



**ACCESS AND EXHIBITION POLICY – CLOTHING AND TEXTILES COLLECTION**

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Voted by the Collections Management Committee on March 16, 2012

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## 1. MISSION

The Clothing and Textile Collection houses more than 23,000 clothing and textile-related artifacts with local, national, and international significance. Founded in 1972, the Collection includes everyday wear and designer clothes for men, women and children from different continents and spanning over 350 years of history. In addition to examples of textiles from different continents, artifacts that depict clothing and relate to the production and embellishment of cloth are also part of our holdings. These include looms, spindles, needlework tools, patterns, historical fashion magazines and photographs. An integral part of teaching, learning, and research in the Department of Human Ecology, the Collection also facilitates community outreach for the University of Alberta. Sharing the artifacts we hold with students, faculty and the community is one of the ways in which we can help achieve the mission of the University, the Department and the variety of units that we are linked with. To better understand why we do what we do, we must look at the parts of these units' missions that are relevant to our work.

### a. University of Alberta

**“Mission** - Within a vibrant and supportive learning environment, the University of Alberta discovers, disseminates, and applies new knowledge through teaching and learning, research and creative activity, community involvement, and partnerships. The University of Alberta gives a national and international voice to innovation in our province, taking a lead role in placing Canada at the global forefront.”

(<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/facts/>, accessed July 26, 2011)

### b. Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences (ALES)

“The Faculty of Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences (ALES) is a science-based faculty that is uniquely positioned. Our professors and students draw from the natural sciences, the social sciences and the arts and humanities.... Community engagement, knowledge transfer and application of research are integral to all teaching and research within ALES.

ALES is home to over 1400 undergraduate, 400 graduate students and 110 faculty members. Our undergraduate programs allow students to cross disciplinary, cultural and language boundaries. We provide a graduate education experience that promotes the pursuit of leading-edge research and deep scholarship while ensuring the development of strong connections to the external community...”

(<http://www.ales.ualberta.ca/AboutUs.aspx>, accessed July 26, 2011)

### c. Department of Human Ecology

“Human Ecology is an interdisciplinary applied field that uses a holistic systems approach to examine the many contexts of people’s lives. In particular, we focus on the dynamic relationships people have with their near environments: clothing, family, home and community.”

(<http://www.ales.ualberta.ca/hecol>, accessed July 26, 2011)

### d. Museum and Collection Services

[Not listed as mission] “The University of Alberta Museums is a distributed network of 28 diverse museum collections located in faculties and departments across campus where they are used daily in teaching, research

and community outreach programs. Museums and Collections Services (MACS) is an academic support unit that is the central source of professional museum information, services, programs, and expertise. “

(<http://www.museums.ualberta.ca/AboutUs.aspx>, accessed July 26, 2011)

#### **e. Clothing and Textiles Collection**

**Mission** – As part of the University of Alberta, the Clothing and Textile Collection aims to support discovery, dissemination and application of new knowledge through teaching and learning, research and creative activity, community outreach and partnerships. Placed within the Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences, we draw on the social and natural sciences, the arts and the humanities to facilitate research and teaching priorities both at the University of Alberta and beyond. We welcome collaborative, multidisciplinary work and seek strong connections to the external community. Through acquisition, artifact use in the classroom, Web access, exhibitions, research appointments, displays and tours we aim to transfer knowledge and interest in our collection to engage individuals worldwide.

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## **2. WAYS TO ACHIEVE OUR MISSION THROUGH THE COLLECTION**

Clothing and textiles are integral to the study of societies past and present. They reflect critical features of systems of production, idioms of design and patterns of use – all topics addressed within the Department of Human Ecology. Clothing in particular opens a window into social practice; and individual items of apparel can provide invaluable evidence to social science and humanities researchers (student and faculty). This collection enables students and researchers to better understand how garments are made, how clothing interacts with the human body, and the function of fashion within various communities. Such information cannot be gleaned from an image: the actual object is essential to understand the influences of textiles and clothing in the lives of peoples from different time periods, regions and ethnicities. Collection objects are used in the classroom, Web site, exhibitions, research, displays and tours to support discovery and dissemination of knowledge.

