



Tidying up in the past – for the future
- prioritising in museum collections

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Guidelines for prioritisation

Transfer of ownership and destruction of
cultural history museum objects

Bergen City Museum



KULTURRÅDET
Arts Council
Norway

<http://www.kulturradet.no/vis-publikasjon/-/retningslinjer-for-avhending>

<http://www.kulturradet.no/vis-publikasjon/-/guidelines-for-prioritisation>

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The Norwegian guidelines in short

1. Preparation

- Clarify legal and formal issues
- Ensure compliance with statues and planning documents

2. Planning

- Define why the process is to be done and what the goal is
- Choice of methods/tools

3. Implementation

- Selection of objects
- Valuation and documentation

4. Choices and consequences

- Further actions following the prioritisation process

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Legal considerations

- Registered or not - no legal difference
- Legal difference between transfer of ownership and destruction
- Documentation of ownership
- Possible to apply to amend or reverse claims/demands from donor

Search: Eeg + avhende

<http://hdl.handle.net/1956/7899>

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Å rydde i fortida – for framtida

Prioritering, avhending og destruksjon i
museumssamlinger

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Choices and consequences in BCM

- We have valuated 365 chairs
 - Just over 100 physically destroyed
 - Just over 50 offered as part of the educational collection
 - 200 + preserved as museum objects
- We have valuated 55 ploughs
 - 15 physically destroyed
 - 5 offered as part of the educational collection
 - 35 preserved as museum objects

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Our experience so far...

- The process has to be firmly rooted within the organisation
- Important to be open
- Making a decision requires practice
- Makes it easier if you can physically gather a group of objects – but it's not absolutely necessary!
- The collections become more representative
- Less opposition than we expected...
- Increased interest og acceptance
- Time-consuming, but very satisfactory

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The road ahead...

- Try to find solutions to some challenges:
 - How can we follow ICOM's Code of Ethics in an efficient way?
 - How do we handle documentation backlog?
 - How much time should we spend on 'obvious destruction candidates'?
 - Consider other external recipients for transfer of ownership
 - Consider public auction/sale

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How did we end up where we are?

- Many collections formed due to the effort of enthusiasts
- Focus on collecting in order to «save» our heritage
- Focus on exhibitions & activities for the public
- Little attention given to storage conditions and documentation
- Gradually lost sight of what one had

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To prioritise, or not to prioritise, is not the question...

- Prioritising is a must – we do it all the time!
- Questions often come if transfer of ownership or destruction is suggested
- Will an object be of more value in a different collection or will be better suited as a prop?
- Maybe it is considered not to have sufficient historic value for us to spend resources on it?

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Why do we need to prioritise – and sometimes dispose?

- More representative collections with a higher cultural historical value
- A better overview of the collections
- Avoid pushing the decisions over to our future colleagues
- To spend public funding in the best possible way
- Realistic expectations for new storage areas



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What about new material?

- An increasing amount of material possessions during the last century
- Less *stuff* is designed and produced locally
- We need to discuss and decide who should collect what
- Important to state what not to collect
- We have to make bold choices

What if we don't dare?

- Are the collections we pass on as representative as they could be?
- Have we spent the funding in the best way for the society we are serving?
- Will the assessment become even more difficult in the future?
- Have we done our best to secure material heritage from our recent past and the present?
- Are we doing the best job we could do with the resources we have?

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