

Museum Store: The Manager's Guide

Basic Guidelines for the
New Museum Store Manager

FOURTH EDITION



MUSEUM STORE ASSOCIATION

Museum Store

The Manager's Guide

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Museum Store Association

Celebrating 58 years, the Museum Store Association is a nonprofit, international association organized to advance the success of nonprofit retail and of the professionals engaged in it. By encouraging high standards of professional competence and conduct, MSA helps nonprofit retail professionals at museums and cultural institutions better serve their organizations and the public. MSA supports museum stores and vendor affiliates through publications, annual meetings, regional chapters, networking and professional resources.

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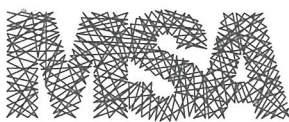
Numbers by the Book

Museum Store

The Manager's Guide

Basic Guidelines for the
New Museum Store Manager

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MUSEUM STORE ASSOCIATION

Denver, Colorado



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1 The Retail Store: An Integral Part of the Museum | 7

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS • The role of the museum store • Writing a mission statement and core values • Following ethical merchandising practices

2 Building Budgets and Tracking Stats | 21

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS • Formulating a budget • Measuring the store's performance • Establishing accounting procedures and maintaining accurate records • Selecting a point-of-sale and inventory control system

3 Managing Merchandise | 47

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS • Developing a sound merchandise plan • Exploring product resources • Researching licensing partnerships • Managing your inventory

4 Designing Displays | 77

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS • Strategically planning the store layout • Designing effective visual displays • Merchandising for maximum impact

5 Managing Staff | 91

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS • Leadership words of wisdom • Selecting staff and establishing personnel policies • Training motivated and productive employees • Recruiting and managing volunteers • Consultants: Seeking outside assistance

6 Creating Great Customer Service | 113

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS • Personalizing your store's customer care policy • Promoting proactive selling techniques • Responding to customer questions and complaints

7 Developing Effective Marketing | 121

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS • Turning customers into consumers • PR: Getting the word out • Establishing your identity in the community and beyond

8 Setting Up an Online Store | 137

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS • Opening an online store • Developing an appealing, easy-to-navigate website • Publicizing your web presence

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS | 145

BUSINESS FORMULA LIST | 153

Go to www.museumstoreassociation.org to access all sample forms and spreadsheets.

Note: In this edition, "museum" is used as a generic term for all types of nonprofit cultural stores.

The Retail Store: An Integral Part of the Museum

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

- The role of the museum store
- Writing a mission statement and core values
- Following ethical merchandising practices

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Educational Resource

The store must be viewed as an educational extension of the museum that reflects its collections, exhibitions, and programs. This is as important as its financial role. Your responsibility as the store manager is to see that key museum administrators understand the store's educational function and support the store accordingly.

Too often, the store manager is not part of the institutional decision-making or planning process. As a result, problems arise, such as a new exhibit that opens before the store has stocked related merchandise. In such cases, not only are visitors disappointed, but the museum misses income opportunities.

The store manager must carry the banner for the store as an integral part of the museum's educational and earned-revenue function to museum administrators. There can be tension between the store manager and other museum professionals, who may see the store as a commercial entity rather than an academic or artistic part of the institution. Unless you make persistent efforts to mitigate this tension, you could spend more time working through political snares than on your store operations. Avoid these perceptions by informed and focused choices in the books and products sold.

Seek to unite with other members of the museum staff for the greater mission of the institution. Ask the advice of the curator on sensitive merchandise decisions. Develop good working relationships with educational and exhibit staff and, of course, the director. Ideally, you should have direct access to the director or assistant director.

Because the store is a reflection on the museum itself, think carefully about the image you want to project and select merchandise accordingly. Ask yourself what niche your store can fill. Perhaps it will be "the best art bookstore in the city," or "the best source for local crafts." Excel in the area in which you choose to concentrate.

When selecting merchandise, constantly ask, "Does it relate to my museum?" If the answer is no or the connection is shaky, resist buying. The second question to ask is, "Can I sell it?" If so, you're on the right track. Review the merchandise on a regular basis and reevaluate how it relates to the museum's collections, exhibitions, and programs. Staying close to your organization's mission will be your guide as you and your financial officer decide whether or not unrelated business income tax (UBIT) will be due on sales.