#### **a. Classroom Use**

Many of the courses offered by the Department of Human Ecology use artifacts from the collection an integral part of coursework. Objects are used in teaching clothing and textile history, textile science, apparel design, product development, material culture and museum studies. Faculty members in all disciplines are invited to use the collection as a resource within courses. Within this context the Curator, Collections Manager, or individuals trained by them or under their supervision can bring artifacts into various classrooms. The Collections Manager usually stays with the artifacts at all times. It is up to the judgment of the Collections Manager to assess if an individual has the proper training to be left alone with artifacts. If brought outside the Human Ecology building, the issue of transportation and security will need to be addressed several weeks ahead of time.

#### How it addresses our mission:

Through classroom use, we aim to share what we currently know on our artifacts, get students involved and engaged through direct contact with artifacts that pertain to issues discussed in class and, when applicable, encourage their own path to discovery or towards new knowledge across disciplines. This is type of research is



among the most important as few collections of clothing and textiles exist within the country and direct access is rare. Clothing and textiles can be used in a variety of ways across disciplines to foster learning in many cultures and disciplines. Japanese textiles may serve, for example, to observe societal structures through dress, to address traditional agricultural practices such as indigo farming, or to discuss how clothing as a near environment relies on ideals of beauty anchored in a specific culture.

#### **b. Web Access**

Images and information on collection artifacts and current and past exhibitions can be accessed by anyone in the world through the collection Web site (<http://www.hecol.museums.ualberta.ca/>). Although different than direct access to artifacts, the Web site enables us to share our treasures with the world so that discovery goes beyond the classroom and the gallery to **expand across time and geographic boundaries**. Through access to our database and archive of exhibitions, individuals can access primary source material (the artifacts) or learn about these objects through research conducted for exhibitions. Information and new scholarly research on our collection can thus be disseminated in the most efficient way.

##### How it addresses our mission:

The Web site is developed with different publics in mind. The online database interface enables virtual access to our collection (<http://collections.museums.ualberta.ca/cltx/>). Individuals can use easy-to-understand vocabulary terms, dynamic graphics and helpful visuals to access artifacts. Ways of understanding these objects are offered through exhibition links that both disseminate information on current exhibition research and hosts an archive of past exhibitions. Educational activities for school groups may accompany these exhibition Web sites and reach a younger public. Information on museum practices and preventive conservation is also available on the Web site to help community members understand how to address the safe-keeping of clothing and textiles.

#### **c. Exhibitions**

Exhibitions can occur within the Human Ecology Gallery, in one of its many display cases situated on different floors within the building, in other secured and controlled spaces within the University, or, lastly, off campus. Exhibitions are different from displays as they offer rigorous analysis and interpretation of the artifacts within a coherent theme. Unlike articles or books, artifacts used in exhibitions are not meant to illustrate a written narrative. Objects selected for exhibition must be edited and carefully placed to convey a story through a visual discourse. Their selection and juxtaposition must be thoughtfully done and accompanying texts should convey in few words the essence of the research conducted. Accompanying activities for different age groups may be posted on a Web link or in-depth articles written to provide detail on new findings.

##### How it addresses our mission:

Exhibitions are an excellent way to advance research on material culture. They can advance scholarship in many fields of study and reach a wide variety of constituents in different ways. While scholarly articles and the popular press may reach specialized audiences or a certain age and demographic group, exhibitions can offer an open-ended experience to a multitude of viewers. They offer the most efficient way to offer direct exposure to artifacts and to foster community involvement and partnerships. While exhibitions can convey existing knowledge, rigorous research may lead to new knowledge and its dissemination. As people learn in different ways, they may capture a public that would not have been engaged otherwise.

#### **d. Research Resources**

Students from all disciplines are encouraged to make research appointments to study artifacts in the Collection. Frequent student use is expected for case studies in courses such as design, history, business, marketing, material culture and museum studies. Faculty members and researchers in all disciplines are invited to use the Collection as a resource within courses and for their research. Community members can also make research appointments. Interested parties must contact the Collections Manager to discuss their needs by mail, email or telephone.

##### How it addresses our mission:

Direct contact with artifacts fosters the discovery process, research and learning and may lead to new knowledge and its dissemination. Although it may not be the most efficient use of time and resources on behalf of the Collection staff, it is often the only way that a researcher can grasp the full essence and multi-sensorial nature of the artifacts and the craftsmanship involved in its making.

#### **e. Displays**

Displays are easy ways to share our Collection and allow direct access to artifacts to a broad audience. They do not require as much time, energy and resources as exhibitions but may still be time-consuming as proper mounting of artifacts can take time and use resources and labels need revised and updated to convey current levels of knowledge. As for exhibitions, the length of time artifacts are presented must be measured to address deterioration due to the effects of temperature and light on objects.

