

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN GEOLOGY MUSEUM

Mission

The University of Wisconsin Geology Museum (UWGM) is dedicated to education and research in the geological sciences. As a public, state-funded institution, the museum serves both the scientific community and the public at large. To that end, the museum is committed to the preservation and maintenance of its collections and records, and to their access for scientific and educational purposes. (1997)

Collections Management Policy

Purpose

The purpose of the UWGM's collections is to:

- Collect and preserve geological and paleontological specimens for research and education;
- Collect rock, mineral and fossil specimens relevant to Wisconsin's geologic history;
- Maintain a collection of educational specimens that can be used in outreach efforts (e.g. school science nights, open houses, presentations in classrooms).

Authority

The UWGM is a public, state-funded institution within the University of Wisconsin System and resides physically within the Department of Geoscience on the UW-Madison campus. The Museum Director reports to the Chairperson of the Department of Geoscience and the Associate Dean (natural sciences) of the College of Letters and Science.

The Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the museum, which includes overseeing the collections, outreach, and maintenance of the museum. The Director is the final authority on all decisions relating to the collection, including acquisitions and loans.

The Museum Curator is responsible for the physical care of the museum's collections, which includes maintaining specimen records, implementing judicious conservation techniques, overseeing specimen storage and administering loans. The Museum Curator reports to the UWGM Director.

Scope of Collections

The UWGM was founded in 1848 with a letter from H.A. Tenney that solicited Wisconsin citizens to donate mineral and rock specimens to the new University of Wisconsin. Today, the museum's collections have grown to include rock, mineral and fossil (vertebrate and invertebrate) specimens from around the world. These specimens are maintained by the UWGM for research and educational purposes. Strengths of the collection include:

Wisconsin Collection

Rocks and Minerals – Wisconsin has a rich mining history. UWGM’s collection contains many representative rock and mineral specimens from around the state. Additionally, the collection includes fragments from six documented meteorite falls in Wisconsin.

Invertebrate Fossils – The Waukesha soft-bodied fauna is considered a lagerstätte, a fossil locality that is remarkable for either its diversity or quality of preservation. There are a handful of Silurian Period (440-410 million years ago) localities worthy of special merit, including the arthropods and conodont animals found at the Waukesha, Wisconsin site.

Quaternary Fossils – Wisconsin is rich in vertebrate, invertebrate and plant material from the most recent Ice Age. Museum holdings include giant beaver, mastodon, and mammoth fossils. Perhaps the most well-known museum specimens are the Boaz and Anderson Mills Mastodons, found in 1897 and 1989 in southwest Wisconsin (respectively). These bones were bought by the State of Wisconsin and put on display at the UWGM in 1915.

Mesozoic Vertebrate Collection

Interior Seaway Fossils – Over the course of multiple field excursions in the 1990’s, museum personnel recovered fossils from the Niobrara Chalk in Kansas. Many of these are now prominently displayed in the museum including fossils from *Uintacrinus* (free-floating crinoid colony), *Hesperornis* (a diving bird), *Squalicorax* (a shark with preserved stomach contents), *Pteranodon* (a pterosaur model based on collected material), *Xiphactinus* (the “bulldog fish”), *Platecarpus* (a marine lizard), and an *Inoceramus* (a giant clam) shell colonized by oysters.

Hell Creek Dinosaurs – From the mid-1990’s until 2005, museum personnel excavated dinosaur material from the Hell Creek Formation in Montana. This material is similar in age to the Interior Seaway fossils discussed above, which helps create a cohesive temporal story in the museum. A composite *Edmontosaurus* skeleton, a replica *Tyrannosaurus rex* skull, and reconstructed *Triceratops* skull are on display from the Hell Creek Formation.

Westphal Quarry Fossils – This quarry is on federal property (BLM) and contains a bone bed yielding many sauropod bones as well as other Jurassic-age fauna. Named after the retired director, Klaus Westphal, the quarry has been active from 2001-2007.

Definition of Collections

Permanent Collection

Specimens in the UWGM's Permanent Collection make up the core of the museum's holdings and are held to the highest documentation and care standards. These accessioned items fulfill the museum's mission and conform to the Collections Policy Statement of Purpose.

UW Thesis Collection

Specimens referred to in UW-Madison Department of Geoscience graduate student theses are repositied as a subsidiary of the UWGM collection. Museum personnel are responsible for curating and loaning these materials. These specimens are numbered separately (UWXXXX) from the museum's Permanent Collection.

