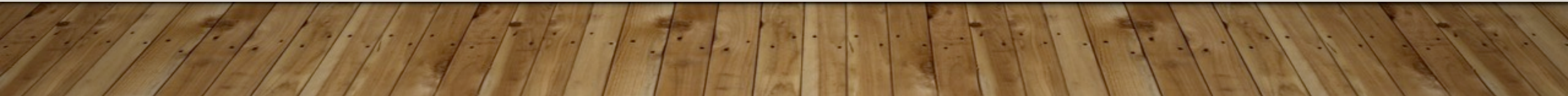


ISSUES WITH MUSEUM DEACCESSIONS: TOUGH DECISIONS, DIFFICULT OBJECTS

IF A COURSE OF ACTION IS DEFENSIBLE AND CONFORMS TO ETHICAL
STANDARDS, IT SHOULD BE CAPABLE OF WITHSTANDING PUBLIC SCRUTINY



COLLECTIONS PLANNING = BEST PRACTICE

- Collections development planning provides intellectual control over collections
- This planning provides a road map for future acquisitions AND deaccessions
- All resources of your museum should support the museum's mission or purpose; collections are no exception
- Collections are one way— an important way— to promulgate the mission
- Collections development plans align the collections with mission

COLLECTIONS MUST ALIGN WITH MISSION

- After all, museums collect artifacts but they do not exist for those artifacts
- Collections are there to inspire, delight, and illuminate. They do *something* for our visitors. “Museums are about somebody, not some things”
- Objects that are peripheral to mission take up time, space, and money--
- Deaccession maximizes resources— time, space, and money!
- Others may be able to “use” those things you let go but be vigilant about your fiduciary responsibilities to collections

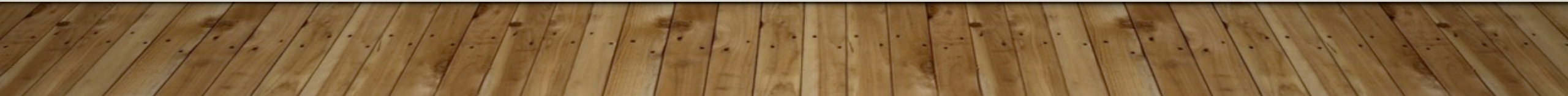
HOW DO COLLECTING PLANS HELP WITH DEACCESSION?

- Resist active acquisition before envisioning what you want the collection to include. Determine what you want and need according to mission.
- Collections should be **actively** shaped. This means:
 - curators go after what they want for the collection
 - curators must regularly cull the collection for items to be removed.
- Otherwise, how do you know what you should—and should not—be acquiring?

A WORD OF CAUTION: ACQUIRING TO SELL

- These non-mission pieces take up resources—space, staff time
- Can deteriorate on premises
- Takes focus off mission-related activities (Duty of Obedience)
- Collections managers become “clearinghouses” for sale of artifacts

Is it worth it?



THINKING ABOUT COLLECTIONS PLANNING

- To create collecting plans, think about your mission. Research, community, or experience focused?
- Many institutions focus on themes. What stories are important to tell in your communities?
- What objects must you have to tell these stories? What's feasible? What's acquirable?
- What objects seem *peripheral* to mission and audience?

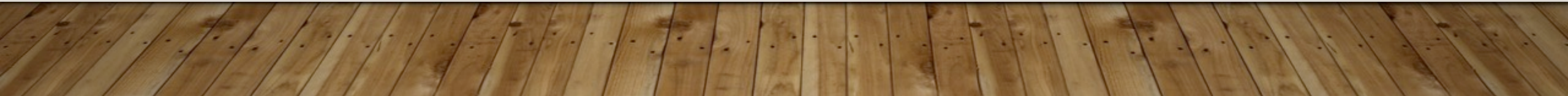
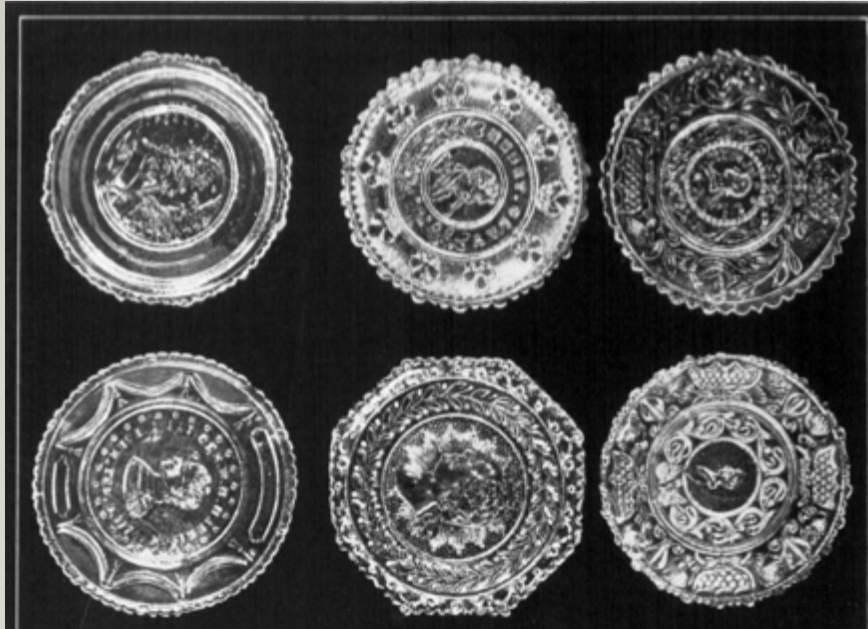
PROCEEDING WITH COLLECTIONS PLANNING

