

DEFINITION OF ACQUISITION

An acquisition is defined by the transfer of title of an object from a donor to the Institute.

Title of an object transfers legally to the Institute when three conditions are met: the intent is clear of a person or entity to donate, the object is transferred physically to the institution, and the institution formally accepts the donation.

All acquisitions are made by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for the educational, scientific, and research purposes of MIT Museum. In addition to the policies set forth here, acquisitions are subject to MIT's Archival Policy (<http://web.mit.edu/policies/13/13.3.html>) and Policy on Acquisition of Art and Artifacts (<http://web.mit.edu/policies/14/14.7.html>).

DEFINITION OF ACCESSION

Accessioning is the combination of processing and cataloging an object into a museum's collection.

THE CORE COLLECTIONS TODAY

Each of the five collections encompass exceptional materials that are world-renowned by specialists in myriad fields. History of how the collection was developed or acquired:

- **Architecture and Design Collections** – established by William Ware in 1866, five years after MIT received its charter. These were among the founding historical collections of the MIT Museum.
- **Hart Nautical Collections** – established in 1922 with the creation of a nautical museum by the MIT Corporation, for the Department of Naval Architecture. The holdings were added to the MIT Museum in 1982.
- **MIT General Collections** – established in 1971, from the photographs and artifacts assembled for a display at the inauguration of President Jerome Wiesner. It was part of the original MIT Historical Collection.
- **Science and Technology Collections** – established in 1999, when the scientific instruments were separated from the memorabilia of the MIT Historical Collections.
- **Holography Collection** – an initial collection of approximately a dozen early holograms with documentation in the 1960s was augmented by the acquisition by the MIT Museum of the entire collection of the Museum of Holography in 1993.

COLLECTIONS

The Museum collects artifacts for its Permanent Collections in the form of apparatus, models, instruments, paintings, drawings, photographs, prints, decorative arts, memorabilia, audiovisual materials, and documentary written materials.

Objects may be acquired from academic and administrative offices within the Institute, or non-MIT related organizations and private individuals in the form of gifts, purchases, transfers of Institute property, bequests and exchanges with other repositories.

The Museum is guided by the principles and laws that concern the following:

- The Museum adheres to the archaeological standards of the Council of American Maritime Museums (article VI, section 3) and will not directly or indirectly acquire objects that have been stolen, illegally removed from their country of origin, illegally salvaged, or removed from commercially exploited archaeological or historic sites.

- In accordance with the "Guidelines Concerning the Unlawful Appropriation of Objects During the Nazi Era" and additional reports and recommendations prepared by the American Association of Museums and the International Council of Museums, the museum will not directly or indirectly acquire objects that were unlawfully or forcibly taken by the Nazi Regime of Germany during the period 1933 to 1945 from their rightful owners, who included private citizens, victims of the Holocaust, public and private museums and galleries, and religious, educational and other institutions.
- The Museum will not directly or indirectly acquire objects not in compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990.

The Museum does not accept acquisitions on which restrictions or special conditions, other than donor recognition, have been placed. Exceptions to this policy must be considered by the Collections Committee and approved by the Director. Partial title will be accepted only under conditions pre-approved by the Director.

Due to limited exhibition space and periodically changing exhibitions, no commitments shall be made to exhibit objects acquired for the collections in the Museum's galleries for any duration of time.

Curatorial departments periodically collect reference materials to support the Museum collections. These materials generally are in the form of printed catalogs, magazines, books, photographs and ephemera. This material is only of use to the Museum as reference to support its accessioned collections, and therefore has a different status and receiving procedure than the usual acquisitions process.

Selected MIT publications are collected for internal reference and exhibition purposes. The **Institute Archives and Special Collections** is the repository for MIT's official publications. It is therefore the Museum's policy to retain no more than three copies of a publication: a reference copy, an exhibition copy, and, when deemed necessary, a loan copy. The Museum does not maintain the archives of the Institute, nor does it collect the papers or manuscripts of professors, faculty, or staff unless they have first been offered to the Institute Archives and then only if the material meets the Museum's requirements for acquisition.

Objects will not be rehoused, preserved, cataloged, or made available for use by researchers until ownership has been transferred to the MIT Museum.

The MIT Museum makes every effort to include MIT's Environmental, Health and Safety Department (EHS) in the Acquisitions process to make safe any hazardous materials slated for the Museum's Collections. Curators are advised to contact the Lead Contact and General Safety coordinator. All Collections staff participate annually in EHS training for Managing Hazardous Artifacts.

FOR COLLECTING GOALS SEE COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENT

ACQUISITION CRITERIA

Potential acquisitions must meet three basic criteria:

Relevance: the object must support the Museum's mission and fit within its stated collecting goals.

Use: the object must have the capacity for use in exhibitions and/or for research and scholarly purposes.

