

IFLA GUIDELINES FOR EXHIBITION LOANS

Rare Books and Manuscripts Section

The following guidelines on potential **loans of collection materials for purposes of exhibition** (as distinguished from interlibrary loans for purposes of research) are intended to assist potential borrowers and lending institutions in the formulation of appropriate policies that serve the needs of both the collections and the institutions.

This core group of principles and best practices was developed from a recent survey of the loan policies of leading IFLA libraries in Europe and North America. In some cases, these suggestions incorporate specifics from the American Library Association's Association of College and Research Libraries Rare Books and Manuscripts Section Guidelines for Borrowing Special Collections Materials for Exhibition available at the RBMS web site. Further details are provided in *The New Museum Registration Methods* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museum, 1998) in the section on "Loans."

APPLICATIONS

Formal written requests for loans should be sent to the lenders at least six months in advance (as early as possible in the case of international

loans) in order to allow time for curators, conservators, and collection managers to evaluate the item's condition and to articulate special needs for display, such as mounts or gallery conditions (lighting, temperature, or humidity); to execute necessary conservation prior to travel; to review the legal aspects of the loan; to evaluate the facilities of the borrowing institution; and to make an appraisal of value for purposes of insurance.

Loans often follow from research and prior contacts with curators who may be aware of prospective requests. In most cases, written requests are sent by the person responsible for the exhibition (Exhibition Coordinator) or curator to the chief executive officer of the institution. Institutional policies vary, and it is best to inquire about the right person or office so that the requests reach the appropriate office. Loan requests should describe the item, including catalog or inventory numbers. They should provide information on the exhibition, describing the exhibition's title and themes, the dates and place of the exhibition, and plans for publicity and publications, such as brochures, catalogues, and web sites.

RECEIPT AND PROCESSING LOAN REQUESTS

Most institutions will consider loans in terms of curatorial, conservation, and managerial or registrarial concerns.

The **curator** evaluates the books or objects for rarity, value, provenance, and suitability for loan to the particular institution and exhibition.

The **conservator** attends to the physical characteristics and condition of the material, proposes any needed conservation treatment, and makes recommendations for conditions of display and shipping if the loan request is approved.

The **registrar** tracks the receipt of the loan request and all subsequent transactions between borrower and lender, such as the responses to facilities reports, the preparation and accomplishment of final loan contracts, as well as insurance and transport. If the loan request goes forward, the borrowing institution executes a loan agreement for each item. This represents a contract between the borrower and the lender. The loan agreement will specify how the objects are to be transported and may ask for special arrangements for mounting, lighting, packing, and shipping. The lending institution may occasionally request a courier. This is a staff member of the lending institution who will travel with the material in order to supervise packing, shipping, check-in, installation, and repacking. International loans involve assistance with export licenses and customs from reliable art shippers and customs brokers.

DOCUMENTATION & OTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON LOANS

Condition Reports are prepared by conservators in order to document the state of the objects and to record changes in conditions and treatments.

Photographs frequently supplement the written data. Condition reports are used to evaluate the state of the objects on receipt by the borrower, before packing at the close of the exhibition, and at the time of return to the home institution.

Any changes or problems must be reported immediately to the lender.

Facilities Reports are detailed statements on the housing, handling, and physical environment of the exhibition, including security arrangements. Standard secure display involves locked, alarmed cases with the exception of framed or mounted objects. Agreed-upon temperature and humidity requirements must be monitored. Appropriate lighting, as specified in the loan contract, must be maintained.

The **maximum length of loans for most works on paper is three months.**

Alternate openings and the use of facsimiles can assist in maintaining this standard when longer display periods are needed. Plans for exhibitions to travel to other venues must be stated at the time of the loan request. In general, three venues is the maximum amount of institutions to which loaned items may travel.

Expenses for loans are paid by the

borrower, including transportation costs: packing and crating; freight, customs charges and brokers' fees; and courier expenses such as first-class or business-class air travel and per diems; insurance: photography; conservation, special mounts, or frames; and loan fees to cover staff time and other administrative costs.

REPRODUCTIONS, PERMISSIONS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Credit is given to lending institutions in exhibition labels, published catalogues, brochures, press releases, and web sites. Loan agreements record credit lines, as requested by lenders.

Permission in writing must be obtained by the borrowing institution for photography. Occasionally the lender may wish to have the photographs made at the home institution and may charge a fee for reproduction. In reciprocation for loans, gratis copies of the exhibition catalogues or brochures are sent to lenders.

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