1. Align with mission: how can collections help meet your mission?
2. Do you understand what's in your collection? Better know. Resist pressure to deaccession OR acquire until you do.
3. Align your collections with these important issues or themes— what fits?
4. Refine the collection, Decide what to collect and you just don't need.

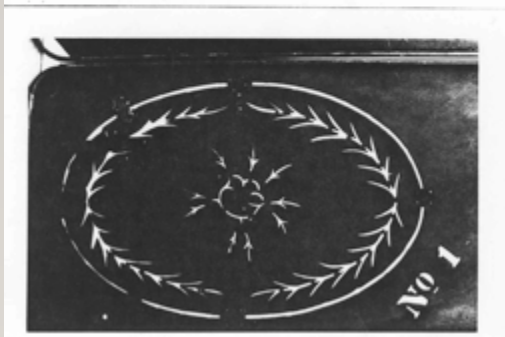
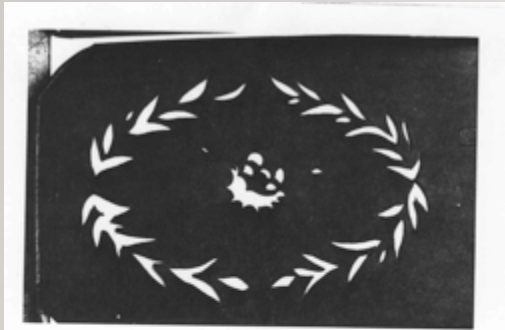
EXAMPLE: THEMATIC COLLECTIONS PLANS YPSILANTI HISTORICAL MUSEUM

- **Theme A:** From recreation to industry, the **Huron River** has played an integral role in every aspect of the lives of Ypsilantians for many generations.
- **Theme B:** Although not without conflict, **diverse cultural groups** have helped Ypsilanti flourish and have contributed to the unique cultural fabric of the city.
- **Theme C:** Ypsilanti's economy has been fueled by ***industry and education***.
- **Theme D:** Ypsilanti's residents have played a significant role in United States' ***wartime*** efforts, both on the home front and on the battlefield.

INCLUDES DETERMINING DEPTH OF COLLECTIONS



USE: RESEARCH? PROGRAMS? EXHIBIT?



Laurie LaBar-Kidd
Curator, History Collections
The Maine State Museum
83 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0083

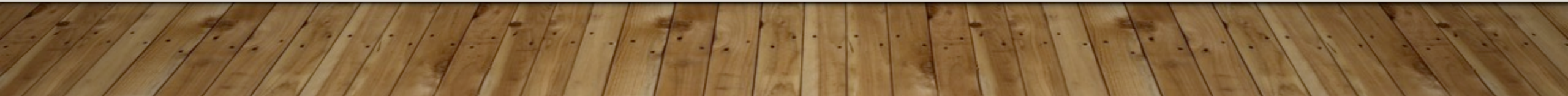
Dear Ms. LaBar-Kidd:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am inquiring as to whether your institution is interested in acquiring, for the cost of shipping, over one-hundred zinc stencil rug-hooking patterns created by Edward Sands Frost of Biddeford, Maine, ca. 1870...

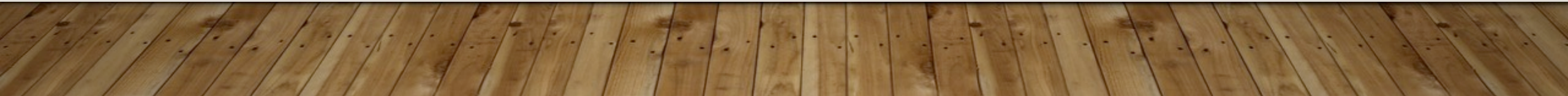
EXAMPLE: HISTORIC DEERFIELD ACQUIRES 1703 LETTER

