[Logo]

Closure Plan

# Contacts:

[Insert table of museum contacts associated with closure, this is helpful if there is any staff turnover]

# Introduction:

In May 2020 Florida Institute of Technology decided to permanently close the Ruth Funk Center for Textile Arts. This decision came amid other cost-cutting measures the university made due to the economic fallout of COVID-19. This plan outlines the approach that Center faculty and staff are taking to smoothly close the museum and disperse the collection. It is divided into three phases adding up to over one year of closure operations. The overall intent of the plan is to disperse the permanent collection through transfer of title to other non-profit institutions such as museums, cultural arts institutions, and library special collections that can use and display the objects, so they remain within the public trust.

# Phase 1:

Phase 1 is a research and preparation stage in the closure process, estimated to take 3-4 months.

1. Inventory of Collections

Before the Center’s closure, collections staff were in the midst of a collection wide inventory to record the physical location of objects in the collection database, PastPerfect. Upon closure, the collections staff completed the physical inventory before the reduction in force. Now, staff must record everything in the database so location information travels with the record. Without location information, object retrieval (necessary for Phase 2 of the Closure Plan) will take additional time. This is an important first step in the closure process in addition to normal operations because it reveals any found-in-collection objects or undocumented property (objects found in the storage space without documentation) and missing objects. Also any uncatalogued objects will need to be added to the database for best record keeping practices.

1. Website

The Center will update the website to reflect current stages of the closure process to keep donors and the public informed. This will also help other institutions with questions about the process.

1. Legal Clarification

501(c)(3) institutions that dissolve must file articles of dissolution with the Department of State’s Division of Corporations. While this may not apply to the Funk Center because it exists as a 501(c)(3) under the umbrella of Florida Tech, the issue must be investigated for clarification before further action is taken with the collection, otherwise penalty of law could ensue.

1. Quality of Title

The Center holds several objects and corresponding records that have some documentation, but do not have a Deed of Gift or Gift in Kind form in their file. This presents a quality of title issue. The Deed of Gift is the clearest and most preferred form of proof that an object belongs to the Funk Center and is no longer the property of the donor. Most institutions will not accept transfer agreements if the transferring institution was not in possession of full title to the object(s). It could also have legal implications for the university down the line if a claim is made to the title of an object.

This could easily be cleared up in some cases due to the Center’s practice of “booking” gifts through the university’s Development department. Staff will solicit for their records, and the remainder could be proven through a combination of written or oral intent, acceptance, and delivery to gain quality title.

1. Found-In-Collection

The Center’s Collections Management Policy states:

*“If abandoned property is found through the process of inventory or day-to-day collections activity, the collections staff should review documentation to determine whether the object is an unclaimed loan or abandoned property “Found In Collections” or “FIC”. The Center adheres to the state laws of Florida on abandoned property and gaining legal ownership status (reference Statute 265.565). FIC objects may be accessioned into the collection or disposed of according to approved deaccession policy. Each FIC object will be assigned an FIC number, for example FIC2016.1.”*

Florida Statute 265.565 advises on unclaimed loans, which does not apply in the Center’s case. An unclaimed property notice will be advertised on the website for two weeks. If within that time anyone calls to prove that the Center holds property that is not rightfully theirs, that object (strictly speaking of objects within the found-in-collections category) will be returned to them. Remaining unclaimed objects become the property of the Center.

1. Budget

The Center will require a budget to maintain closure operations. Staffing, preservation supplies, packing supplies, and sometimes freight will all be costs the Center must incur during this time. Not unlike Florida Tech, cultural institutions and museums across the nation have been hit hard by the economic impact of COVID-19. In negotiations with other institutions for transfer, it may come down to the cost of shipping on whether or not they will be able to accept and receive objects. In some cases, if it is feasible, staff can hand-deliver (requiring a rental vehicle and gas) the objects to the location, in other cases this may not be possible so the Center will have to pay for freight of the objects to the location.

1. Contact Lists and Documentation

The Center will be in contact with multiple parties at once for negotiations of transfer. The constantly updated organization of this information will be crucial to keeping up good records and good rapport. One misstep could cause irreversible repair to a negotiation. That is why all information must be stored on the Center’s shared drive and in the collection database. The Center must keep good record of donor contacts and updated addresses (in the database), institutions contacted (excel spreadsheet), an object level record of where each item was transferred (excel spreadsheet), and all transfer of title/property documentation.

