

STATEMENT OF CURATORIAL VALUES

What is a curator?

Curators formulate and develop the intellectual and cultural policy of archives and museums. Their role is to acquire and preserve objects, and to research, identify, and interpret them for the benefit of the community. They establish coherent and objective curatorial standards and policies, which in turn inform archival procedures, protocols and techniques.

The collaborative nature of the relationship between curators and archivists is key to the life of a collecting institution. The archivist is the custodian of the standards governing the management of a collection; the curator is the collection's spokesperson. These roles are necessarily intertwined, as a curator is expected to embrace archival standards, and an archivist should be aware of, and be able to promote, the cultural significance of the collection. Before deciding upon a given policy, the curator must consult the archivist in relation to its compliance with the best available archival practice.

Curators and archivists have distinct and yet complementary roles; from this standpoint, they have equal professional standing in a collecting organization. This balance of power ensures that no curatorial decision is made without proper consideration of the safety and integrity of the collection.

What is an artefact?

In curatorial terms, an artefact is a work to be acquired, preserved, and made accessible. There are three elements to a cultural artefact: the content of the work, i.e. its subject matter, events and sounds to be presented to an audience; its context – the social, cultural, technological and political factors affecting the environment in which the work has been created; its experience, as determined by the media in which the work was and is heard or seen by its public. The combination of these three determines the cultural significance of the artefact.

NFSA CURATORIAL VALUES

Acquisition, preservation and access are equally important features of a curatorial vision. None of these areas of activity will be developed to the detriment of the others.

• *Collecting the artefacts – respect for the items and their diversity*

1. All work formally under the responsibility of the NFSA is as important to the collection as any other work, regardless of its cultural identity, nationality, or access status.
2. Curators are bound to respect the diversity of ideas, values and beliefs in the community, and should not impose their own in deciding which works are to be collected. They are responsible for developing a collection that draws on and represents the diversity of cultural, political, social, religious and other ideas of individuals and groups in the past and present society, not just the dominant ideas of their time.

• *Handling the artefacts – respect for the item's integrity*

1. No work in the collection will be altered, manipulated or modified under any circumstance (even by its author) for any reason whatsoever, be it of a cultural, political, racial, religious or economic nature. While new works may be created through the use of one or more existing

works in the collection, the new work should never alter, manipulate or modify the existing collection items.

2. As soon as a work becomes part of the national collection, each of its components is *potentially* an “original” and should be treated with all the care necessary to ensure its survival for future generations. The “original” work (as determined as such by the curator) should never be touched except for the creation of preservation and access elements.
3. No duplication whatsoever of the original work should be made without prior adequate measures to ensure the stability of the collection item.
4. Any preservation work must be reversible; it must not involve further alteration of the original work, and it must be carefully documented.
5. No duplication, transfer or migration of the original work for preservation or access purposes will be allowed before a work is accessible in its original format or medium, insofar as the original format or medium exists and is available.

- ***Experiencing the artefacts – respect for the item’s cultural identity***

1. Curators must ensure that the work can be experienced in its original medium and format, or at least in a form as close as possible to the way it was intended to be seen and/or heard at the time of its creation.
2. The work may be also made accessible in other media, as long as a choice is always given (insofar as possible) between its experience through the original medium and through a new one.
3. The difference between the original presentation of a work and its modern reproduction must be understood and articulated.