- Collection of letters with famous signatures that were not pertinent to mission
- Some hesitated to deaccession items acquired because of ***famous names***
- Ultimately deaccessioned lot in 1998; wonderful finds for others!
- Historic Deerfield purchased it (\$7500) from funds from their deaccessions: *"We have about 30,000 items and each year our curators carefully comb the collection for certain items we could sell to acquire others like this letter,"It's an unusual find.... it survived [and] it is so germane to Deerfield"*

AND THE ULTIMATE IRONY



AND THE ULTIMATE IRONY



Your Credit is Good
BUT OUR
System is Cash



BEAUTY PRODUCTS

SOLD IN PACKAGES ONLY

SOLD IN PACKAGES ONLY



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Pocket Ben



PROCESS OF REVIEWING / DEACCESSIONING OBJECTS

- Collections Management Policy Guidelines provide the roadmap
- Partnership
 - Initiating Deaccessioning: Curator/Director
 - Overseeing Process: Registration
 - Consulting on donor relations: Development

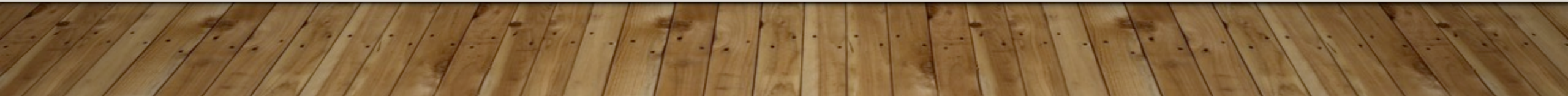
CURATOR

- The process should be driven by curatorial desire to create a coherent authority over the museum's collections.
- Working with the director, the curator is responsible for identifying objects that are candidates for deaccessioning
- Documents the history of the object, provenance, reasons for deaccessioning

CRITERIA FOR DEACCESSIONING

- Not within the scope of museum collection
- No longer useful for educational purposes
- Exchange would provide a better example
- Duplicate
- Damaged or in poor condition
- Incorrectly attributed, a fake, a forgery
- Acquired in a manner contrary to museum's acquisition policies

LIVING ARTISTS



REGISTRAR

- Responsible for all record-keeping and tracking the process from start to finish
- Support due diligence
 - At accessioning (date everything!)
 - At deaccessioning
- Research title
 - Is title clear?
 - Are there restrictions
 - Are there donor requests that need to be considered
 - As a courtesy, is it possible to contact the original donor or heirs to discuss the work



DEVELOPMENT

- Guidance on donors
- Guidance on restricted funds
- What happens when a donor family objects?

FORM



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
MUSEUM OF ART

Deaccessioning Form

Object

- A. Full description of object (including photographs):
- B. History of attribution:
- C. Provenance:
- D. Publications:

Source

Purchase

- A. If the object was purchased, state the fund(s) used and the price paid for the object:
- B. Are there any restrictions attached to the fund(s) with which the object was acquired?
- C. If yes, state restrictions:

Gift/Bequest

- A. If the object was donated or bequeathed, state the value at the time the object came into the museum:
- B. Are there any legal restrictions that would limit the Museum's right to deaccession the object?
- C. If yes, state restrictions:
- D. Is the donor still alive?
- E. Is the donor or the donor's family likely to make a further gift or bequest to the Museum?
- F. Has the Museum made a reasonable effort to notify the donor, heirs, the living artist, or other interested parties, concerning the plan to deaccession the object?

Title

- A. Has the Registrar researched the object's title?
- B. What documentation was used to establish title? Provide details:
- C. Additional comments concerning title:

COVER SHEET

RECOMMENDATION FOR DEACCESSIONING

Confidential, for internal museum use only

The following is recommended for deaccessioning:

Object No:

Artist/Maker:

Title:

Date:

Medium:

Dimensions:

Credit Line:

Submitted by: _____
Director

Date: _____

Verification of title: _____
Registrar

Date: _____

Recommendation Approvals

Museum Executive Committee: _____

Date: _____

Deaccessioning Approvals

Office of the President: _____

Date: _____

Board of Regents: _____

Date: _____

Attached: Photograph
 Appraisal information (if value over \$25,000)
 Printout of database information

CHECKLIST



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN MUSEUM OF ART

DEACCESSION ACTIVITY SHEET FOR UMMA OBJECT NUMBER: _____

- _____ Deaccessioning Form in file
- _____ Photograph in file
- _____ Appraisal information in file
- _____ Title documentation in file
- _____ Registrar confirms title is clear and signs Deaccessioning Form
- _____ Letter to donor/donor family in file
- _____ Disposition Method Confirmed
- _____ Director signs Deaccessioning Form
- _____ Submitted to the Executive Committee
- _____ Approved by the Executive Committee
- _____ Submitted to the Office of the President
- _____ Approved by the Office of the President
- _____ Submitted to the Board of Regents
- _____ Approved by the Board of Regents
- _____ Deaccessioning complete