vary widely in their construction and presentation, but all types of vocabulary standards can potentially be used in automated or manual systems to ensure consistent, precise cataloguing and more efficient retrieval. Some of the vocabulary standards most commonly used in museums follow.

Some important vocabulary and classification systems for museums include:

#### *Multi-Faceted Vocabularies*

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT)**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the AAT is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. In addition to broader, narrower, and related terms, it contains cross references, alternative terms, French equivalent terms, UK English equivalent terms, source information, and history and scope notes in a thesaurus format. The AAT was developed from numerous existing terminologies, and includes the vocabulary from the Revised Nomenclature, which is widely used in Canadian museums. CHIN has contributed approximately 2600 French terms to the AAT; these are now visible within the AAT as French language equivalents for the most common terms. This bilingual version of the AAT is used to assist with searches in CHIN's Artefacts Canada: Humanities database. CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. Terminology found within the AAT would be appropriate for use in multiple fields of the Artefacts Canada: Humanities database. The AAT includes some French terminology, but the database interface is available only in English.

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\)"](#)

#### *Object Classifications/Vocabularies (Humanities)*

- **Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects (Parks DVD)**

Parks Canada and CHIN have collaborated to create this Web version of the Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects. The Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects is a bilingual museum classification system and vocabulary

standard used in Canada for humanities collections. It helps museums cataloguing collections to identify, name, and classify objects using definitions and illustrations. This classification system is based on an object's original function (the purpose for which the object was created). Museums can consult the Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects online, navigating through the hierarchical classification structure, or searching for definitions of categories, classes or object terms. Images and descriptions of many terms are included.

[Go to "Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects \(Parks DVD\) "](#)

- **The Info-Muse classification system for ethnology, history and historical archaeology museums**

Based on the Parks Canada Classification System, which is itself based on Chenhall's Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging. This system is the fruit of collaboration between Parks Canada, the Musée de la civilisation and the Société des musées québécois. The definitions of terms are drawn mainly from the Parks Canada Classification system. Like the Parks and Nomenclature systems, the Info-Muse classification groups objects by their original function. Hierarchical organization is by Category and Sub-Category. This classification system is appropriate for use in the Category and Class fields of Artefacts Canada: Humanities database. Available in English and French.

[Go to "The Info-Muse classification system for ethnology, history and historical archaeology museums"](#)

- **The Info-Muse classification system for fine arts and decorative arts museums**

Based on the Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT), and research by Thérèse Labbé. Representatives from a broad range of museums and associations also contributed to the development of this work. The two subdivisions of the AAT's "Art" subgroup, namely "Fine Arts" and "Decorative Arts," correspond to the categories in the Info-Muse classification system. This classification system is appropriate for use in the Category and Class fields of Artefacts Canada: Humanities database. Available in English and French.

[Go to "The Info-Muse classification system for fine arts and decorative arts museums"](#)

- **Nomenclature 4.0 for Museum Cataloging. Fourth Edition of Robert G. Chenhall's System for Classifying Cultural Objects**

Nomenclature 4.0 is a function-based classification system and vocabulary for cultural objects in museum collections. Many Canadian museums use Nomenclature to assist with vocabulary control for object naming and classification (e.g. CHIN fields Object Name, Category, etc.). Nomenclature is the basis for the Parks Canada Classification System, as well as the Objects Facet of the Getty's Art & Architecture Thesaurus and the Info-Muse Classification System for ethnology, history, and historical archaeology museums. CHIN and Parks Canada representatives were part of the Nomenclature Task Force responsible for the publication of Nomenclature 4.0.

More user friendly and better designed than its predecessors, this fourth edition is available in print, in English only.

[Go to "Nomenclature 4.0 for Museum Cataloging. Fourth Edition of Robert G. Chenhall's System for Classifying Cultural Objects"](#)

- **Adopting a Classification System for Collections of Cultural Objects: A Comparison of Nomenclature 4.0 and the Parks Canada Classification System**

Museums in Canada that are documenting their historical collections in English generally use either Nomenclature, or the Parks Canada Classification System. This paper will provide an overview and comparison of these two North American standards, and guide museums in their choice.

[Go to "Adopting a Classification System for Collections of Cultural Objects: A Comparison of Nomenclature 4.0 and the Parks Canada Classification System"](#)

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) Objects Facet**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. The Objects Facet of the AAT is based on terminology from Revised Nomenclature, which is widely used in Canadian museums. The Objects Facet contains terminology for "tangible or visual things that are inanimate and produced by human endeavor", arranged according to the "item's original purpose or origin or its primary context of development". CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. The terminology found in the AAT Objects Facet is appropriate for use in the Object Name and Object Type fields of Artefacts Canada: Humanities database.

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\) Objects Facet"](#)

- **Cultural Objects Name Authority (CONA)**

The Cultural Objects Name Authority (CONA) is a product of the J. Paul Getty Trust. CONA contains titles, current location, and other core information for cultural works. The scope of CONA includes architecture and movable works such as paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings, manuscripts, photographs, ceramics, textiles, furniture, and archaeological artifacts. As with the other Getty vocabularies, the primary focus is on art, architecture, and archaeology. CONA includes works from all over the world and from prehistory to the present. Names of works may be current or historical, and in multiple languages. CONA does not include records for natural history specimens or scientific collections, unless they exhibit fine craftsmanship of the type collected by art museums. CONA does not include names of musical or literary works. Like the other Getty vocabularies, CONA has a thesaural structure. CONA records contain enough information so that users can uniquely identify each object, differentiating each object for other similar or related works. The data entry rules for a CONA record comply with Cataloguing Cultural Objects (CCO). Like the other Getty vocabularies, CONA grows through contributions of the user community, and

contributors are credited. CONA is a multilingual resource, but the interface is available in English only.

[Go to "Cultural Objects Name Authority \(CONA\)"](#)

- **Religious Objects - User's Guide and Terminology**

CHIN collaborated with the Direction des Musées de France and Réunion des Musées Nationaux to produce this work under the Canada-France Accord. This publication includes an illustrated guide for data entry, and a hierarchical terminology (English and French) of more than 300 standard terms for Catholic religious objects and furnishings, and liturgical vestments and linens. A second project, a collaboration between CHIN, the Getty Information Institute, the French Ministry of Culture, and the Italian Central Institute for Cataloguing and Documentation, has resulted in the development of a multilingual (English, French, and Italian) lexicon of religious object names. The multilingual lexicon is entitled, "Religious Objects of the Catholic Faith/Objets religieux du culte catholique/Corredo ecclesiastico di culto cattolico."