Educational Outreach Collection

These specimens are for hands-on presentations and other educational activities. Specimens in the educational outreach collection are not formally accessioned and may be removed from the collection at any time.

Acquisitions and Accessions

Specimens for the Permanent Collection may be acquired through donation, bequest, purchase, exchange, field collection or any other legal means by which museum ownership is established. The UWGM will not attempt to accession a specimen for which there is not a clear transfer of legal title to the museum. The Director is responsible for approving acquisitions and specimens for accessioning, including any acquisitions with restrictions.

The criteria used in evaluating a potential acquisition include:

1. Do the specimens align with the UWGM's Mission and Collections Policy Statement of Purpose?
2. Is the UWGM able to properly curate (document, store, preserve, exhibit) the specimens? Considerations should be made to condition, size, quality, rarity, costs involved, and potential for use in exhibits.
3. Are there restrictions on the specimens? In acquiring an object (by whatever means), the UWGM does not imply any guarantee that the item(s) will be accessioned, exhibited, or retained indefinitely in the museum's collection.
4. Does the person or organization donating the material have clear legal title to the item(s)?

Accessions must be acquired in an ethical manner (see *Ethics* subsection of this policy). In order to avoid legal and ethical problems, specimens that are lacking provenance information will not be accessioned.

All specimens that are accessioned into the Permanent Collection will be given a permanent record containing all information about the objects (e.g. provenance and acquisition history). The Museum Curator is responsible for managing these records.

Graduate students completing theses in the UW-Madison Department of Geoscience have the option of repositing specimens referenced in their thesis with the UWGM. These specimens are considered to be property of the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and will be treated as a subsidiary of the UWGM Permanent Collection. The UWGM has been entrusted to provide a safe and secure storage environment and to administer loans of these specimens.

Materials may be added to the Educational Outreach Collection at the discretion of the Museum Curator. These specimens are not accessioned.

Deaccessioning and Disposal

Specimens can only be removed from the UWGM's Permanent Collection via deaccessioning. The Director has the authority to initiate and approve the deaccessions process for specimens in the Permanent Collection. Either or both the Friends of the Geology Museum board members and the Chairperson of the Department of Geoscience must be consulted when the specimen's value is over \$1000. Estimates of the fair market value can be obtained through independent appraisals or through staff research.

The criteria used in evaluating a potential deaccession include:

1. Is the specimen relevant to the UWGM's mission and Collections Policy Statement of Purpose?
2. Does the specimen require special care (e.g. toxic, harmful, hazardous)?
3. Has the specimen deteriorated beyond usefulness?
4. Does the item duplicate other objects in the Permanent Collection?
5. Do the duties required for repositing the specimen place an unreasonable burden on UWGM staff or budget resources?
6. Are their restrictions on use and disposal for the specimen in its permanent accessions file?

Following deaccession, specimens may be appropriately disposed of through donation, exchange, sale or any other legal means by which museum ownership is transferred to the new owner. When disposing of a deaccessioned specimen, preference will be given to other public domain institutions. As an alternative to the above options, deaccessioned specimens may be transferred into the Educational Outreach Collection with the approval of the Museum Curator. If deaccessioned specimens are sold, museum personnel, volunteers and Friends of the Geology Museum board members are not permitted to purchase them. Funds from sold specimens can only be used to acquire new specimens for the Permanent Collection.

A permanent record of the deaccession will be kept in the collections database and the accession number will not be reassigned to a new object. The Museum Curator is responsible for managing these records.

Specimens in the Educational Outreach Collection can be disposed of at the discretion of the Museum Curator. These items are not accessioned and their disposal does not require documentation.

The UW Thesis Collection is administered but not owned exclusively by the UWGM, therefore all decisions pertaining to the disposal of specimens in this collection must be approved by the Department Chairperson.

Preservation

The UWGM has an obligation to properly care and provide safe storage for specimens in its collections. With regards to preservation, items held in the Permanent Collection and UW Thesis Collection will receive priority over those in the Educational Outreach Collection.

The Museum Director and Museum Curator are responsible for the preservation of the collections. All items in the care of the UWGM are stored in the museum's repositories, which includes a flex-space storeroom with oversize pallet racking as well as storeroom with drawer units in compactor shelving. The Museum Director, Museum Curator and Emeritus Director have keys to gain access to repositied material.

The majority of specimens on display in the UWGM are inside of secure, glass-fronted cases. Less than twenty specimens are housed outside of cases within the UWGM. Apart from the large vertebrate skeletons, these specimens are touchable by museum visitors. All touchable specimens are robust and too heavy to be removed by visitors. Each touchable specimen should be examined every six months and repaired if needed.