##### How it addresses our mission:

While new knowledge may not be the goal of displays, they can ignite curiosity and careful scrutiny by viewers. They can lead to creative activity, community involvement and inter-disciplinary use. As exposure to the elements affects the artifacts physically and proper mounting still needs to be conducted, it is recommended that exhibitions of museum-quality artifacts be preferred over their straightforward display.

However, when artifacts are used for displays in cases or on the third floor corridor by the lounge, the individual(s) in charge of the display must properly mount the artifacts to insure its safety and professional presentation, must accompany the piece(s) with proper label(s) and must insure a high quality presentation that reflects professional standards. The person in charge must also report the date of the initial display and take-down to the Curator for inclusion in the master exhibition calendar in order to track the length of time an artifact is exposed to light. It is recommended that these displays last no longer than four months as they are exposed to undimmed light 24/7.

#### **f. Tours**

Students in all disciplines, faculty members, researchers and community members can access the Collection through guided tours of our unique storage facility. Interested parties must contact the Collections Manager a month ahead of their desired appointment date to check for availability. A maximum of eight individuals can be accommodated per tour. Members of the general public can also be given tours of the Collection. These must be scheduled on the last Thursday of every month, keeping in mind the Collections Manager's availability.

##### How it addresses our mission:

Through tours we can address the needs of a limited number of students on field trips with their teachers, visiting scholars and community members. Specific types of artifacts may be requested that are not currently the subject



of exhibitions or displays. Staff time being limited, tours are not the most efficient way to support discovery, dissemination and application of new knowledge. Tours can address community involvement and show good will to those inclined to help us in our mission.

### **3. EXHIBITION SCHOLARSHIP**

Scholarship can be demonstrated in many ways. While written documents have long been the tools scholars have used to disseminate new knowledge, the way they have presented this information in print has been structured over the years to assure their sources of information could be verified according to scientific methods. As for printed work, levels of rigor and intellectual difficulty are present in other demonstration of scholarship. With the growing popularity of museum exhibition, professional organizations have developed ways to evaluate scholarship in exhibitions. This section outlines criteria for assessing new exhibition or travelling exhibition proposals to foster the most intellectually rigorous use of the exhibition space, in keeping with our mission in higher education.

#### **a. Priorities of Use for Gallery and Display Spaces**

We are mostly adopting the exhibition assessment criteria of the Costume Society of America (CSA) as a model for the rigorous scholarly evaluation of exhibition scholarship. The CSA is a professional organization founded in 1973 with the aim to advance the global understanding of all aspects of dress and appearance. In 2002 the CSA began awarding “The Richard Martin Award for Excellence in the Exhibition of Costume” to up to two institutions each year. The award aims to address different aspect of curatorial work in order to understand the complex nature of costume exhibitions for: “They are collaborative efforts and represent the synergy of the curator's scholarship, a conservator's skill, the designer and preparator's artistry, the development department's fund raising success, the promotional skills of marketing, educational programming, and frequently the devoted efforts of docents and other volunteers.” The categories of audience consideration, scholarly rigor and accessibility have been added to the list and the CSA criteria have been slightly modified to include textile artifacts, as these constitute a significant portion of our collection.

#### **A. Exhibition Concept**

Is the subject of this exhibition engaging, imaginative, innovative, interesting, and/or long over due? Is the subject of the exhibition a standard idea, but the presentation significantly enhances the basic nature of the subject so as to engage viewers?

#### **B. Choice of Objects**

Do the garments, accessories and other objects from the exhibition speak to the subject of the exhibition? If the exhibition combines artifacts from the collection with other materials, such as paintings, decorative arts, etc., do these objects complement the artifacts and enhance the exhibition subject?



**C. Audience Consideration**

Does the exhibit consider the audience/s of the exhibit? Is it geared towards students, academics, the general public or a combination? Does the exhibition challenge the viewer or exclude them? Is it too simplistic or dumbed-down?

**D. Research & Scholarship**

Is the research appropriate for the exhibition artifacts, concepts and subjects? Is it in any way exceptional and/or groundbreaking? Does this exhibition contribute new information to the discipline of clothing and textiles?

**E. Scholarly Rigor**

Does the researched content of the exhibit reflect academic rigor? Is it appropriate to the level of the exhibition curators/designers and the audience (undergraduate, graduate, professor)? Is the text referenced adequately and appropriately (too little or too much)?