[Go to "Religious Objects - User's Guide and Terminology"](#)

- **Vocabulary of Basic Terms for Cataloguing Costume**

This classification system and vocabulary for costume was developed by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Costume Committee. It is multilingual (English, French, and German). Garments are classified according to their relation to the human body (e.g. layers of dress: main garments; outerwear; protective wear; underwear; etc.) Includes both a classification system and object naming terminology, as well as illustrations to identify various costume elements.

[Go to "Vocabulary of Basic Terms for Cataloguing Costume"](#)

- **British Museum Object Names Thesaurus**

Originally created as an internal reference tool for the British Museum collection, this on-line thesaurus of object names contains hierarchical and other standard thesaural relationships and follows ISO 2788 standard for thesaurus construction. Available in English only.

[Go to "British Museum Object Names Thesaurus"](#)

- **Liste des dénominations, Direction des musées de France**

Two-level, alphabetical list of object names, used within the Joconde database of the Direction des musées de France. Available in French only. RTF:

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/partenaires/AIDEMUSEES/telechargement.htm>

[Go to "Liste des dénominations, Direction des musées de France"](#)

- **Thesaurus for Graphic Materials II: Genre and Physical Characteristic Terms (TGM II)**

TGM II was created by the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division as a companion to TGM I. It provides headings for categories of material - by genre (portraits, etc.), by vantage point, method of representation, production technique or version, marking, shape or size, intended purpose, characteristics of the image's creator, or publication status. Terms denoting artistic movements and styles are not included. "The Thesaurus for Graphic Materials is a tool for indexing visual materials by subject and genre/format. The thesaurus includes more than 7,000 subject terms to index topic shown or reflected in pictures, and 650 genre/format terms to index types of photographs, prints, design drawings, ephemera and other categories." TGM II terms are applicable to two-dimensional, chiefly pictorial, graphic materials (among them, prints, photographs, drawings, and ephemera) whether they are part of a book, or in a manuscript, graphic, or other collection. They are applicable to some non-pictorial and three-dimensional material commonly found in graphic collections, such as visiting cards and photograph cases. They are appropriate for materials commonly found in general graphic collections of research libraries and historical societies. (There are more terms for photographs and historical prints than for fine prints, drawings, and paintings. There are few terms for educational audiovisual materials.) Available in English only.

[Go to "Thesaurus for Graphic Materials II: Genre and Physical Characteristic Terms \(TGM II\)"](#)

- **MDA Archaeological Objects Thesaurus**

Names of archaeological objects (e.g. amulet; flask; tile) that can be recovered from archaeological fieldwork. Developed by the MDA Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Working Party between 1995 and 1997. The Thesaurus is intended "to establish guidance and common principles for the recording of object names within the archaeological profession and related disciplines". For the purposes of the Thesaurus, archaeological objects are defined as: "any physical evidence, usually portable, resulting from past human activity and human interaction with the environment, or environmental remains, that can be recovered through archaeological fieldwork". The thesaurus includes 2,204 terms, derived from the simple object name and authority lists submitted by members of the Working Party, together with the Object Class derived from the RCHME/English Heritage Thesaurus of Monument Types. Follows ISO 2788 standard for Establishment and Development of Monolingual Thesauri. Available in English only.

[Go to "MDA Archaeological Objects Thesaurus"](#)

- **MDA Railways Object Name Thesaurus**

Hierarchical vocabulary for naming railway objects. Includes vocabulary for: - Railway types (e.g. narrow gauge railway) - Commercial records and equipment (e.g. timetable, waybill) - Infrastructure (e.g. spur line, tunnel) - Tools and equipment (eg. Rail ice scraper) - Vehicles and vehicle components (e.g. trains by function, power source, etc.) Includes alphabetical list and glossary. Available in English only.



[Go to "MDA Railways Object Name Thesaurus"](#)

- **MDA Waterways Object Name Thesaurus**

Hierarchical vocabulary for describing objects which relate to inland waterways (canals and rivers but not coastal areas). Developed by a working group of the MDA for the inland waterways of the British Isles, but will have a broader application. Includes vocabulary for: - Components (e.g. oar, gaff, mast, bulkhead) - Craft Type (by function, construction, etc.) - Costume - Tools and Equipment - Containers Includes alphabetical list and glossary. Available in English only.

[Go to "MDA Waterways Object Name Thesaurus"](#)

- **Archaeological and Built Heritage Thesauri - National Monuments Record**

A series of thesauri developed by the National Monuments Record in England, to be used in documentation of archaeological sites and built heritage. Includes thesauri for: Building Materials, Monument Types, Military and defensive sites, Archaeological components and evidence, and many others. Available in English only.

[Go to "Archaeological and Built Heritage Thesauri - National Monuments Record"](#)

- **Outline of Cultural Materials (Murdock) - Human Relations Area Files**

The Outline of Cultural Materials by G.P. Murdock is an ethnological classification system "reflecting human behaviour, social life, customs, material products, and ecological settings". Allows multiple classification of single objects (by material, function, form, etc.), but does not provide object names for use within classification levels. The Outline of Cultural Materials is part of the culture and subject classification created and maintained by the Human Relations Area Files, Inc. (HRAF). This classification system may be useful for ethnology collections, and is appropriate for use in the Category and Class fields of Artefacts Canada: Humanities database. Available in English only.

[Go to "Outline of Cultural Materials \(Murdock\) - Human Relations Area Files"](#)

- **Social History and Industrial Classification: A Subject Classification for Museum Collections (SHIC)**

Published by the SHIC Working Party of the UK's Museum Documentation Association (now Collections Trust), SHIC is the product of a collaboration between a number of UK museums to produce a subject classification for the field of social and industrial history. It is "designed to make links between a wide variety of museum material...according to the sphere of human activity with which they are primarily associated". The Social History and Industrial Classification provides a broad interdisciplinary structure with which to arrange objects, photographs, archival material, etc. within the field of human history. It includes both abstract concepts/general materials as well as more specific, concrete terms. SHIC is not widely used in North America. An online demonstration version is available, as well as a full print version. Available in English only.

