



National Gallery of Canada Musée des beaux-arts du Canada

RESEARCH POLICY

Approved by the Board of Trustees on December 9, 2014

All references to the National Gallery of Canada include its affiliate, the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography (CMCP)

1. PREAMBLE

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.

Research is the “systematic investigation or inquiry aimed at contributing to knowledge ... by careful consideration, observation, or study of a subject.”¹ It is fundamental to the Gallery’s mandate.

The mandate of the National Gallery of Canada, including its role in fostering 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;

(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.

1 OED Online. June 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com> (accessed 11 July 2014).

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 contemporary context in which these works were created, viewed and understood, as well as into their later reception. Research is also undertaken to ascertain the most appropriate manner of presenting works of art in order to promote the understanding of different artistic periods and movements, different uses of artworks, etc.

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

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

A. To Undertake and Sponsor Research in the Visual Arts:

i. Collections Oriented Research

Collections oriented research is an ongoing activity, performed both as works are acquired and retrospectively. It includes the objective assessment and documentation of an artwork – for example, its materials and techniques, condition, authorship, date, function, provenance, and exhibition and bibliographical history – as well as the study of its meaning, importance and reception. This information is fundamental to collections management and to the care, installation and interpretation of works in the collection. Collections oriented research has varied goals, including: the assessment of potential acquisitions; improved documentation of works in the collection; identifying and resolving conservation, art historical or collections management problems; as well as designing interpretive programmes and installations.

Note that special attention will be paid to researching the provenance of works which have gaps in their collecting history during the Nazi-era, i.e. 1933-1945.

ii. Project Oriented Research

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

iii. 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, technical art history and the history of conservation practice 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.

iv. Library and Archives

The Library and Archives contributes to the research and resource-sharing mandate of the National Gallery through its collections, exhibition programs, exhibition loans, through the publication of its *Occasional Papers* series, and through digitization and 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 including the Indigenous Art of Canada, European Art, International 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.

v. Research on behalf of the public

Research is performed by staff in response to 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. This research is performed as resources and expertise permit, and as the inquiry merits.

Gallery staff do not appraise or authenticate works of art.

B. 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, digital media, educational programmes, didactic materials and displays, and by organizing and participating in conferences, seminars, lectures and informal talks. Research results may also be communicated privately to members of the public and scholars, and with the professional community through independent 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 research undertaken by Curators, other Gallery divisions, including the Restoration and Conservation Laboratory, Library and Archives, and Education, have major research responsibilities. These responsibilities are presented in Appendix II.

4. THE APPROVAL OF RESEARCH

Project oriented research is approved by the respective Deputy Director or Director and is incorporated into the work plans.

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 such as educational and professional leave, and interchange agreements to further research skills and knowledge, and to support individual and team projects

Acknowledging the importance of shared ideas and experience, the NGC will encourage collaborative projects, conference attendance, and the association of NGC staff with Library Research Fellows, colleagues in Canadian and foreign museums, other federal institutions and with staff in universities and research institutes. All above endeavours would respect the Gallery's institutional and financial needs.

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 curatorial and conservation 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 - in the case of curators – through sabbaticals. Any allotment would be in keeping with the entitlement in the applicable collective agreement and must respect the Gallery's institutional and financial needs.

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

APPENDIX II

DEPARTMENTS WITH APPLIED RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITIES

Research activity in the NGC is primarily directed towards the development, understanding and maintenance of its collections and the preparation of programmes, with the major responsibility for these activities devolving on the Curatorial section of the Collections, Research and Education branch. Closely tied to these operations are the complementary functions of the Restoration and Conservation Laboratory, Library and Archives, and Education. For the most part research is performed by professional staff, for whom it is a fundamental and integral part of their responsibilities: curators, conservators, librarians, archivists, and educators, on-call staff and volunteers may be assigned research tasks.

i) Curatorial

Research performed by the curatorial staff is fundamental 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 with and drawing on the expertise of colleagues as appropriate. The curator collaborates with NGC staff across its divisions, drawing on complementary areas of expertise and skill.

The research carried out by curatorial staff contributes substantially to:

- a. collections development and management;
- b. collections documentation;
- c. collections conservation;
- d. advancement of knowledge about the collections and individual works, by interpreting these through installations, exhibitions, didactic displays, lectures and publications and other means;
- e. advancement of general art historical knowledge, through exhibitions, didactic displays, lectures and publications and other means;
- f. research on behalf of the public and professional colleagues.

ii) Conservation

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

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

- d. the establishment of a work's authorship and date through technical study, and assessment of its condition.

The conservator may collaborate with members of the NGC curatorial and educational staff on research projects including exhibitions, scholarly articles and special projects. Along with curators, the conservator has a uniquely important role in assessing potential acquisitions. 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 and art historians as required.

iii) Library and Archives

Library and Archives supports research by providing services, and through the development and preservation of collections. Services include reference, circulation, inter-library loan, subscriptions to electronic resources, document delivery, visual resources support and participation in local, national and global networks of libraries through resource-sharing, collaboration, and other initiatives. Services are provided to the Gallery's curatorial, education, conservation, and library staff and to Research Fellows, as well as to external scholars and researchers and the public. Library and Archives collections on the visual arts are the most extensive in Canada, and constitute the national research collection in the field. Collecting activity is guided by the Collection Development Policy (1997), supplemented by the Library and Archives Collection Development Policy (2011).

In order to serve collections-oriented, project-oriented and discipline-related research, the Library's collecting of books, periodicals and electronic resources must be carried out with a coherent and balanced approach, maintaining the currency and breadth of the collections, with an eye to both present and future needs.

The Archives collections are built around the Gallery's own institutional archives, which are themselves prime materials for research. In addition, collecting activity encompasses the papers of Canadian artists, art dealers, galleries, collectors, societies, art critics, curators, historians and trustees. Canadian content, national significance, pertinence to the Gallery and significance for research are taken into account in making acquisitions and allocating resources.

iv) Education

Education conducts research in theory, methods and practices for the purpose of enriching and extending its interpretive programs, products and services to the widest audience through a variety of traditional and digital media. Research and interpretive activities or initiatives in education are planned and evaluated for the benefit of visitors engaging with the Gallery's collection and exhibitions in Ottawa, at other venues and online.