The majority of specimens in the museum's care are stable rocks, minerals and fossils that require little in the way of conservation treatments. For specimens that require special care and/or conservation action (e.g. fragile or damaged specimens), the Museum Director has the power to authorize conservation treatment and select an appropriate conservator, either within the museum staff or an outside contractor. All proposed treatments should be submitted in writing to the Director and must be approved in advance. The Director must authorize any changes in the proposed treatment.

Along with maintaining and preserving the museum's collection, museum personnel are responsible for providing researchers access to the collection. Loaned material will be packed and shipped in a way that provides the greatest amount of protection to the items as is possible. When destructive sampling of loaned items is requested, all action must be authorized by the Museum Director or Museum Curator, documented in the permanent file and justified by the researcher.

Documentation

A primary responsibility of the UWGM is to keep records for all objects in its care. The Museum Curator is responsible for all collections documentation (allocation of numbers and maintenance and backup of the electronic database). One backup copy (manual and electronic) of the database will be kept offsite and a second copy (manual and electronic) will be kept in the Department of Geoscience. These backup copies should be updated every year or more frequently if more than ten items are accessioned every six months.

There are three components in keeping records tied to their objects:

Specimen Numbers

Every specimen in the museum collections receives a unique catalog number that refers to the record containing all information related to the object. This number should be applied to the object in an out of the way, yet still visible place and must be legible. Archival paint and ink should be used to mark specimens.

Specimen Labels

Specimens may have a label included with them in their repository drawer. The card should be made of non-acidic paper and the label written with light-fast, non-acidic ink.

Database Entry

A detailed computer record will be kept for each item in the museum's care. This record should include the catalog number, provenance information, storage location information, and other key information about the specimen.

Inventory

The Museum Director has the authority to request a comprehensive inventory of the collection. A partial inventory must be done from a statistically representative sample of the collection every three years.

The Museum Curator is responsible for assembling museum personnel to complete any inventory. Database records to be used during the inventory include specimen identification, accession number and location in the museum or repository. If an item is missing, the Museum Curator is responsible for initiating a more extensive search for the item. For lost or damaged specimens, the Museum Curator is responsible for amending the item's permanent record and alerting the Director. The Director or Museum Curator may be responsible for filing any police report or insurance claim.

Risk Management and Security

Reasonable threats to the UWGM's collections include flood, fire, and theft. The museum and its repository are physically housed within the Department of Geoscience and are up-to-date with Wisconsin state fire protection code. The building is not located in a flood-prone area, however backup generators provide power to pumps in case of flooding.

Items on display in the museum are protected after-hours by a PIN-protected security system that is monitored and responded to by the UW-Madison Police. Museum personnel do not need to be present for the university police to respond and enter the museum if the alarm has been set off. The Director will be notified of any alarm after hours in the museum.

The museum repository is outside of the museum proper and thus its security system. However, most items held in the repository are protected behind three locks, two of which only the Museum Director, Museum Curator and Emeritus Director have access to. Large items and lower priority items are held in other storerooms within the Department of Geoscience. Access to these rooms is limited by key access to the Director, Assistant Director, Museum Curator and departmental faculty.

During open museum hours, museum staff are responsible for maintaining a presence in the museum to discourage theft and tomfoolery. If necessary, the UW-Madison Police are on-call to assist with any security threats.

The UWGM adheres to all disaster response documents published by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Safety Department (<http://www2.fpm.wisc.edu/safety/>).

The University of Wisconsin – Madison insurance program, covers all items in the care of the UWGM. All claims must be documented and go through the University insurance department. Any loans to or from the UWGM are also covered under this plan. The Museum Director is responsible for filing any claims for damaged or stolen museum property.

Access

The UWGM is committed to providing researchers as well as the general public access to its collections. There are two modes of access to the museum's collections: items on exhibit and items off-display in the museum's repository.

Museum exhibits

Visitors are welcome to view specimens on display in the UWGM during regular museum hours. Guided tours are available by reservation through the tour office. Visitors unreasonably interfering with any other guest's museum experience may be asked to leave.

Amateur photography of museum exhibits and displays is allowed. Professional photographers must submit a written request in advance to the Director. Images for commercial use will only be approved if they will directly benefit the museum and align with the UWGM mission.

