

CU Collections Management Group

Mission:

The CU Collections Management Group (CU-CMG) is a support network for the faculty and staff members on the CU Boulder campus working with collections, as well as the staff in noncollections positions who work with them. The group strives to be an asset for the campus and each other regarding best practices, digital asset management, advocacy and emergency preparedness.

This white paper seeks recognition for the CU Collections Management Group as a resource for the campus and stewards of the collections entrusted to the university.

Who

The CU Collections Management Group (CU-CMG) is made up of volunteer representatives from many of the managed collections on the University of Colorado Boulder campus, as well as the staff in noncollections positions who work with them, and is a resource for all. The focus of this group is best practices; ethical models; preservation; research and teaching; engagement; and collaboration. This incarnation of the CU-CMG has been active since September 2015, although the group has existed in previous iterations.

What

The individual collections are significant, with importance and relevance for the campus, state, region, nation and the world. The collections have even more strength and relevance when considered as a whole. Access to these collections for research contributes to the unique intellectual output of the university.

The collections vary widely in scope but not importance:

- **CU Art Museum cares for more than 8,600 artworks from diverse aesthetic and cultural origins encompassing more than 10,000 years of human history. Highlights include the Classical Collection, Art of the Americas, and Asian, European, and Modern & Contemporary collections.**

- The Museum of Natural History consists of six distinct collections with more than 5 million objects and specimens: Anthropology, with both ethnographic and archaeological materials; Botany; Entomology; Paleontology; Zoology, consisting of vertebrate and invertebrate collections; and Diatoms.
- Jerry Crail Johnson Earth Sciences & Map Library holds 220,000 maps as well as atlases, aerial photographs and digital geospatial data. The collection is international in scope; significant historical coverage is of Colorado.
- The Special Collections and Archives collections include rare books, medieval manuscripts, contemporary artists' books, and a signature photo book and photography collection. It contains 50,000 linear feet of more than 1,700 manuscripts and records collections, including manuscripts, correspondence, files, diaries, photographs, posters, newspapers, electronic media and published works.
- The William A. Wise Law Library provides access to legal resources. It houses 651,000 volumes and volume equivalents in all formats, including rare books and digital collections. It is the largest legal collection in the Rocky Mountains.
- The CU Heritage Center collection focuses on the history of the University of Colorado Boulder campus, its students and alumni. It consists of more than 25,000 objects, including photographs, scrapbooks, ephemera, personal objects, textiles, manuscripts, books, periodicals, maps, architectural drawings, prints, decorative arts and memorabilia.
- The CU Digital Library (CUDL) features nearly 30,000 digital objects in more than 30 collections. The material presented in the CUDL covers disciplines in the sciences, humanities, social sciences and fine arts. The types of materials include letters, manuscripts, rare books, maps, architectural drawings, journals, video interviews, audio oral histories, historical photographs, photobooks, three-dimensional museum objects and many more.
- The Art and Art History Visual Resources Center houses a continuously growing collection of more than 60,000 images and videos relating to its intellectual and creative output, as well as its curriculum. About 18,000 have been digitized and cataloged with descriptive metadata. These materials represent student and faculty creative work, documentation of the department's renowned Visiting Artist Program, faculty research and scholarship, and materials used for teaching and learning.
- The Roger G. Barry Archives and Resource Center at the National Snow and Ice Data Center houses historical science materials. Its holdings include thousands

of maps, photographs, prints, expedition journals, and other items of interest to those researching the history of science or studying past climate.

Challenges faced by collections

The CU-Collections Management Group was formed as a response to the lack of a network for cultural institutions on campus. This has been partially resolved over the last two years the group has been active, but we believe there is still work to be done in establishing a wider network on campus. A 2016 survey the group conducted on campus suggested that collections exist in departments and other areas on campus outside of the formal collections. We would like those responsible for these informal collections to be able to find our group. We are optimistic that increased visibility on campus will lead to increased communication and collaboration among departments on campus. CU-CMG believes the infrastructure for this communication and network is underdeveloped, which is a role we can fill for the campus.

Benefits to the campus and the community

By becoming a recognized entity of the campus, the members of the collections management group will have more support for our collaborations and stronger internal advocacy. There will also be a cost savings to the campus if the group can make cooperative purchases of resources. We already have an informal network of support for emergency preparedness, when needed; recognition would give us more authority in this area. We maintain a listserv, which could be increasingly used to streamline communication with the various collections on campus and gives us the opportunity to be a central point of contact for administration regarding campus collections and resources. An official website would allow for increased access to those who steward these collections as well as information on safekeeping and investing in these resources.

The charge by the campus to recruit and retain students is enhanced by our irreplaceable collections, diverse facilities and faculty/staff at the top of their fields. We believe the campus ability to incorporate object- and archive-based learning into the curriculum plays an active part in increasing the reputation of the university. This is exemplified by the experience of one member who recently made a presentation on object-based learning at an international conference. Students and faculty, from CU and non-CU campuses, research and publish using the campus collections. Our patron and visitor usage is not limited to an academic audience, and community members are some of the biggest supporters of these cultural resources, furthering our institutions ability to provide the community with an accessible and welcoming entry point to the campus.

Goals for CU-CMG

We seek recognition so the CU-CMG receives increased administrative support for collaboration and our network. This could lead to recognition of participation in the CU-CMG as service for the campus with support from department chairs and directors. Eventually, the group may want to consider formalization, with a charge and possibly a budget line, but we feel more investigation is required before moving forward with this request.

We also request permission for a CU-CMG website, so that interested parties will find it easier to contact the group. A website would allow for the sharing of best practices for collections care, as well as providing information for and increasing the accessibility of our collections on campus.

Finally, we believe that recognition would increase support for the group's ability to share services and therefore costs, as the Libraries, CU Museum of Natural History, and the Visual Resource Center have done with LUNA Imaging Software. This is an area in which the group is especially interested as the campus increases focus on digital asset management. While the campus is encouraging open access and understands the grant requirements for digital assets, the requirements for access and preservation vary widely from collection to collection.

Departments represented in CU-CMG

CU Art Museum

CU Heritage Center

CU Museum of Natural History

CUPD Events & Emergency Management

Facilities Management CAD/GIS Office

National Snow and Ice Data Center

University Libraries

American Music Research Center

Libraries Information Technology

Map Library

Metadata Services Department

Special Collections & Archives

University Risk Management

Visual Resources Center, Department of Art and Art History

Wise Law Library