[Go to "Social History and Industrial Classification: A Subject Classification for Museum Collections \(SHIC\)"](#)

- **Historic Aircraft Type - National Monuments Record**

Created for the National Monuments Record by English Heritage, this indexing tool aids the recording of aircraft remains and crash sites, listing aircraft types by form, function and manufacturer. Hierarchical thesaurus of watercraft types (e.g. canoe, tug, trawler, schooner, etc.) Includes alphabetical index. Available in English only.

[Go to "Historic Aircraft Type - National Monuments Record"](#)

- **Maritime Craft Type - National Monuments Record**

Created for the National Monuments Record by English Heritage, this hierarchical thesaurus contains terminology for watercraft types (e.g. canoe, tug, trawler, schooner, etc.) Includes alphabetical index. Available in English only.

[Go to "Maritime Craft Type - National Monuments Record"](#)

- **DOCAM Glossaurus**

The DOCAM Glossaurus is a bilingual glossary of terms used in documentation, preservation, technologies, and practices used with new media art. The glossary is arranged as a faceted thesaurus; the five main facets include: Activities, Agents, Art Practices, Components, and Manifestation & Reception. Available in English and French.

[Go to "DOCAM Glossaurus"](#)

- **DOCAM Technological Timeline**

The DOCAM Technological Timeline "is designed to show, in clear and graphic form, the ways in which art history and the history of technological invention run alongside each other". Although it is not an exhaustive history of technology used to produce artworks, it illustrates the "complex relationship between the history of technology and the development of media-based art forms". Although the timeline itself is available only in English, presentations about the timeline are available in English (<http://www.docam.ca/en/technological-timeline.html>) and in French (<http://www.docam.ca/fr/timeline-des-technologies.html>).

[Go to "DOCAM Technological Timeline"](#)

- **Les systèmes de classification du Réseau Info-Muse : pourquoi et comment les utiliser ? - Capsule documentaire no 3**

This document offers guidelines for selecting a classification system. Available in French only.

[Go to "Les systèmes de classification du Réseau Info-Muse : pourquoi et comment les utiliser ? - Capsule documentaire no 3 "](#)

*Subject Classification/Vocabulary (Humanities)*

- **Domaines, Direction des musées de France**

La Direction des musées de France has created a list of « Domaines », used in their collections database, Joconde. Hierarchical list of domains (or fields of study) by type of material (e.g. photographie, métallurgie), by function (e.g. vie militaire, architecture), by chronology, civilization, or geography (e.g. âge du fer, mérovingien, Europe), and by discipline (e.g. anthropologie, beaux-arts). Available in French only. RTF:

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/partenaires/AIDEMUSEES/telechargement.htm>

[Go to "Domaines, Direction des musées de France"](#)

- **Thesaurus of Graphic Materials I: Subject Terms (TGM I)**

TGM I was created by the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division to support both cataloguing and retrieval needs. It is used for subject indexing of graphical materials, including historical photographs, architectural drawings, artwork, etc. Includes a controlled vocabulary for describing "a broad range of subjects depicted in such materials, including activities, objects, types of people, events, and places". Proper names of people, organizations, events, and geographic places are not included. Available in English only.

[Go to "Thesaurus of Graphic Materials I: Subject Terms \(TGM I\)"](#)

- **ICONCLASS**

Iconclass is a subject-specific classification system; it is a hierarchically ordered collection of definitions of objects, persons, events and abstract ideas that can be the subject of an image. Museums can use Iconclass for iconographic research and the documentation of images (Description taken from the website). Consists of a classification system (approximately 28,000 definitions), an alphabetical index, and a bibliography with 40,000 references to books and articles of iconographical and cultural historical interest. Available in English only.

[Go to "ICONCLASS"](#)

- **Liste des sujets représentés (à partir du Thésaurus iconographique Garnier), Direction des musées de France**

Comprehensive thesaurus for controlled headings for subjects represented in works of art. Includes divisions for themes, nature, body and material life, psychological and moral life, society and social life, political and administrative life, armament and military life, agriculture and hunting/fishing, industry and commerce, transport and communication, intellectual and scientific life, arts, religious life, imagination,

ornament, geographic subjects, biblical, Buddhist, and Taoist subjects, mythological subjects, groups (e.g. national, cultural), period, and fictional characters. Members of the CHIN Standards Working group on the "subject/image" field have expressed their continuing satisfaction with the performance of the Garnier iconographic thesaurus, on which this version is based. Available in French only. RTF: <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/partenaires/AIDEMUSEES/telechargement.htm>

[Go to "Liste des sujets représentés \(à partir du Thésaurus iconographique Garnier\), Direction des musées de France"](#)

### *Artist Names Authority*

- **Union List of Artist Names (ULAN)**

Created by the J. Paul Getty Trust, the ULAN is a structured vocabulary that "includes proper names and associated information about artists. Artists may be either individuals (persons) or groups of individuals working together (corporate bodies). Artists in the ULAN generally represent creators involved in the conception or production of visual arts and architecture". The coverage of the ULAN is from Antiquity to the present, and it has a global scope. ULAN includes names, relationships, locations (for birth, death, and activity), important dates, and notes. The ULAN can include the vernacular, English, other languages, natural order, inverted order, or nicknames. There is no ""preferred" name identified in the ULAN; instead, many variants of the name are provided. The artist names in ULAN are multilingual, but the database interface is available only in English.

[Go to "Union List of Artist Names \(ULAN\)"](#)

- **Artists in Canada**

Artists in Canada, compiled and maintained by the National Gallery of Canada Library, is a bilingual union list that identifies the location of documentation files on Canadian artists. Libraries and art galleries across Canada have contributed biographical information and lists of their documentation files to create this resource which contains information for more than 55,000 artists. Each record includes: biographical information on the artist, artist technique, name variants, and file location. Available in English and French.

[Go to "Artists in Canada"](#)

- **Canadiana Authorities**

The Canadiana Authorities contain over 660,000 name, title and name/title authority records, representing standardized entries for Canadian authors/artists/creators or institutions. These authority records provide standardized access to personal names (such as artists and other creators), corporate body names and titles used in cataloguing by libraries and museums. Users can search the database by keyword, creator or institution name, or title.