**F. Interpretation**

Are the labels, catalogue, brochure(s), and/or educational materials, etc. well written, accurate, informative, engaging, and intellectually stimulating? Does the exhibition materials written documentation interact effectively with the objects (e.g., through appropriate placement of labels) and support learning about the subject of the exhibition?

**G. Exhibition Design**

Is the exhibition particularly beautiful and/or profoundly memorable because of its overall design and presentation? Do the artifacts fit effectively within the exhibit cases/cabinets? Has the figure-ground relationship been considered by, for example, activating the spatial qualities of the cases/cabinets? Is there an innovative uses of space, materials, design elements, and/or media? Are interactive components used effectively and creatively?

**H. Installation: Mannequins/Forms/Mounts**

Have the objects been successfully presented on mannequins/forms/mounts in a manner appropriate for the object, period and general conservation standards?

**I. Accessibility**

Have the objects been successfully positioned and presented to be viewed from many angles? Are all text panels and labels positioned well for ease in viewing? Is the text san-serif type and contrasting well with colours to make it as legible as possible? Is the language-use and wording at an appropriate level for the audience/s?

**J. Overall Excellence**

Has the exhibition achieved excellence by surpassing standards of practice in scholarship, interpretation and/or design, or by introducing innovations that stretch the boundaries of accepted practice? Does this



exhibition serve as a model to visitors of the capacity of clothing and textiles exhibitions to provide transforming experiences to both students and the public in general?

Using the guidelines listed above, efforts should be made by the Collections Management Committee to establish a priority of use, to assure the best possible use of the Human Ecology Gallery and other exhibition space within the building. Rigorous research and advancement of scholarship should be at the core of how the space is used in order to address our institutional and departmental missions. Proposals will be carefully evaluated and proposals shall reflect the serious commitment by the author(s).

**b. Faculty Use**

When space is available, priority should be given to rigorous exhibitions that advance scholarship and can lead to both excellence in exhibition curatorial practices and accompanying articles in scholarly journals. This is a combination of traditional and innovative scholarship demonstration that can be better understood by academic institution when evaluating tenure and promotion dossiers. This is usually the domain of faculty members.

**c. Faculty and Student Co-curation**

Although mentorship cannot be imposed on faculty members, an ideal way to address exhibition scholarship and education is for the co-curation of exhibitions between faculty members and students. This can lead to the same outcome as exclusive faculty use for rigorous projects and give a unique and in-depth experience to a student.

**d. Class Projects**

Collaborative class exhibitions are an integral part of the Human Ecology Department. Need for the Gallery for such projects should be made to the Collections Management Committee as early as possible. As the exhibition schedule is established several years ahead of time, the earlier the request is made, the more feasible the request can be.

**e. Student Use**

Students can propose exhibitions but it is strongly recommended that they approach a faculty member for co-curated projects when they are undergraduates. Their proposals will be judged according to the same criteria for excellence.

**F. Use by Faculty or Student Outside the Department**

As the Department of Human Ecology supports the Clothing and Textiles Collection, priority should be given to members of its faculty, staff and student body. Use of the gallery for the exhibition of artifacts that are not part of the Clothing and Textile Collection are welcome. Levels of scholarship will remain in the evaluation of all projects.

## 4. EXHIBITION PROPOSALS & WORKING DOCUMENTS

Exhibition proposals from outside the Material Culture program should normally be structured so that prospective curator(s) reflect the time, efforts, and funds the project may require. This document is expected to convey a realistic assessment of the project for both the curator(s) and the staff of the Clothing and Textiles Collection. While an exhibition proposal is normally the first document to be sent for consideration, once an exhibition is accepted, further working documents are expected on set dates. Guest curators are expected to find their own sources of funding for shipping, borrowing fees, archival materials for mounting and display as well as any other out-of-pocket expenses their exhibition requires.

### a. Exhibition Proposal

This document should include:

- 1) Working title
- 2) Duration of time the artifacts can be on display  
N.B.: It is recommended that the authors of the proposal keep in mind that different mediums may require limited exposure to controlled lighting and specific temperature and humidity requirements. For example, textile-based artifacts require low light (five foot candle) and, under ideal conditions, should usually not be displayed longer than four to six months. The nature of the dyes present in the artifacts chosen and their condition may shorten or lengthen this time of exposure.
- 3) If set dates are required this should be explained clearly as well as the reason for the set date (ex.: conference being held locally or student graduating at set time)  
N.B.: Set dates may limit the possibility of the proposal being accepted.
- 4) Short description (one page)
- 5) Proposed object list  
N.B. Indicate possible loans and display method (i.e. three-dimensional mount, framing, hanging,...) so that preparation time can be assessed (assuming that the artifact is stable and does not require stabilizing or more advanced conservation treatment).
- 6) Preliminary Budget
  - What costs are expected and who is expected to cover these costs?
  - If the exhibition is dependent on fund-raising, list the avenues the curator(s) will take to address costs.