Example of contact spreadsheet organized by collection:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Institution | Contact | Phone | Email | Mailing Address | Date Contacted | Correspondence Notes | Affected Objects |

Example of object level spreadsheet:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Object ID # | Object Name | Dimensions | Description | Transfer Status |

1. Categorizing the Collection

To facilitate the smooth transfer of objects, the Center will sort all objects into categories based on donor, collection area, and provenance. These categorized lists will be used when the Center makes targeted contact with institutions of similar collecting scope.

Example of collection category spreadsheet:  
Japanese Collection (accounts for 8% of permanent collection)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Object ID # | Object Name | Dimensions | Description | Condition |

1. Announcements

The Center will send out announcements among “colleague” institutions and appropriate professional platforms such as listservs and associations to spread the word on the impending dispersal and begin making negotiations with institutions.

Information to be conveyed in this announcement:

* Intent of dissolvement
* Intent of transfer to similar non-profit institutions (501(c)(3), good financial standing, held within public trust, objects will be used for research, teaching, or display)
* General collection categories available
* To support the rushed timeline, priority will be given to institutions that can take the majority of a collection category

# Phase 2:

This phase is the most complicated of the plan for the various external factors it relies upon and will undoubtedly take the longest out of the three phases, estimated 8-10 months.

1. Targeted Outreach of Collection Groups and “One-offs”

Using the contact lists, collection categories, and announcements created in phase 1 of the plan, staff will begin making targeted outreach to interested parties. This targeted outreach will include lists of objects that would be appropriate for that institution to acquisition.

Most of the 1600 objects in the collection can be sorted into clear categories, however there will be singular objects that are difficult to place and require just as much effort as placing a collection of objects. These objects will be selected during categorization and will appear throughout the transfer process as they are selected out of a group if deemed inappropriate for a receiving institution.

1. Repatriation

The Center holds a small collection of Native American work. Every effort will be made to repatriate these objects to appropriate institutions within the tribal system. For example, objects from the Seminole tribe would hopefully go to the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on the Seminole reservation with priority over an institution outside the reservation.

1. Correspondence, Negotiations, and Review Meetings

Correspondence, negotiations, and review meetings with multiple institutions will take the most time due to the fact that it relies on external factors. In this unprecedented time in our world due to COVID-19, correspondence and negotiation is more difficult. Many people are still working from home and this includes museum professionals around the country.

To acquisition an object into a permanent collection can take months in normal operations due to all of the research, meetings, and paperwork involved; consider how COVID-19 has impacted day-to-day internal and external communications and this process is slowed even more. Between the time an object becomes available to a museum and the time it is acquired, a number of things happen internally: the director and curator agree on importance of the acquisition, the object is transported to the museum, curatorial research is conducted, a curatorial proposal is written; consultation with the curator, director, and board takes place, conservators are consulted on preservation, registrars are consulted on storage needs, legal concerns are reviewed, and finally the object is placed on the agenda for the review of an acquisitions committee (Buck, 48).

Most institutions interested in an object or a collection prefer to conduct an in-person visit and visual inspection before proceeding with agreements or transporting the object into their custody. It is even likely that institutions are not conducting any object intake procedures as a precautionary measure. Another factor to consider is that the majority of cultural institutions submit their acquisition proposals to a board of trustees before they are formally accepted. Often these meetings occur only twice per year. The Center and Florida Tech should expect significant delays in this part of the process due to external factors previously mentioned and COVID-19.

1. Object Photography

Most of the records in the Center’s database have images. If necessary, staff will take photos of objects to provide the interested or receiving institution more details on those objects. This requires object retrieval and handling – a time consuming process that in most cases requires two trained staff.

1. Transfer of Title Agreements

Transfer of title agreements are used to officially document the transfer of ownership or property of an object from one institution to another. The Center will create such a document modeled off of other institutions and professional standards. This document must be created and submitted for each object (sometimes a group of objects) in the collection.