[Go to "Canadiana Authorities"](#)

- **Virtual International Authority File (VIAF)**

The Virtual International Authority File (VIAF) is a research project of OCLC which combines the name authority files of many libraries into a single name authority service. The stated goal of the project is to "facilitate research across languages anywhere in the world by making authorities truly international". To create the VIAF, software is used to match and link authority records for personal names. "Users in their respective countries will be able to view name records as established by the other nations, thus making the authorities truly international and facilitating research across languages anywhere in the world." VIAF now has 16 participating libraries, over 13 million personal name authority records and plans to expand by including corporate names and uniform titles. Library and Archives Canada is participating in the VIAF project, meaning that their personal name authority records are now included in VIAF. VIAF is multilingual, but the web interface is available in English only.

[Go to "Virtual International Authority File \(VIAF\)"](#)

- **Library of Congress Authorities**

Authority headings for Subject, Name, Title and Name/Title combinations. Includes approximately 42 million subject and genre/form authority records, and 9.3 million name authority records (Description taken from the website). Available in English only.

[Go to "Library of Congress Authorities"](#)

### *Creator Roles Classification/Vocabulary*

- **Liste des rôles des auteurs /exécutants, Direction des musées de France**

Term list for creator roles - for example, sculpteur, calligraphe, graveur. Available in French only. RTF:

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/partenaires/AIDEMUSEES/telechargement.htm>

[Go to "Liste des rôles des auteurs /exécutants, Direction des musées de France"](#)

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) Agents Facet**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the AAT is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. The Agents Facet of the AAT contains terminology for "designation of people, groups of people, and organizations identified by occupation or activity, by physical or mental characteristics, or by social role or condition." It also contains a hierarchy of terms to describe living organisms - "descriptors for plants and animals intended for cataloging art, architecture, and related disciplines", including scientific and common names. This hierarchy of the Agents facet does not duplicate scientific taxonomies: "it includes levels and records that are inappropriate for a scientific taxonomy but are necessary for the target audience of the AAT, which is the art and architectural

history cataloging community." CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. The terminology found in the AAT Agents Facet is appropriate for use in museum databases that record the Creator Role (e.g. painters, sculptors, etc.), as well as for Subject (describing the subject depicted in artworks).

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\) Agents Facet"](#)

### *Place Names Classification/Authority*

- **Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN)**

Created by the J. Paul Getty Trust, the TGN is a "structured vocabulary containing "names and associated information about places. Places in TGN include administrative political entities (e.g., cities, nations) and physical features (e.g., mountains, rivers). Current and historical places are included". Geographical coordinates are also included. The terms in the TGN are multilingual, but the database interface is available only in English.

[Go to "Thesaurus of Geographic Names \(TGN\)"](#)

- **Référence bibliographique pour vos recherches toponymiques – Capsule documentaire no 2**

Published by La Société des musées québécois (SMQ), this guide recommends and explains the use of the Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN) within museums. Available in French only.

[Go to "Référence bibliographique pour vos recherches toponymiques – Capsule documentaire no 2"](#)

- **Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB)**

The Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB) is maintained by Natural Resources Canada to store names for Canadian geographical features, including populated places, administrative areas, and water and terrain features (such as lakes, mountains). Museums may use the CGNDB to help with the consistent naming of Canadian geographical names in their collections databases. The CGNDB sometimes provides Canadian place names to a more detailed level than Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN); museums may wish to use it in parallel with TGN. Available online, in English and French.

[Go to "Canadian Geographical Names Data Base \(CGNDB\)"](#)

- **Banque de noms de lieux du Québec**

The Banque de noms de lieux du Québec is updated monthly and provides accurate information on more than 255 500 names of places in Québec (Description taken from the website).

[Go to "Banque de noms de lieux du Québec"](#)

- **Lieux géographiques de création, d'exécution et d'utilisation, Direction des musées de France**

Hierarchical terminology for place names to be used in documenting the creation and use of museum objects. Available in French only. RTF:

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/partenaires/AIDEMUSEES/telechargement.htm>

[Go to "Lieux géographiques de création, d'exécution et d'utilisation, Direction des musées de France"](#)

*Time Periods, Styles, and Cultures Classification/Vocabulary*

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) Styles and Periods Facet**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the AAT is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. The Styles and Periods Facet of the AAT "encompasses styles, chronological periods, nationalities, and cultures." CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. The terminology found in the AAT Styles and Periods Facet is appropriate for use School/Style and Period fields of the Artefacts Canada: Humanities database.

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\) Styles and Periods Facet"](#)

- **Liste des datations en siècle ou millénaire (périodes de création, d'exécution et d'utilisation), Direction des musées de France**

Hierarchical terminology for historical periods, such as: 2e millénaire; 10e siècle; 1ère moitié 10e siècle. Available in French only. RTF:

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/partenaires/AIDEMUSEES/telechargement.htm>

[Go to "Liste des datations en siècle ou millénaire \(périodes de création, d'exécution et d'utilisation\), Direction des musées de France"](#)

- **Liste des écoles, Direction des musées de France**

Hierarchical terminology for 'schools' of influence, used in cataloguing artwork. Available in French only. RTF:

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/partenaires/AIDEMUSEES/telechargement.htm>

[Go to "Liste des écoles, Direction des musées de France"](#)

- **Liste des époques et styles, Direction des musées de France**

Hierarchical terminology for periods such as : « époque Louis XVI », « Ming », « néolithique », and styles such as « Art nouveau ». Available in French only. RTF:



<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/partenaire/AIDEMUSEES/telechargement.htm>

[Go to "Liste des époques et styles, Direction des musées de France"](#)

- **Liste des périodes, Direction des musées de France**

Hierarchical terminology for periods such as : «7e siècle av JC». Available in French only. RTF:

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/partenaire/AIDEMUSEES/telechargement.htm>

- **Outline of World Cultures (Murdock) - Human Relations Area Files**

The Outline of World Cultures by G.P. Murdock organizes the peoples and cultures of the world by ethnic origin and assigns each group a unique classification number. The Outline of World Cultures is part of the culture and subject classification created and maintained by the Human Relations Area Files, Inc. (HRAF). This classification system is appropriate for use in the Culture field of Artefacts Canada: Humanities database. Available in English only.

[Go to "Outline of World Cultures \(Murdock\) - Human Relations Area Files"](#)

### *Materials and Techniques Vocabulary (Humanities)*

- **British Museum Materials Thesaurus**

This thesaurus, developed by the British Museum based on the materials found in their collection, covers a very wide range of materials. It has three top-level terms: Organic, Inorganic, and Processed Material. Available in English only.

