

Society for the History of Collecting CAA Session, Chicago February 2020
CFP: The Institution as Collector

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Both the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art celebrate their 150th anniversaries in 2020. Yet these two institutions began in very different ways. While the Boston museum was an outgrowth of that city's Athenaeum, with an already extensive collection of works of art, New York's museum was founded without a single object in its collection. These examples are a starting point to consider the ways in which museums act as collectors. The history of collecting is more usually positioned as driven by individuals or families. While house museums have garnered attention as expressions of their founders' biographies and interests, municipal or encyclopedic museums have not been examined in a comprehensive way. By focusing on institutions, our session seeks papers that expand our understanding of the nature of collecting. Papers might address any of the three aspects of the collecting process: acquisition, installation and preservation, and deaccession. Questions that might arise for discussion are: How are acquisition policies of a museum articulated and how do they change with the growth of the institution? How and why have museums developed collectors' committees? How do museums act as tastemakers? How are single collector bequests shown within a larger institution? What has been the impact of curators or directors on their institutions' collections? Papers may consider institutions other than museums that collect works of art. For example, corporate collections, pension funds or foundations have been little studied beyond self-produced volumes.

Please send a 250-word proposal along with a cover letter to americas@societyhistorycollecting.org by August 1, 2019. You must be both a member of CAA and a member of the Society for the History of Collecting [<https://societyhistorycollecting.org/uncategorised/join-us-2/>]