### b. Object List

A year ahead of the exhibition opening, an object list must be handed over to the Collections Manager of the Clothing and Textile Collection. If loans are requested from different collections and/or other institutions, the curator(s) of the exhibition must work with the Collections Manager to make formal requests on UofA forms. This length of time is necessary for outside loans and for the internal assessment of UofA artifacts. Loans from outside sources are usually required to be sent a year ahead of time. Advance request is usually mandatory for many institutions as it allows enough time for the staff to address requests, retrieve objects, assess their condition, and inquire as to their use in the near future. If conservation proves to be necessary, lending institutions may charge the curator(s) for the conservation fees in addition to loan fees and require the work to be done by their chosen conservators. In the case of advanced conservation problems, making a formal request a year ahead may not

provide enough time for treatment to be arranged. The curator(s) of the exhibition must find funding for external loan fees and conservation treatment by professionals approved by the Collection staff. If artifacts are to be mounted three-dimensionally by Collection staff, advanced notice is also required. Anyone requiring help from Collection staff should comply with this “year ahead” policy as it allows for better time management and is more respectful of our staff.

#### **c. Floor Plan**

Three months before the exhibition, the curator(s) of the exhibition must deliver a detailed floor plan. A plan of the Human Ecology Gallery is available on request. Aerial views on this plan are easy to produce. Help to produce a frontal view of the space can be provided. The floor plan must be detailed and include all artifacts and props (including items like display cases, supports, labels and label holders, text panels, etc).

#### **d. Research Report**

At the time of the exhibition opening or, preferably, a few weeks ahead, curator(s) must provide the Collection staff with a copy of all labels, texts and images for the archive and for Web inclusion.

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## **5. CHANGES IN EXHIBITION SCHEDULING**

Unexpected events may cause cancellations of planned exhibitions. Such cancellations should necessarily be rare. Exhibition proposals are serious commitments not to be taken lightly. Failure to follow-through on exhibition commitments undermines the goals and long term plans of the Collection, the lives and workloads of Collection staff, and the reputation of the Department and University.

Notice of cancellation or the possibility of a cancellation must be communicated as early as possible to the Curator of the Collection.

#### **a. Exhibition Cancellation by Faculty Member**

If a faculty member is unable to meet his or her curatorial commitments, extending the life of the current exhibition may be considered. If the artifacts cannot be on display for a longer period, finding alternate pieces for a second rotation may be considered. The Curator of the Collection may contact individuals who had accepted proposals in case they might be ready to present their project earlier. If another exhibition can be used to fill the space of the cancellation, The Curator of the Collection must consider all the ramifications it involves, such as loan request, schedules for mounting and preparation and advertised dates in the media. The possibility of an exhibition opening earlier or closing later to cover for a cancellation may be entertained, but cutting into the advertised dates should not be considered. If all else fails, the Curator of the Collection is responsible to produce a replacement exhibition. It must be recognized that such unexpected projects are unlikely to meet the normal standards of scholarly excellence sought by the Committee. This ad hoc exhibition will also impact the performance of the Curator in other research and educational tasks. As a result, it is strongly recommended that the reasons for the cancellation be kept on file to address possible re-scheduling or future proposals by the curator in question responsible for the cancellation.

**b. Student Exhibition Cancellation**

If a student fails to hand the Object List on time, it is strongly recommended that the exhibition be cancelled. This first delay is likely to lead to further delays with other working documents and give little lead time for replacement plans. Alternate plans listed in 5.a should be considered and, as stated earlier, the Curator of the Collection is responsible for producing a replacement exhibition.

**c. Exhibition Cancellation by Individual or Organization Outside the University of Alberta**

If an individual or organization outside the University of Alberta has made the commitment to present working documents on a timely matter and is unwilling or unable to abide by their commitment, the Collections Management Committee must be consulted to discuss the potential repercussions of cancelling the exhibition. The possibility of writing an exhibition contract will be considered in the future but is not likely to be used at this time. Alternate plans listed in 5.a should be considered and, as stated earlier, the Curator of the Collection is responsible for producing a replacement exhibition.

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