Stay active and informed on museum policies regarding different kinds of merchandise, such as ivory, mineral specimens, animal byproducts, and architectural artifacts. The Museum Store Association (MSA) has adopted ethics policies to serve as guidelines on these matters.

Mission Statement

A mission statement is a tool to keep you and others informed of and focused on the purpose of the museum store. If it seems the store is getting away from its original intent because of changing circumstances or the often-frantic pace of retail, refer to the mission statement. If no statement is in place, write one and put it into effect. Use it for yourself and share it with staff, the museum, and the community to communicate the store's purpose. To develop a mission statement:

1. Refer to the museum's statement of purpose as stated in the nonprofit tax documents.
2. Compose a simple, short, clear store mission that reflects the museum's statement of purpose and the institutional mission statement.
3. Get approval for the store mission statement from the museum administration.

Here are some sample mission statements:

The purpose of the Photography Museum Store is to further the educational goals of the Photography Museum by providing visitors with merchandise for purchase that is related to the museum collections and exhibits and by providing earned income to the museum through profits on sales in the store.

The Natural History Museum Store extends the educational experience of the museum to its visitors, and provides financial support to the operations of the Natural History Museum.

The Botanical Garden Store's mission is to offer horticulture and botanical products and information for sale to the Garden's visitors. The store will provide education and delight to the visitor and funding to the Garden's programs through earned revenue.

Merchandise policies then follow logically from the mission statement. Issues concerning Unrelated Business Income Tax (UBIT), ethics, and the mission statement are all related.

Core Values

The next step is to develop your store's core values, which will be carried out by all of your staff. Work with your key staff and your supervisor to make three to five words or short phrases that act as a behavioral dashboard for all who work in the store. These should be posted for staff and become part of your company culture and their customer experience training. Examples:

Courtesy – Knowledge – Curiosity – Honesty – Enthusiasm
Our customers are guests: Welcome!
Our mission is our story: Tell it!
Our collections are our resource: Learn!
Our products educate: Show them!

Ethics Policies

If the museum itself does not have ethics policies in place on products made from endangered species, rare and one-of-a-kind merchandise, vintage merchandise, and archaeological and ethnographic resources, it would be wise to adopt such policies.

The following ethics policies have been adopted by the Board of Directors for the MSA membership. You may adopt them as they are or use them as a guideline for developing your own policies.

MSA Code of Ethics (Adopted 1984, Revised 2000)

MSA was established in 1955 to promote professional standards and to foster a climate of integrity within the museum store profession. Because the diversity of museums makes it impractical to address specific ethical issues that may arise for each museum store, this document is intended as a guide for store personnel.

The museum store is primarily an extension of the educational aspect of the museum and can be an important source of income. It is therefore the responsibility of the museum administration and the museum store manager to collaborate on a policy that will reflect their community of interest and purpose.

The use of the term “museum store” has specific meaning and carries with it important obligations to the public to ensure quality and authenticity. Improper use of the term is not condoned by MSA.

Management and personnel. Since public perception of the museum store is closely tied to the parent institution, it is the responsibility of museum store personnel to be fully aware of the source, quality, authenticity, and educational worth of all items sold in the store. Misrepresentations, whether intentional or not, reflect upon the reputation of the museum as well as the museum store. All museum store personnel, whether paid or volunteer, are representatives of the museum.

Volunteer managers are ethically obligated to ensure that their volunteer status is not used as an excuse to exploit the commercial role of the museum store at the expense of its educational function. It is unethical for museum

store personnel to use their museum affiliation for personal profit or to engage in any activity that may compromise the integrity of the institution or undermine the confidence of the museum staff and the public.

Reproductions, replicas, and derived products. The policy regarding the propriety of manufacturing reproductions, replicas, and derived products varies from museum to museum. Their sale in museum stores must be carefully regulated because of the ease with which they can be misconstrued by the public. All reproductions and replicas must be clearly and indelibly identified as such. Museum store managers are obligated to learn and observe applicable copyright laws.

Advertising implying that reproductions are original works is unethical, misleading, and, in some instances, illegal. Any representation suggesting that the value of a reproduction appreciates is also unacceptable.