Condition: the object must be in reasonable condition and must not require significant expense for treatment in order to make it relevant or useful unless such funds are provided for by the donor or other sources such as grants, or other special arrangements with another institution or organizations.

In addition, the following questions must be considered when evaluating a potential acquisition. If the answer to any one of these questions casts doubt on the ability of the Museum to properly care for or manage the object, serious thought should be given to declining the acquisition.

Is the source the rightful owner of the object and are there any conflicts regarding property rights or legal title?

Has the source requested that any restrictions or special conditions be placed on the acquisition? If so, is their acceptance justifiable given Museum policy?

Are there any constraints in terms of copyright, patent, trademark, license or any other intellectual property rights? Will all intellectual property rights be turned over to MIT? If the source is not the copyright holder, has the holder been identified and can copyright be transferred to the Institute or a licensing arrangement be made?

Has the provenance of the object been properly documented? Are there any concerns as to the authenticity of the object or its provenance?

Does the object unnecessarily duplicate another object already in the collections?

Is appropriate storage space available? Is the general collections budget adequate to make the object accessible? If the answer to any of these questions is no, the Museum should explore with the prospective donor the possibility of his/her establishing an endowment to support the extraordinary costs of care, storage, and/or access.

Are there any safety concerns related to the object which might demand special handling, display, and/or insurance requirements?

If the object is being purchased, is the price fair and reasonable? Could the object or its equivalent be acquired by gift or bequest rather than purchase?

ACQUISITION TYPES

Unsolicited objects offered as potential acquisitions for the Museum's collections are considered to be in the **temporary custody** of the Museum. If the acquisition of an unsolicited object is approved, the object will be formally accessioned into the collections and the Incoming Receipt of Property will be retained in the object's accession file. Unwanted, unsolicited objects will be returned to the source, if the source is known. If the source is not known, Museum staff will attempt to locate an appropriate repository for the object and if unsuccessful, the object may be considered abandoned property under the meaning of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 200B, and action will be taken according to these regulations.

GIFTS

The Museum does not accept donations in which legal title is not transferred to MIT. It is understood by the Museum that the donor's intent is to turn all title (and copyright where applicable) in the object over to MIT at some future point and an agreement to this end must be specified at the time of the gift. The Museum generally will use objects only for scholarly, educational, and promotional purposes. Any further copyright usage will be agreed upon by the Museum and the artist or creator.

Gifts to MIT Museum are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. If a donor wishes to take a charitable deduction, it is their responsibility to initiate IRS Form 8283 for Noncash Charitable Contributions. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is responsible only for certifying receipt of the gift and is not allowed to establish any valuations, nor provide any recommendations as to appraisers. Under no circumstances will Museum staff appraise donations or make arrangements for an appraisal on the donor's behalf.

TRANSFERS OF INSTITUTE PROPERTY

A transfer of Institute property will be considered for acquisition in the same manner as other acquisitions and in accordance with MIT's Policy on Acquisition of Art and Artifacts. Once an object has been transferred to the Museum, it cannot be returned or lent to the transferring office except in accordance with the Museum's policies. The Museum does not provide storage space, either temporary or long-term, for objects owned by other academic or administrative offices that have not been acquired for the collections. A receipt for the Transfer of Institute Property will be issued for all transfers and retained in the object's Accession File.

Transfers of Institute property may involve objects originally used as equipment. (ie: robots, lab equipment, etc.). These objects should be deactivated from the MIT Property Office inventory as part of the Transfer process. In some instances, property that was originally purchased with federal funds may require additional certification.

PURCHASES

MIT Museum maintains an acquisition fund, under the supervision of the Director, which is used towards the purchase of objects for the collections and for the direct care of collections, which is defined as the conservation of collections objects or the improvement of collections storage facilities.

If money for a purchase is to be obtained from a third party, the funds must be in hand or secured in writing prior to submitting an acquisition proposal to the Collections Committee.

The bill of sale or signed Receipt of Purchase will be retained in the object's Accession File.

BEQUESTS

Bequests will be considered for acquisition in the same manner as gifts. MIT Museum reserves the right to refuse bequeathed objects that do not meet its criteria for acquisition, or it may choose to accept only a portion of the bequest. For all bequests, copies of the will including all codicils shall be retained for the object's Accession File.

EXCHANGES

Exchanges are treated as two separate collections management actions:

Incoming objects will be considered for acquisition in the same manner as other acquisitions and must be approved before the exchange takes place. Title transfer documentation appropriate to the type of acquisition will be retained in the object's Accession File.

Outgoing objects must be deaccessioned in accordance with Museum policy. Deaccession Recommendation and Deaccession Action forms will be retained in the object's Accession File. Exchanges will only be made with another similar institution.

The Registrar will provide a report on acquisitions for the annual President's Report at the close of the fiscal year.

The Registrar will review the accession files at the end of every fiscal year to confirm completion of the transactions for that year.