[Go to "British Museum Materials Thesaurus"](#)

- **Vocabulaire Techniques - Matériaux, Direction des Musées de France**

Hierarchical vocabulary for techniques, arranged by the type of material associated with each technique. Available in French only. RTF:

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/partenaire/AIDEMUSEES/telechargement.htm>

[Go to "Vocabulaire Techniques - Matériaux, Direction des Musées de France"](#)

- **Définitions des techniques, médiums, matériaux et supports, Direction des Musées de France**

Glossary of terms for technique, medium, material, and support. Alphabetical list. Available in French only.

[Go to "Définitions des techniques, médiums, matériaux et supports, Direction des Musées de France"](#)

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) Materials Facet**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the AAT is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. The Materials Facet of the AAT contains terminology for "physical substances, whether naturally or synthetically derived. These range from specific materials to types of material designated by their function, such as "colorants", and from raw materials to those that have been formed or processed into products that are used in fabricating structures or objects". CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. The terminology found in the AAT Materials Facet is appropriate for use in the Materials, Medium, and Support fields of the Artefacts Canada: Humanities database.

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\) Materials Facet"](#)

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) Processes and Techniques Hierarchy**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the AAT is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. The Processes and Techniques of the AAT contains terminology for "actions and methods performed physically on or with materials and objects, and for processes occurring in materials and objects." CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. The terminology found in the AAT Processes and Techniques Hierarchy is appropriate for use in the Technique and Decorative Technique fields of the Artefacts Canada: Humanities database, as well as some Condition fields within museum collections management systems.

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\) Processes and Techniques Hierarchy"](#)

- **Building Materials Thesaurus - National Monuments Record**

Thesaurus of construction materials for built heritage. Includes top-level terms: animal; earth mix; man made material; material <by form>; metal; mineral; stone; textile; vegetal. Available in English only.

[Go to "Building Materials Thesaurus - National Monuments Record"](#)

### *Archaeology and Architecture Classification/Vocabulary*

- **Thesaurus of Monument Types - National Monuments Record**

Hierarchical thesaurus of monument types (e.g. opera house, foundry, factory, mill, cemetery, etc. Includes alphabetical index. Available in English only.

[Go to "Thesaurus of Monument Types - National Monuments Record"](#)

- **Le thésaurus de la désignation, (oeuvres architecturales et mobilières), Direction des musées de France**

A hierarchical thesaurus of 1135 terms used for the designation of architectural works and of 2529 terms used for the designation of movable heritage works. Browse Edifices or Mobilier, hierarchically or alphabetically (Description translated from the website). Available in French only. Available at <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/inventai/patrimoine/> (select "vocabularies").

[Go to "Le thésaurus de la désignation, \(oeuvres architecturales et mobilières\), Direction des musées de France"](#)

- **Méthodes de collecte, types de sites et lieux géographiques de découverte, Direction des musées de France**

Hierarchical terminology for "collection methods", "site types", and "place of discovery". Available in French only. RTF: <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/partenaires/AIDEMUSEES/telechargement.htm>

[Go to "Méthodes de collecte, types de sites et lieux géographiques de découverte, Direction des musées de France"](#)

- **Building Materials Thesaurus - National Monuments Record**

Thesaurus of construction materials for built heritage. Includes top-level terms : animal; earth mix; man made material; material <by form>; metal; mineral; stone; textile; vegetal. Available in English only.

[Go to "Building Materials Thesaurus - National Monuments Record"](#)

- **Archaeological and Built Heritage Thesauri - National Monuments Record**

A series of thesauri developed by the National Monuments Record in England, to be used in documentation of archaeological sites and built heritage. Includes thesauri for: Building Materials, Monument Types, Military and defensive sites, Archaeological components and evidence, and many others. Available in English only.

[Go to "Archaeological and Built Heritage Thesauri - National Monuments Record"](#)

### *Species Classification/Vocabulary (Natural Sciences)*

- **Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS) - Taxon based biological information system**

ITIS is a database created by an international partnership of agencies and taxonomic specialists. ITIS provides information on species names and their hierarchical classification; it includes "documented taxonomic information of flora and fauna from both aquatic and terrestrial habitats". For each scientific name, ITIS includes "the authority (author and date), taxonomic rank, associated synonyms and vernacular names where available, a unique taxonomic serial number, data source information

(publications, experts, etc.) and data quality indicators". Available in French and English.

[Go to "Integrated Taxonomic Information System \(ITIS\) - Taxon based biological information system"](#)

### *Physical Attributes Classification/Vocabulary*

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) Physical Attributes Facet**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the AAT is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. The Physical Attributes Facet of the AAT contains terminology for aspects of artifacts and materials such as "size and shape, chemical properties of materials, qualities of texture and hardness, and features such as surface ornament and color." CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. The terminology found in the AAT Physical Attributes Facet is appropriate for use in fields such as Decorative Motif, Decorative Element, and other physical description fields of the Artefacts Canada: Humanities database. The Physical Attributes Facet includes a hierarchy for Conditions and Effects which would be useful vocabulary control for Condition fields within museum collections management systems.

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\) Physical Attributes Facet"](#)

- **DOCAM Glossaurus**

The DOCAM Glossaurus is a bilingual glossary of terms used in documentation, preservation, technologies, and practices used with new media art. The glossary is arranged as a faceted thesaurus; the five main facets include: Activities, Agents, Art Practices, Components, and Manifestation & Reception. Available in English and French.

[Go to "DOCAM Glossaurus"](#)

### *Disciplines Vocabulary*

- **Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) Disciplines Hierarchy**

Created by the J.Paul Getty Trust, the AAT is a thesaurus of terms used in the cataloguing and indexing of art, architecture, artifactual, and archival materials. The AAT Disciplines Hierarchy (a section of the Activities Hierarchy) contains terminology for "branches of learning, areas of specialization, and professions and professional specialties." CHIN recommends the use of the AAT for museums with broad humanities collections. The terminology found in the AAT Disciplines Hierarchy is appropriate for use in the Discipline field of the Artefacts Canada: Humanities database.

[Go to "Art & Architecture Thesaurus \(AAT\) Disciplines Hierarchy"](#)

- **CHIN Discipline Authority List proposed for the Humanities (2006)**

Derived from the Art & Architecture Thesaurus, this short list of 43 terms, providing broader terms, narrower terms, related terms, and scope notes, is appropriate for use in the Discipline field of the Artefacts Canada: Humanities database. Available in English and French.