Deaccessioned materials and the museum store. The sale of any deaccessioned materials through the museum store is unethical. Even though the item may have been officially deaccessioned, the public may perceive the transaction as the museum store participating in the liquidation of the museum's collection.

Information fair use policy. Museum store websites are an extension of traditional museum stores. Museum stores have an ethical responsibility to post in an easy-to-find and clearly written manner a policy detailing how they collect, track, use, and disclose information gathered about website visitors. Visitors to museum store websites should be assured that information collected for one purpose is not shared or sold to a third party without their consent. Visitors should also be assured that by providing personal information they will not receive unwanted solicitations.

Audience diversity and the museum store. The museum store enjoys a unique opportunity to serve a diverse clientele. For that reason, the store is obligated to offer items that are educational, safe, and of the highest quality.

Endangered cultural and natural heritage. The sale of any object or merchandise that is manufactured from or incorporates parts of any endangered species is a grievous offense against the moral principles upon which museums are established. Sale of illicitly acquired antiquities is offensive to the affected cultures and destructive to archaeological sites. MSA fully supports existing laws and recognizes the need for their rigid enforcement in order to preserve and protect our dwindling cultural and natural resources from wanton commercial exploitation.

Ethics Policies for Endangered Natural Heritage

The Board of Directors of the Museum Store Association has approved the following guidelines for the sale of products that concern our endangered natural heritage and for the sale of reproductions.

1. *Elephant Ivory: Asian.* All commercial activity in Asian elephant ivory is strictly prohibited by law. The MSA fully supports all existing laws protecting the Asian elephant, its parts and products, and the rigid enforcement of laws.
2. *Elephant Ivory: African.* The MSA supports existing law concerning the commercial activity in African elephant ivory. The African elephant is listed by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) as "endangered." All commercial activity in African elephant ivory is strictly prohibited by law. The MSA fully supports all existing laws protecting the African elephant, its parts, and its products.

No ivory products, including ivory of undetermined origin or recycled ivory, may be offered for sale at the MSA Exposition or Product Development Marketplace.

3. *Other Ivory: Walrus.* The walrus is protected under the Maritime Mammal Protection Act under CITES. Ivory obtained prior to December 21, 1972, and authentic Alaskan Native Handicrafts incorporating walrus ivory may be sold with a permit. In general, commercial activity in fresh walrus ivory, other than Alaskan Native Handicrafts, is prohibited.

The sale of Alaskan Native Handicrafts is permissible, but each and every item offered for sale must be accompanied by the seller's certificate that the item incorporating walrus ivory is genuine Alaskan Native Handicraft.

4. *Other Ivory: Whale Teeth.* The sperm whale is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and by CITES. It also is covered under the Maritime Mammal Protection Act. Interstate commerce in scrimshawed sperm-whale teeth is allowed only if covered by a National Maritime Fisheries Service (NMFS) Certificate of Exemption that is issued for material lawfully held in the United States on December 28, 1973. Import for commercial purposes is prohibited. The same restrictions apply to material from blue, bowhead, finback, gray, right, and Sei whales.

The MSA prohibits the sale of scrimshaw whale teeth at the Exposition, unless the seller files with the MSA an NMFS Certificate of Exemption for each and every article offered for sale, stating the type and age of the ivory. Sellers of antique scrimshawed whale teeth must provide the NMFS Certificate of Exemption, as well as a certificate of authenticity, from a licensed antique dealer that the article is 100 or more years old.

The sale of imitation scrimshaw is permissible only if each and every piece bears an indelible maker's mark. Additionally, dealers are encouraged to provide written literature with each piece, stating that the article is constructed of manmade materials.

5. *Other natural products.* It is the obligation of the seller to know and to satisfy the requirements of all laws protecting a particular species, whether plant or wildlife, whose parts or products are intended for sale through the MSA. Sellers should be prepared to provide any and all documentation and certificates of exemption as required by CITES, the ESA, or state law.

Sellers wishing more information should direct inquiries to: Fish and Wildlife Service, Federal Wildlife Permit Office, Washington, DC, and/or to the appropriate state permitting office.

6. *Reproductions, replicas, and adaptations.* The MSA Code of Ethics permits the sale of reproductions, replicas, and adaptations of original artifacts. However, because such products are easily mistaken for "originals," the MSA requires that each and every reproduction, replica, and adaptation offered for sale at the Exposition or in museum stores be indelibly marked with a maker's name.