1. Packing, Shipping, and Delivery

Packing, shipping, and delivery will take time and money resources. In addition to needing at least two trained staff, archival and packing supplies, and freight are needed to safely transport objects. As mentioned before, cultural institutions and museums across the nation have been hit hard by the economic impact of COVID-19. In negotiations with other institutions for transfer, it may come down to the cost of shipping on whether or not they will be able to receive objects. In some cases, if it is feasible, staff can hand-deliver (requiring a rental vehicle and gas) the objects to the location, in other cases this may not be possible so the Center will have to pay for freight of the objects to the location.

1. Transfer of Records

It is the professional and ethical standard of cultural institutions to keep good records of objects within their collection. The Center will transfer research, catalog records, photographs, condition reports and any other pertinent documents along with the objects they transfer (physical or electronic depending on receiving institution preference). Upon request, the Center will export and transfer electronic records from the collection database to the receiving institution so they can import this information into their database, especially if the transfer includes a large number of objects.

1. Leftover Objects Go to Auction

If transfer to another collecting institution is not possible, sale at auction is the next method of dispersal/disposal. As stated in the Center’s Collections Management Policy on disposal methods for deaccessioning, “the object(s) may be sent to public auction with a suitable reserve on it where full disclosure of the object history and provenance would be made. All auctions shall be public and as well publicized as possible.”

The Center will make every effort to fully catalog these objects with provenance for the auction house, before preparing a contract. Public relations in this part of the process is crucial, and the Center should provide as much information as possible at the earliest time. The public can be informed through issuing a press release targeted to members, donors, funders, and the general public. This press release should include descriptions of the items and a full disclosure of the proposed use of proceeds.

# Phase 3:

This phase wraps up the business of the Center and is estimated to take up to 3-4 months.

1. Donor Correspondence

In the interest of Florida Tech keeping up good rapport with its donors and as a courtesy, each donor or next of kin will be notified on the outcome of the transfer of their gift to the university.

1. Advertise Transfers

In addition to object donors, the wider community should be able to find out where objects have been transferred, so they can see them or inquire about them if they wish to do so.

The American Textile History Museum in Massachusetts posted transfers and receiving institutions on their website upon completing their closure business. The Center should do the same. With the help of the Marketing and Communications department, a press release on the state of the closure process should go out once this information is published on the website.

1. Packing, Shipping, and Delivering Remainder of Objects

It is likely that there will still be shipping arrangements being made during phase three of the plan due to the schedules of the receiving institutions. Packing, shipping, and delivery will take time and money resources. In addition to needing at least two trained staff, archival materials, packing supplies, and freight are needed to safely transport objects. As mentioned before, cultural institutions and museums across the nation have been hit hard by the economic impact of COVID-19. In negotiations with other institutions for transfer, it may come down to the cost of shipping on whether or not they will be able to receive objects. In some cases, if it is feasible, staff can hand-deliver (requiring a rental vehicle and gas) the objects to the location, in other cases this may not be possible so the Center will have to pay for freight of the objects to the location.

1. Donation of Non-Collection Objects

The Center will be left with many specialty supplies and equipment that should be donated to other non-profits. These are items such as specialty display materials, collection shelving, archival materials, conservation materials, and art education materials. Some of these items will be advertised to the Florida Tech community. However, since there is not a use for those types of non-collection objects at Florida Tech, every effort will be made to donate these items to other museums and cultural institutions, especially within the surrounding community. When these types of non-collection objects are donated, the Center will keep record using an outgoing receipt.

1. Secure Important Files and Documents

Object records should not be destroyed and must be kept in a secure location by Florida Tech in case any issue arises. The institutional records such as exhibit files should be kept as part of Florida Tech’s institutional history, and so future researchers may have access to them. Every effort will be made to store these records with the University Archives at Evans Library. If this is not an option, the Center staff will attempt arrangements with one of the libraries in the county. These arrangements should be explored early on in the process.

# Works Cited and Bibliography:

Buck, Rebecca A. and Jean Allaman Gilmore. *Museum Registration Methods.* 5th Edition. AAM Press. Washington D.C. 2010.

Malaro, Marie C. and Ildiko Pogany DeAngelis. *A Legal Primer on Managing Museum Collections.* 3rd Edition. Smithsonian Books. Washington D.C. 2012.

Klein, Janice. *Making a Good End: How to Close a Museum*. FAIC Connecting to Collections Care Webinar Series. 13 Nov. 2018. Webinar.