Museum space cannot be rented out for events by outside individuals or organizations. Certain museum-sanctioned events (e.g., Behind the Scenes Nights, museum-sponsored receptions) are permitted. However, a staff member must be present for the duration of the event.

Museum repository and collections records

Specimens not on display in the museum can be accessed by making an appointment to visit the material onsite or by requesting a loan to study or use the material offsite.

Onsite – Individuals interested in visiting the collections or examining collections records must submit a written request in advance to the Director. While being studied, the material must be kept in a secure location (e.g., a museum office or departmental classroom with restricted key access). The Museum Curator is responsible for safeguarding any private or locality information on the accession records. Museum personnel will notify the user of any special handling restrictions or procedures.

In the event contractors or inspectors need to gain access to the museum exhibit area or repository, museum personnel will accompany the worker to ensure the safety of museum holdings.

Offsite – Adult individuals (e.g. teachers, homeschooling parents) may borrow materials from the Educational Outreach Collection for educational purposes (e.g., classroom use, homeschool use, Science Olympiad). In addition, museum personnel may take specimens from the Educational Outreach Collection offsite for educational purposes (e.g., School Science Nights, classroom presentations, public presentations). The Assistant Director or Museum Curator may approve requests to borrow Educational Outreach specimens.

Museum specimens from the Permanent Collection may be requested by researchers for offsite study. Please review the loan policy for information regarding collection material that will be taken offsite for study or educational use.

UW Thesis Collection material may be examined onsite or loaned offsite. To visit the material onsite, a written request must be submitted to the Museum Curator. In the case of onsite or offsite use, priority will be given to scholarly research and educational pursuits.

Loans

The UWGM engages in a loan program with the goals of:

- increasing the number of people who can access museum holdings for scholarly research or educational outreach purposes;
- providing museum visitors with access to specimens beyond museum holdings, and;
- allowing researchers at the UW-Madison to engage in research with objects from other institutions.

Outgoing Loans

Permanent Collection and UW Thesis Collection – Loan requests must be made in writing and are subject to approval by the Museum Curator. The UWGM will loan material from these collections to institutions, not individuals. The borrowing institution must be able to provide a safe and secure environment for the specimens over the duration of the loan period as stipulated in the formal, approved loan agreement.

Loan Period - All outgoing loans from the Permanent Collection and UW Thesis Collection will have terms of one year or less. Loan extension requests must be made in writing and are subject to approval by the Museum Curator. Loans may be renewed twice (three years total) and then must be returned to the museum.

Shipping – When specimens are being shipped from or to the UWGM, objects should be wrapped and packed in a professional manner to ensure the safety of all items during transport. The museum will establish the required shipping method and standards as part of each loan (e.g., courier, hand-carry, Fed-Ex, etc.).

Preparation – Without written approval of the Museum Director, fossil material should not be prepared or altered in any way by the borrower.

Replication – Without written approval of the Museum Director, the borrower should not replicate fossil material. If permission to replicate is granted, the UWGM reserves the right to restrict the total number of copies made and request that the original molds be returned with the specimen(s).

Destructive Sampling – Any request to perform destructive sampling must be submitted in writing and is subject to approval by the Museum Director. Criteria used to evaluate the proposed sampling include: the value of the information gained, the value of the specimen(s) and whether the integrity of the specimen(s) will be completely lost.

Educational Outreach Collection – Requests to loan specimens may be made in writing, phone or in person. Persons eligible to borrow educational outreach materials include, but are not limited to: K-12 teachers, homeschool organizations and parents, and members of the UW-Madison community for offsite outreach programs. While on loan, the borrower is responsible for keeping the materials in a secure location when they are not being used. Before the specimens are borrowed, the borrower and the Assistant

Director or Museum Curator must complete an Outreach Loan Form. The borrower must comply with all terms and conditions of the signed loan agreement.

Loan Period – All outgoing loans from the Educational Outreach Collection will have terms of one month or less. Loan extension requests may be made over the phone, in person or in writing and are subject to approval by the Museum Curator. Loans may be renewed twice (three months total) and then must be returned to the museum.

Shipping – Loaned specimens must be picked up and dropped off at the museum during regular, weekday hours. If this is prohibitive to the borrower, specimens may be shipped at the expense of the borrower.

With all outgoing loans the following terms apply:

1. The Museum Curator is responsible for creating, monitoring and maintaining loan records and for communicating with borrowers.
2. Loan forms must be filled out by the UWGM and the borrower prior to the objects leaving the museum's care.
3. The UWGM retains the right to refuse loans to borrowers that have mishandled loaned material in the past or failed to return items in a timely fashion.
4. The UWGM retains the right to recall a loan.