[Go to "CHIN Discipline Authority List"](#)

## Standards for Thesaurus Construction

Standards have been created to guide the development of monolingual and multilingual thesauri. Museums often create their own thesauri or adapt existing standards to their needs, and the use of thesaurus construction standards will guide this process. Thesauri that have been constructed following these standards are easier to share or to integrate with other thesauri.

The standards for creation of thesauri will provide some guidelines as to how the thesaurus should be structured, what kind of relationships should be included, how to identify preferred terms, etc. However, many thesauri do not follow all the rules of these standards for thesaurus construction, and are still effective tools for indexing and retrieving data.

- **Thesauri for Information Retrieval (ISO 25964-1:2011)**

ISO 25964-1:2011 gives recommendations for the development and maintenance of thesauri intended for information retrieval applications. It is applicable to vocabularies used for retrieving information about all types of information resources, irrespective of the media used (text, sound, still or moving image, physical object or multimedia) including knowledge bases and portals, bibliographic databases, text, museum or multimedia collections, and the items within them. ISO 25964-1:2011 also provides a data model and recommended format for the import and export of thesaurus data. ISO 25964-1:2011 is applicable to monolingual and multilingual thesauri (Description taken from the website).

[Go to "Thesauri for Information Retrieval \(ISO 25964-1:2011\)"](#)

- **Thesaurus principles and practice**

A concise summary of the most important principles for museum use of thesauri. Describes best practice for creating or modifying thesauri. Available in English only

[Go to "Thesaurus principles and practice"](#)

## Cataloguing Rules (Data Content Standards)

Data Content standards (sometimes called cataloguing rules) provide rules for recording museum collections information. They can include information on punctuation, diacritics, rules for recording titles, names of people, places, and organizations, capitalization, date formats, etc. Consistent documentation, both within single databases and across multiple repositories, will increase access to the content by maximizing search results. Data content

standards are also important in manual systems. The following content standards are especially relevant in the museum context:

- **Cataloguing Cultural Objects (CCO) A Guide to Describing Cultural Works and Their Images**

CCO is a data content standard which is designed for cataloguing works of art, cultural artifacts, and their visual surrogates; cataloguing original objects may require some additional, specialized guidelines. CCO helps control the choice of terms, and defines order, syntax, and form for data values for cataloguing cultural objects. It can be used in the development of in-house cataloguing rules. The primary emphasis of CCO is on descriptive metadata; it excludes administrative and technical metadata. Controlled vocabularies and thesauri are recommended. CCO is a "manual for describing, documenting, and cataloging cultural works and their visual surrogates. The primary focus of CCO is art and architecture, including but not limited to paintings, sculpture, prints, manuscripts, photographs, built works, installations, and other visual media. CCO also covers many other types of cultural works, including archaeological sites, artifacts, and functional objects from the realm of material culture." CHIN's "CCO Assessment Working Group" (one of CHIN's Standards Working Groups) completed a project in 2008 to assess the CCO for use in Canadian museums. After examining the implications of using CCO within their own institutions, developing a set of sample records, and completing a test using CCO rules to catalogue a new collection, they have recommended CCO for use within Canadian museums with humanities collections. CHIN has enhanced the CHIN Humanities Data Dictionary with the addition of CCO rules. CCO is a project of the Visual Resources Association (VRA). Available in English only.

[Go to "Cataloguing Cultural Objects \(CCO\) A Guide to Describing Cultural Works and Their Images"](#)

- **Resource Description and Access (RDA) and Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edition (AACRII)**

RDA (which succeeded the older AACRII) is a set of cataloguing rules used by libraries in most English-speaking countries, and increasingly used throughout the world. Useful to museums in that it contains format standards for the names of people, places, and corporate bodies, along with rules for capitalization, abbreviation, and numerals. In general, museums will find the Cataloguing Cultural Objects (CCO) standard more suitable to their needs, but RDA will be of use to museums with bibliographic collections.

[Go to "Resource Description and Access \(RDA\) and Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edition \(AACRII\)"](#)

- **Rules for Archival Description (RAD)**

RAD is the Canadian standard for archival description. It provides a set of rules which "aim to provide a consistent and common foundation for the description of archival material within fonds, based on traditional archival principles" It contains information on the units of information to be recorded about archival collections, as well as rules for consistent cataloguing of all types of material, at multiple levels

(fonds, series, files and item levels). Item level rules are based on AACRII. Maintained by the Canadian Committee on Archival Description of the Canadian Council of Archives. Available in English and French.

[Go to "Rules for Archival Description \(RAD\)"](#)

- **Les règles d'inscription des noms propres - Capsule documentaire no 4**

Developed by the Société des musées québécois (SMQ), this document offers guidelines for recording proper names (names of people and organizations). Available in French only.

[Go to "Les règles d'inscription des noms propres - Capsule documentaire no 4"](#)

- **Documenting Missing and Uncertain Information - Documentation Tips no 7**

This tip sheet contains information on how to deal with uncertain or missing information when documenting museum collections. Available in French and English.

[Go to "Documenting Missing and Uncertain Information - Documentation Tips no 7" \(PDF version, 38.3 KB\)](#)

## Interchange (Data Format Standards)

There is an increasing need for museums to exchange their data with each other (e.g. for exhibition planning or research), for museums to exchange data internally (e.g. among departments, applications or platforms), and also for museums to include their data in collective resources. There are several ways that museums can exchange or share cultural heritage data, such as:

- import/export and transfer of data files
- harvesting.

Standards have been developed to make these activities possible.

- [Meaningful Data Exchange](#)
  - [Conceptual Reference Model](#)
  - [XML](#)
  - [XML Schemas for Museums](#)
  - [Data Mapping](#)
  - [Data Harvesting](#)

### Meaningful Data Exchange

Most collections management software has the capability to export or import data in a number of formats. This makes it possible for a museum to export their collections management data for transfer to another system and/or organization. But the challenge is



to transfer the data without losing any of the "meaning" or precision of the data in the process. Much of this meaning is not inherent in the actual data, but is in the definitions of the data elements used by the system, and the relationships between data elements. For example, museum collections data may contain a large number of personal names and dates, but unless these data elements are described (e.g. creator name, creator birth date, cataloguer name, collector name, collection date, etc.) and the relationships between the fields are clear, the data are not very useful.

There are a variety of tools, standards, and protocols to assist with exchange of cultural heritage data. These tools are used to define a structure for the various data elements, and also to exchange the data along with the relationships.

