



## Research Policy

Approved by the NGC Board of Trustees March 23, 2004

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide direction for the ongoing development, conduct and management of research activities of the staff of the National Gallery of Canada and the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography.

Research involves the conceptualization and formulation of ideas as a basis for interpreting the collections and advancing knowledge, the searching and evaluating of primary and secondary sources of information, and the synthesis and documentation of results for dissemination. It is fundamental to all museum activities which advance knowledge and understanding of the visual arts.

The mandate of the National Gallery of Canada to foster research is derived from the Museums Act, 1990:

Establishment of the National Gallery of Canada (Part I, sections 5 and 6[1]):

The purposes of the National Gallery of Canada are to develop, maintain and make known, throughout Canada and internationally, a collection of works of art, both historic and contemporary, with special but not exclusive reference to Canada, and to further knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of art in general among all Canadians.

In furtherance of its purposes, the National Gallery of Canada has the capacity and, subject to this Act, the rights, powers and privileges of a natural person and in particular, but without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the National Gallery of Canada may:

- (f) undertake and sponsor any research, including fundamental or basic research and theoretical and applied research, related to its purposes and to museology, and communicate the results of that research;
- (g) provide facilities to permit qualified individuals to use and study its collection;



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- (h) promote knowledge of and disseminate information about works of art and other museum material in its collection and art in general, throughout Canada and internationally, by such means of education and communication as are appropriate;
- (i) establish and foster liaison with other organizations with purposes similar to its purposes.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The mandate of the NGC requires that it foster the public's understanding of the collections. To do so, research must be undertaken not only on the individual objects that constitute the collection but also into the cultural, historical and theoretical context in which these works were created. Research is also undertaken to ascertain the most appropriate manner of presentation to promote understanding.

The primary research activity of the institution is directed towards the development of collections and the preparation of programmes related to the collections.

The objectives of the National Gallery with respect to this policy are:

### 2.1. To Undertake and Sponsor Research in the Visual Arts:

#### a) Collections Oriented Research

Collections oriented research may be summarized in two forms: basic research and directed research. Basic research into the meaning and importance of individual works of art as they are acquired for the collection is an ongoing activity. It is also concerned with collections management and includes the accurate and objective assessment and documentation of works in the collection in the light of current art historical knowledge, as well as the care, installation and interpretation of works in the collection. Directed research is aimed at evaluating and synthesizing specific data to upgrade collection records, to resolve specific conservation problems or to design specific interpretative programmes relating to the permanent collections. Special attention will be paid to researching the provenance of works which have gaps in their collecting history from 1933 to 1945.

#### b) Project Oriented Research

Project oriented research is undertaken in order to advance knowledge and promote understanding about a specific artist, period, technique or cultural phenomenon through



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such means as exhibitions, education programmes and publications supported wholly or in part by the NGC. The objects involved in the project may be drawn partly from the collection of the NGC and partly from outside sources, or wholly from outside sources.

### **c) Discipline Related Research**

As the national art institution it is also appropriate for the NGC to undertake research into the history and theory of art beyond the bounds of the current collections and programmes. The NGC has an obligation to advance knowledge in those areas that relate to the development, care and interpretation of the visual arts and to make a contribution to the discipline as a whole.

### **d) Library**

The Library and Archives contributes to the research and resource-sharing mandate of the National Gallery through its exhibition program, through the publication of its Occasional Papers series, and through the development of electronic research tools, accessible through the National Gallery website.

The Library administers the Research Fellowship Program of the National Gallery, which supports and encourages advanced research in the fields of Canadian Art, Modern Art, European Art, History of Photography and Art Conservation. Open to international competition, the Program emphasizes the use and investigation of National Gallery collections, including those of the Library and Archives.

### **e) Research on behalf of the Public**

Research is performed regularly by staff in response to external requests from the general public and professional colleagues for information pertaining to the collections in general, to specific works of art, to the care and conservation of works of art, to the literature and related materials of the history of art and to the discipline of art history in general.

## **2.2. To Communicate the Results of NGC Research**

The results of research are made accessible and disseminated through a wide variety of public programmes including exhibitions, publications, electronic, audio-visual and other technological media, educational programmes, didactic materials, displays, demonstrations, and through organizing and participating in conferences, seminars, lectures and talks. Research is communicated also through individual consultation with



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members of the general public and the professional community and through scholarly publications.

### 3. IMPLEMENTATION

The intent of the National Gallery of Canada in the fostering of research is specified in the Appendix I.

In addition to the fundamental research activity undertaken by Curators with regard to the collection, other Gallery divisions which have major research responsibilities, including the Restoration and Conservation Laboratory, the Library, and education are presented in Appendix II.

