



Collections Advocacy Toolkit

Twenty Questions: A Self-Assessment Game

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This questionnaire will help you describe your collections and how they serve the interests of your visitors and supporters. Add to or change the questions to suit your institution, then answer the selected questions in one or two sentences or phrases with other staff.

Try the same exercise with directors, trustees, donors, long-term members, and casual visitors. Continue to do this regularly over time until you see repeating responses.

The answers should reveal how others see what you do, how well you do it, and how it impacts them. They will provide ideas and phrases for articulating key messages before you begin advocating for your collections.

1. What do you collect?

2. What individual(s), event(s), or historical era(s) do your collections represent?

3. How do these collections fit into local, regional, national, and world contexts?

4. How do these artifacts illuminate a significant aspect of art or history?

5. What is unique or extraordinary about your collections?

6. How would you describe your site and these collections to someone who doesn't usually visit museums, historic sites, and other collecting institutions?

7. How do these collections impact your visitors?

8. Who are your core audiences?

9. How do your collections, exhibits, and programs serve your core audiences?

10. How do you go about discovering how you are serving your audiences?

11. What do you think about or see differently after interacting with your audiences?

12. How do you engage your audiences?

13. How would you describe the physical condition of the artifacts in your collections?

14. What plans do you have for improving the environment and long-term care of the collections?

15. What exhibits or programs have you developed to highlight preservation of the collections?

16. In what ways is your organization, site, or collection distinct from others in your area?

17. Do you collaborate or partner with institutions that complement yours?

18. What initiatives, coalitions, or partnerships have you joined or do you plan to join?

19. If you could carry out your complete vision, what would your institution, collections, and visitors look like in a decade or two?

20. What would be lost if your institution no longer existed?