### *Conceptual Reference Model*

- **CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model (CIDOC CRM)**

"The CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model (CRM) provides definitions and a formal structure for describing the implicit and explicit concepts and relationships used in cultural heritage documentation", and "is intended to be a common language for domain experts and implementers to formulate requirements for information systems and to serve as a guide for good practice of conceptual modelling". The scope of the CIDOC CRM is very broad, and is intended to cover all information required for the documentation and management of cultural heritage. It contains 86 classes and 137 unique properties. CIDOC CRM is "intended to promote a shared understanding of cultural heritage information by providing a common and extensible semantic framework that any cultural heritage information can be mapped to. In this way, it can provide the "semantic glue" needed to mediate between different sources of cultural heritage information, such as that published by museums, libraries and archives." CIDOC CRM has an 'event-centred' approach to the representation of metadata (such as creation and use), which is now regarded as the most flexible way to model cultural heritage data. An encoding of the CIDOC CRM is provided in RDF Schema, but it is possible to represent it in other ways. It is recognized as an ISO standard: ISO 21127:2006. CIDOC CRM instances can be encoded in RDF, XML, OWL, etc. CIDOC CRM has been harmonized with FRBR (which deals with Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records).

[Go to "CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model \(CIDOC CRM\)"](#)

### *XML*

(Extensible Markup Language) can be used to allow information systems to share structured data. XML (and the community-specific standards based on it) is useful for sharing data between applications, because the data contain tags that describe what the data represent. XML provides a way to exchange not only the data, but also the meaning inherent within the data structure and relationships. Increasingly, XML is offered as an export option with commercial collections management software. Any structured museum data can be encoded in XML.

## *XML Schemas for Museums*

There are several XML-based, "community-specific" standards which have been developed to facilitate the exchange of museum and cultural heritage data. Some important XML Schemas that have been developed specifically for museum data include:

- **Lightweight Information Describing Objects (LIDO)**

LIDO (Lightweight Information Describing Objects) is an XML harvesting schema intended to transfer data from museum collections databases to multilingual data aggregations (such as Artefacts Canada) and for sharing museum data on the web. LIDO can represent the full range of descriptive information about museum objects, and can be used for museum data of many disciplines (e.g. art, cultural, natural science). LIDO is the result of an international collaboration based upon CDWA Lite and museumdat schemas, and is compliant with CIDOC CRM and aligned with SPECTRUM. Some collections management software systems are able to export LIDO records, enabling easier interchange. LIDO was announced in late 2010. It is available in English only.

[Go to "Lightweight Information Describing Objects \(LIDO\)"](#)

- **CDWA-Lite XML Schema**

CDWA Lite is an XML schema to describe a format for core records for works of art and material culture. CDWA Lite is based on the Categories for the Description of Works of Art (CDWA), a metadata standard developed by the Art Information Task Force (AITF). CDWA Lite records are intended for contribution to union catalogs and other repositories using the Open Archives Initiative (OAI) harvesting protocol. Because of its focus on 'core' records, CDWA deals with only a subset of the data elements contained in CIDOC CRM, and is much simpler. CDWA Lite has 22 elements; 9 of these are required. In 2010, Lightweight Information Describing Objects (LIDO) was created by harmonizing the CDWA Lite and museumdat schemas. Available in English only.

[Go to "CDWA-Lite XML Schema"](#)

## *Data Mapping*

Regardless of whether a museum is exchanging data in tab-delimited format, XML, or another format, if the structure of the data source is different from the structure of the target database, data mapping will have to be done to make sure the data are interpreted properly in the new system.

Sometimes this "mapping" is done directly between the two data systems. For example, museums that contribute to Artefacts Canada can "map" their fields to the Artefacts Canada fields using a simple web interface, and then upload their data in tab-delimited or other formats. This "mapping" process allows museums to match each element from their local system to one or more elements within the Artefacts Canada database, so that regardless of what system or metadata standard the museum uses, data that the museum upload to Artefacts Canada are properly interpreted and displayed within the national database.

Recently, there have been developments to make mapping of cultural heritage data a more automatic process. Instead of mapping between local data models on a case-by-case basis, mapping everything to a common standard facilitates exchange. For example, data from a source database are mapped to a standard, such as CIDOC CRM, and data are exported in CIDOC CRM XML so that other systems that comply with this standard can interpret and use this data without loss of meaning or precision.

### *Data Harvesting*

As an alternative to "exporting" and transferring files to another organization or service, museums can also choose to "expose" their data for harvesting. In this scenario, the museum posts their data in some web-accessible location (either secured for limited access, or openly accessible) in a standard format, and the data can be "harvested" by others following standard protocols. In some cases, the exposed data are harvested and loaded into other systems; in other cases, the exposed data are merely queried, and the results are used by remote systems. Usually, data to be harvested are encoded in XML, and can be shared using metadata harvesting protocols and tools such as:

- **Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH)**

The OAI protocol is a potential means for museums to make their databased content more accessible on the Internet, more easily participate in distributed "portal" services, and re-purpose their collections management data. OAI defines a protocol both for metadata harvesting, and for exposing OAI-compliant metadata to be harvested. A museum that wanted to exchange data using the OAI protocol would create an OAI-compliant data repository by "exposing" their data in XML according to a simple technical protocol. Dublin Core (unqualified) is the minimum interchange standard required by OAI; however, any other metadata set described by an XML Schema (such as the CDWA Lite XML Schema) can be used for more detailed description. - configuring their Web server to handle OAI protocol requests. OAI is designed to be easy to implement, with low technical barriers. Available in English only.

[Go to "Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting \(OAI-PMH\)"](#)

- **OAI CatMuseum**

OAI CatMuseum is a museum-specific version of the OAI Cat software originally created by OCLC. It can expose harvestable metadata in Dublin Core format as a lowest common denominator, with CDWA Lite records as a richer format. Available in English only.

[Go to "OAI CatMuseum"](#)

## **Procedural Standards**

Procedural standards and guidelines are available as general frameworks and guides to good practice for museums. The resources in this section have been selected because they deal with (or include sections on) procedures for collections documentation and management. Museums can use these as a basis to build their own, institution-specific

procedures and practices for accessioning, numbering systems, inventories, image management, location control, loans processing, intellectual property management, etc.

CHIN has developed an online course which deals with collections management procedure and documentation practice.