## APPENDIX I

### THE FOSTERING OF RESEARCH

People are a key resource of any enterprise; an organization's ability to achieve results is directly related to how it retains, develops and manages its human resources. The success of research activities depends on the competence, training and motivation of the NGC staff.

i) The Establishment of a Creative Environment

Management will endeavour to provide training and development conditions such as educational leave and interchange agreements so that individual and team projects reach fruition.

Acknowledging the importance of shared ideas and experience, the NGC will encourage cooperative endeavours such as the conference attendance, and the association of the NGC researchers with Library Fellows, colleagues in the Canadian and international museums, other federal institutions and with staff in universities and research institutes.

ii) Allocation of Time and Resources

The allocation and approval of time to conduct research is of special importance in an institution such as the NGC where the curatorial staff responsible for the major part of the research activity is also engaged in many other aspects of collection management and programme development. An appropriate amount of research time will be designated in the annual work plans, or through, in the case of curators, sabbaticals. Any allotment would be in keeping with the entitlement in the applicable collective



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agreement.

Within existing priorities and resources, effort shall be made to provide appropriate space, technical equipment and support, travel allocations, library and archival services.

- iii) The Approval of Research
  - a. Collections and project oriented research in the NGC is approved by the Chief Curator and recommended to the Program Committee and is incorporated into the work plans.
  - b. Discipline related research activities, which are not acquisitions or exhibitions related, will be reviewed and recommended to the Chief Curator reporting to the Director.
- iv) Evaluation of Research
 

Research related to collections, installations, exhibitions, publications and special projects is evaluated by the Chief Curator and the usual NGC management review processes, including the Director's Program Committee and the Publications Review Committee. The research will be judged, where appropriate, according to criteria including contribution to knowledge, public response and critical and peer review.
- v) Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography
 

The Director of the CMCP, is responsible for the application of the research policy of the National Gallery of Canada to the CMCP.

## APPENDIX II

### DEPARTMENTS WITH APPLIED RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITIES

Research activity in the NGC is primarily directed towards the development and maintenance of collections and the preparation of programmes, with the major responsibilities for these activities devolving on the Curatorial section of the Research and Collections Branch. Closely tied to these operations are the supporting functions of the Restoration and Conservation Laboratory, the Library and Archives and Education. For the most part research is performed by professional



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staff hired as curators, conservators, librarians, archivists, docents, volunteers and education officers for whom research is a fundamental and integral part of their responsibilities.

### i) Curatorial

Research performed by the curatorial staff is basic to the manner in which collections will be developed, maintained, rendered accessible and interpreted. Discipline related research is essential to maintain and promote the highest professional standards. The curator works with members of the national and international art historical and museum communities, exchanging information and drawing on the expertise of colleagues as appropriate.

The research carried out by curatorial staff is fundamental to:

- a. collections development and management;
- b. collections documentation;
- c. collections conservation;
- d. advancement of knowledge about the collections through interpretation, including installations, exhibitions, didactic displays and publications;
- e. advancement of general art historical knowledge, through exhibitions, didactic displays and publications;
- f. research on behalf of the public.

### ii) Conservation

Through systematic analysis and documentation, the conservation staff assembles scientific, technical and art historical data primarily for use in the conservation and restoration of the collections. In accordance with these aims, the conservation staff engages in research related to:

- a. artists' materials, techniques and application, including the crafts associated with each category;
- b. conservation methods and materials, from the past and present; and
- c. environmental and deterioration studies.

The conservator collaborates with members of the NGC curatorial and educational staff on research projects including acquisitions, exhibitions, scholarly articles and special projects. The conservator also collaborates with the Canadian Conservation Institute and conservation scientists for particular analytical information. The conservator works together with members of the national and international conservation and museum communities as required.



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### iii) Library and Archives

The resources of the Library and Archives facilitate the study and research of the National Gallery fine art collections, all aspects of Canadian art, the history of Western European and American art in particular, and the history of art in general.

The collections and services of the Library and Archives provide fundamental support to the scholarly research activities of the National Gallery. The Collection Development Policy (1997) of the Library and Archives outlines its core collecting areas, including both books and archival material of all types; these must be maintained in strength and must reflect current art historical knowledge. In addition to its collecting activities, the Library must provide access to the growing number of scholarly resources in the discipline of art history that are available in electronic format.

As the custodian of the de facto national collection, the Library and Archives must make its scholarly resources known and accessible both nationally and internationally, and must share these resources through reference services, document delivery, interlibrary loan, and the publications exchange program. The Library must maintain a close working relationship with scholarly libraries in Canada and abroad in order to provide access to their resources for the benefit of National Gallery research activities.

### iv) Education

Education conducts research in theory and methodology for the purpose of enriching and extending its interpretative services to the widest audience through a variety of media, including the Internet. All research and interpretive programmes in Education are planned and evaluated for the benefit of both Gallery visitors and visitors to all Canadian museums and galleries receiving exhibitions toured by the travelling exhibitions programme.