Sellers are encouraged to provide written information about the maker, method of manufacture, and the importance of the original that inspired the reproduction, replica, or adaptation; but this is not sufficient. A permanent mark must appear on the article itself so that its age and maker can never be mistaken.

Exhibitor affiliates are urged to read these policies carefully. To avoid delay in processing Exposition contracts, vendor members intending to sell any products listed in the above policies should enclose the appropriate documents with their Exposition contract.

Museum members should be aware that the products listed in the above policies have restrictions, the majority of which are dictated by federal or state law. Know the laws in your state. As a seller of products in an educational institution, you are obligated under the MSA Code of Ethics to be aware of and abide by your association's policies and guidelines, as well as the laws governing the sale of these products.

Ethics Policies for Archaeological and Ethnological Resources (Adopted 1984, Revised 1996)

National archaeological resources. The excavation, removal, damage, or alteration of irreplaceable archaeological resources on public lands and Indian lands for commercial or personal reasons is prohibited by the Archaeological

Resource Protection Act of 1979. The resources protected by the Act are found throughout the coterminous United States, Alaska, and Hawaii, and the islands of the Caribbean and the Western Pacific. The Museum Store Association supports all existing federal, state, local, legislative, and administrative regulations that prohibit the illegal excavations of archaeological resources for commercial or personal reasons. Archaeological resources excavated or removed from public lands remain the property of the United States government. Archaeological resources removed or excavated from Indian lands remain the property of the Indian or Indian tribe having rights to or ownership of such resources. The Museum Store Association recognizes the relationship between the marketplace and the destructive removal of objects for the commercial markets. The Museum Store Association disapproves of the purchase, sale, or exchange of any archaeological resource or any offer to sell, purchase, or exchange said archaeological resource, if the resource was excavated or removed in violation of any provision, rule, regulation, ordinance or permit in effect under a different provision of federal, state, or local laws.

The Museum Store Association adopts the following definitions, which are taken from the Archaeological Resource Protection Act of 1979, and retains them as guidelines in determining the status of archaeological resources.

Material remains are of “archaeological interest” if, through their scientific study and analysis, information and knowledge can be obtained concerning past human life or activities.

“Archaeological resource” means any material remains of past human life or activities that are of archaeological interest and are at least 100 years of age and the physical site, location or context in which they are found.

“Material remains of past human life or activities” means physical evidence of human habitation, occupation, use or activity, including but not limited to:

- surface or subsurface structures, shelters, facilities, or features;
- surface or subsurface artifact concentrations or scatters and the three-dimensional relationship of artifacts to each other in the ground;
- whole or fragmentary tools, implements, containers, weapons and weapon projectiles, clothing, and ornaments (including but not limited to pottery and other ceramics, basketry, cordage, weavings, coins, bullets, bottles and other glassware, flaked stone, ground stone, pecked stone, worked bone, metal, wood, hide, feathers, and pigments);
- byproducts, waste products, or debris resulting from manufacture or use of manmade or natural materials;

- rock carvings, rock paintings, intaglios, and other works of artistic or symbolic representations;
- portions of shipwrecks (including but not limited to armaments, apparel, tackle, and cargo);
- paleontological remains when they are found in a direct physical relationship with archaeological resources; and
- arrowheads, including any metal or stone projectile point triangular in configuration, specifically designed and/or used for an arrow.

National Ethnological Resources

Current law does not protect Native American ethnological materials. For many years collectors, art dealers, anthropologists, tourists, and others have bought, traded, or taken (in some cases, illegally) objects of a sacred and religious nature from Indian reservations. (General Federal Criminal Procedure Law, 18 U.S.C. 1163, has been used to recover a sacred object that was being offered for sale at a private auction.) To avoid improperly or illegally collected materials, members of the Museum Store Association can consult with their curators, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1979, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, federal wildlife laws and regulations, and the guidelines and policies of their own institutions.