Insurance – The UW–Madison carries insurance that covers all of the museum collections onsite and when on loan to other institutions including while in transit between locations. For items that are loaned that have a value of \$500 or more, the estimated fair market value should be indicated on the loan form.

Incoming Loans

The UW Madison Geology Museum can request to borrow materials from other institutions to enhance exhibits and to assist members of the UW-Madison Department of Geoscience who are engaged in research.

The Director is responsible for approving incoming loan requests. The Museum Curator is responsible for record documentation and management, condition reporting and monitoring incoming loans.

Museum personnel must apply the same standards of care to incoming loans as are employed when acquiring and managing its museum collections. UWGM personnel will not knowingly borrow specimens for which the lending institution does not have clear ownership. The University of Wisconsin – Madison provides insurance coverage for all borrowed specimens.

Objects in custody

Privately owned specimens may be brought to the museum for identification but may not be left in the museum's custody. The UWGM does not accept unsolicited loans. Museum personnel must discourage individuals from sending in specimens for identification. Photographs of specimens to be identified may be sent via U.S. Mail, however museum personnel are under no obligation to return them. Individuals should be encouraged to send digital photos via email if possible.

Old or unclaimed loans

For items the museum has borrowed that have not been returned or claimed due to a lapse in contact with the lender, a good-faith effort must be made to reconnect with the lender. If the specimen(s) have been in the museum's possession for five or more years, the UWGM may begin considering the loan for termination. Notification of the loan termination must be sent via certified mail to the lender at their last known address. If no response is received within 90 days, the specimen will be considered abandoned and the UWGM may assume title to the object.

Objects found in collections

For items within the collection, the UWGM claims title to unlabelled specimens or specimens for which ownership is unknown. Items for which the UWGM does not have proof of ownership cannot be sold, however may be deaccessioned and given to another institution. Persons claiming title to particular specimens within the collections are responsible for providing proof of ownership.

Intellectual Property Rights Management

The UWGM maintains the right to copyright or trademark museum-related products created by personnel while employed at the museum. These may include, but are not limited to: educational materials, museum website, museum logo, and public program names.

Ethics

UWGM board, staff and volunteers are committed upholding a high standard of ethics with regards to the museum's collection. To this end, museum personnel will uphold the American Association of Museums *Code of Ethics for Museums*. The AAM guidelines will be maintained in addition to the following:

Appraisals

The UWGM will not make, arrange, or pay for appraisals of donations and any internal appraisals will not be shared with donors. If an appraisal is necessary, museum personnel can provide the names of two or more appraisers without preference.

Collecting

Museum staff are obliged to follow governmental regulations in the removal of fossils from public lands. Compliance with all governmental regulations will be documented in the museum's collection records. Proper permits and reports must be filed with the appropriate governmental office (e.g. BLM, NPS, etc.) in order to excavate vertebrate fossils from federal or state land. UWGM personnel must adhere to the regulations detailed on the approved permit (e.g. time window allotted, surface prospecting vs. excavation). The Director is responsible for ensuring the permit is filed in advance and must make sure the permit has been approved by the time excavation begins. The Museum Curator must keep copies of all permits in the museum's permanent records.

When collecting specimens (fossil, rock or mineral) for addition to the museum's holdings, dig participants must ensure that the site is reclaimed and restored to a condition as close to pre-excitation as is reasonably possible. For example, overburden that was removed should be used in the resurfacing of the site. UWGM personnel are responsible for closing down the site at the end of each field season and restoring the site once excavations are complete.

The UWGM will not accept specimens that were collected illegally or for which provenance is dubious or unknown.

Personal Collecting

Museum board, staff and volunteers may collect for their own personal and recreational purposes. However, board and staff members should not directly compete with the UWGM's collecting efforts in order to avoid a conflict of interest.

Use of Personal Collections

Museum personnel (board, staff and volunteers) may not store specimens from their personal collections in the museum. The only exceptions are directly before or after personal specimens are used at a museum function or in a museum exhibit. If a personal collection is being loaned for the museum to use, the museum must be the major benefactor, not the donor. All personal specimens used at a museum function must be documented as an incoming loan.

Revision

The Director and Museum Curator will review the Collection Management Policy every five years in order to assess whether the policy:

- adheres to current professional standards;
- complies with the UWGM Mission Statement and;
- upholds the most current collection plan and purpose.