- **Introduction to Documentation of Heritage Collections**

Introduction to Documentation of Heritage Collections allows you to acquire a fundamental knowledge and to develop the required competency levels needed to successfully carry out a collections documentation project in your institution. This introductory course on the documentation of heritage collections will allow you to learn basic theoretical concepts on the documentation of heritage collections, identify the available tools and recommended ways of documenting collections efficiently, and use appropriate criteria to make informed choices that are adapted to your specific needs. Available in French and English.

[Go to "Introduction to Documentation of Heritage Collections"](#)

Many of the provincial Museums Associations have developed standards or guidelines for museum practice, many of which include advice on collections management and documentation:

- **Alberta Museums Association Standard Practices Handbook for Museums, 3rd Edition**

The Standard Practices Handbook outlines standards of museum practice and makes suggestions for implementation. It includes: Museums and Society: how a museum interacts with its communities; Administration: museum governance and management; Collections: collections management, conservation and research; Programming: public programs, exhibits and publications. Available in English only.

[Go to "Alberta Museums Association Standard Practices Handbook for Museums, 3rd Edition"](#)

- **Association of Manitoba Museums Standards for Manitoba Museums**

This Association of Manitoba Museums publication is a guide to good standards of practice for Manitoba museums. Available in English only.

[Go to "Association of Manitoba Museums Standards for Manitoba Museums" \(PDF version, 277 KB\)](#)

- **Collections Management Policy for the Nova Scotia Museum**

Includes Nova Scotia Museum policy for many museum functions, including collection development, acquisition, documentation, preservation, use, deaccessioning, and repatriation. Available in English only.

[Go to "Collections Management Policy for the Nova Scotia Museum" \(PDF version, 554 KB\)](#)

- **Museums Association of Saskatchewan Standards for Saskatchewan Museums - 2010**

This publication covers all aspects of museum operations, and has relevance for a wide variety of institutions. It includes operational goals and guidelines. Available in English only.

[Go to "Museums Association of Saskatchewan Standards for Saskatchewan Museums - 2010"](#)

- **Museums Association of Saskatchewan Collections Documentation Manual - 2014**

This manual covers a range of topics split into three parts, including Registration, Cataloguing and Use. Each of these three parts describes the processes museums should follow in documenting their collections, some of the issues that need to be considered, and the forms and files that are to be used for each process. Description taken from the Website. Available in English only.

[Go to "Museums Association of Saskatchewan Collections Documentation Manual - 2014"](#)

- **Comment gérer vos collections? Le guide de gestion du Réseau Info-Muse - Deuxième édition**

This guide developed by the Réseau Info-Muse of the Société des musées québécois (SMQ) includes a description of museum processes such as acquisition, loans in and out, and deaccessioning, and the fields required to document these processes. Includes fields for documentation of photographic reproductions, digital images, and rights. Available in French only. This document is currently out of print, but it may be available through a library or bookstore.

[Go to "Comment gérer vos collections? Le guide de gestion du Réseau Info-Muse - Deuxième édition"](#)

There are also guidelines and standards that have been developed within other countries that may be useful to Canadian museums:

- **Benchmarks in Collection Care for Museums, Archives, and Libraries: A Self-assessment Checklist**

Benchmarks in Collections Care is a self-assessment checklist that sets out clear and realistic Benchmarks for collections care. Many museums use Benchmarks as a performance management tool to review and measure their current standards of collections care and work towards improvement. (Description taken from the website). Available in English only. For PDF:

<http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/media/documents/c1/a227/f6/Benchmarks2.pdf>

[Go to "Benchmarks in Collection Care for Museums, Archives, and Libraries: A Self-assessment Checklist"](#)

- **The New Museum Registration Methods. 5th Edition. 2010. Edited by Rebecca A. Buck and Jean Allman Gilmore**

This reference book includes information on procedures for museum registration, object care and storage, collections management, documentation, computerization, insurance, security, ethics, legal issues, etc. Prepared by the Registrars Committee, a Standing Professional Committee of the American Association of Museums (AAM). Available in English only.

[Go to "The New Museum Registration Methods. 5th Edition. 2010. Edited by Rebecca A. Buck and Jean Allman Gilmore"](#)

- **SPECTRUM (Standard ProcEdures for CollecTions Recording Used in Museums)**

Created by Collections Trust, SPECTRUM is a guide to "good practice for museum documentation, established in partnership with the museum community. It contains procedures for documenting objects and the processes they undergo, as well as identifying and describing the information which needs to be recorded to support the procedures". As such, it is both a metadata standard for museum collections documentation, and a procedural standard. It includes information on the minimum UK standard for museum documentation. A simplified version, called SPECTRUM Essentials, is available for smaller museums. SPECTRUM is a well-respected standard internationally, and is increasingly used as the basis for international interchange of museum data. An XML DTD has been produced for SPECTRUM which serves as a system-neutral interchange format for museum data that is based on SPECTRUM. Available in English only.

[Go to "SPECTRUM \(Standard ProcEdures for CollecTions Recording Used in Museums\)"](#)

- **Registration step by step: when an object enters the museum**

This CIDOC fact sheet provides information on the registration process. Available in English, French, Spanish, German, and Dutch.

[Go to "Registration step by step: when an object enters the museum" \(PDF version, 24.2 KB\)](#)

- **Labelling and marking objects**

This CIDOC fact sheet outlines the "methods used for labelling and marking of objects with their accession or inventory number". Available in English and French.

[Go to "Labelling and marking objects" \(PDF version, 26.9 KB\)](#)

- **SPECTRUM Digital Asset Management**

Sets out a methodology by which digital asset management can be integrated alongside the existing curatorial and management functions of the organisation to ensure that they are widely adopted and sustained as a core element of practice. Provides information and guidance on the development of a Digital Asset Management Strategy (DAM Strategy), associated DAM Policies, the implementation of a Digital Asset Management System (DAMS) and the integration of Digital Asset Management Workflows (DAM Workflows) alongside the existing SPECTRUM Collections Management processes (Description taken from the Website).

[Go to "SPECTRUM Digital Asset Management"](#)

- **U.S. National Parks Service Museum Handbook (Parts I-III)**

A reference guide from the U.S. National Park Service on how to manage, preserve, document, access and use museum collections. Includes sections on Museum Collections, Museum Records, and Museum Collections Use. Available in English only.

[Go to "U.S. National Parks Service Museum Handbook \(Parts I-III\)"](#)