International archaeological and ethnological resources. The Museum Store Association supports the following international UNESCO Convention and legislation that establish principles for the control of the trade in the international exchange of archaeological and ethnological materials as well as certain other cultural materials and antiquities:

- The UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.
- Title II of the U.S. Miscellaneous Tariff, Trade, and Customs Act of 1982, implementing the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.
- Title 18 of the United States—The National Stolen Properties Act and its amendment included in Title II of the U.S. Miscellaneous Tariff, Trade, and Customs Act of 1982.
- Title 19 of the United States Code—The Importation of Pre-Columbian Monumental or Architectural Sculptural Murals.

The Museum Store Association urges that its members refrain from purchasing international archaeological or ethnological materials exported from the country of origin in contravention of the terms of the UNESCO Convention.

Under the provisions of Title II of the U.S. Miscellaneous Tariff, Trade, and Customs Act of 1982, the specific types of archaeological or ethnological materials that will be restricted must be identified. Section 205 of the Act authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to list such material by type or other classification. Each listing must be sufficiently specific and precise to serve the two purposes of ensuring that (1) the import restrictions are applied only to material covered by the agreement or emergency action; and (2) importers and other interested parties are provided fair notice of what archaeological or ethnological materials are subject to import restrictions.

Documentation of ethnological material is of prime importance in dispelling any doubts about its legal ownership and export. Any Museum Store Association member who has doubts regarding the purchase of certain ethnological materials can contact the MSA office for references to the above laws and codes. The MSA office will periodically contact the office of the Secretary of the Treasury regarding the listing of archaeological and ethnological materials subject to import restrictions.

If any question arises during the MSA Exposition regarding the sale of undocumented objects or objects of doubtful origin or authenticity from dealers, the dealer must produce the following information upon request:

- documentation of lawful exportation; and
- satisfactory evidence that such material was exported from a country that has ratified the UNESCO Convention (the United States has ratified the Convention with the passage of the Miscellaneous Tariff, Trade, and Customs Act of 1982) not less than 10 years before the date of such entry on or before the effective date of the legislation prescribed under Section 205 (the listing of ethnological and archaeological materials by the Secretary of the Treasury).

The UNESCO Convention does not include a definition of international archaeological and ethnological materials. The Museum Store Association adopts the following definitions for international archaeological and ethnological materials taken from Title II of the Miscellaneous Tariff, Trade, and Customs Act of 1982 as guidelines in the determination of status:

- A. "Archaeological material" is defined as an object that is of cultural significance, that is at least 250 years old, and that normally has been discovered through scientific excavation, clandestine or accidental digging, or exploration on land or under water.

- B. "Ethnological material" is considered to be any object that is the product of a tribal or similar society and is important to the cultural heritage of a people because of its distinctive characteristics, its comparative rarity, or its contribution to the knowledge of their origins, development, or history.
- C. The Cultural Property Advisory Committee intends this definition to encompass only what is sometimes termed "primitive" or "tribal" art, such as masks, idols, or totem poles produced by tribal societies.
 - 1. Such objects must be important to a cultural heritage by possessing characteristics that distinguish them from other objects in the same category providing particular insights into the origins and history of a people.
 - 2. The committee does not intend the definitions of ethnological material under this Title II to apply to trinkets and other objects that are common or repetitive or essentially alike in material, design, color, or other outstanding characteristics with other objects of the same type, or that have relatively little value for the understanding of the origins or history of a particular people or society.
 - 3. Authentic contemporary crafts of articles used or made by distinct tribal members specifically for sale to the tourist market, or in the category of Airport Art, are not included in the committee's definition of ethnological material.

The manufacture and sale of replicas, reproductions, or adaptations or archaeological, paleontological, or historical objects for commercial use is permissible within certain guidelines. All aspects of the commercial venture must be carried out in a manner that will not discredit either the integrity of the museum shop or the intrinsic value of the original object. The replica must be permanently identified and not be misrepresented in any manner as an original archaeological, paleontological, or historical object.

It is the responsibility of Museum Store Association members and affiliates to apply the appropriate definitions and to exercise care in the purchase and resale of unique and unusual ethnological materials. The Museum Store Association will institute a periodic review to ensure these policies remain current and consistent with the national legislation.

Remember...

- The museum store's products should reflect the purpose and quality of the parent institution.

- A Mission Statement will help keep you focused on the purpose of the store.
- Core Values will help create your company culture.
- Written ethics policies will help museum stores achieve their mission with integrity.