



Donation Guidelines

A clear guide to offering objects, archives, photographs, digital, and other material to the Museum

Before you begin: Please contact the Museum before bringing or sending any material. The Museum cannot accept unsolicited drop-offs, and leaving an object at the Museum does not make it a donation.

Purpose and scope

The Maltese-Canadian Museum preserves, researches, and shares the histories and cultural heritage of Maltese people in Canada, together with the relationships between Canada and the Maltese Islands. These guidelines explain what the Museum collects, how potential donations are assessed, and what donors can expect from the process.

A donation is accepted only when an authorised Museum representative signs a Deed of Gift. Preliminary discussions, an expression of interest, or a Temporary Custody Receipt do not transfer ownership.

What the Museum collects

The Museum considers material with a meaningful, documented relationship to one or more of the following collecting areas:

- **Migration and settlement in Canada** - passports, tickets, correspondence, settlement records, employment records, travel documents, sponsorship records, and objects carried or made during migration.
- **Community and institutional life** - records and objects associated with clubs, businesses, careers, parishes, schools, bands, societies, sports, political activity, mutual aid, festivals, and any Maltese-Canadian organisations.
- **Family and personal histories** - family photographs, albums, home movies, oral histories, letters, diaries, certificates, genealogical material, and personal objects with stories or documented associations.
- **Cultural practice and material life** - dress, lace, tools, domestic objects, music, instruments, art, craft, language, folklore, souvenirs, commemorative material, and objects associated with everyday life.
- **Religion and devotional life** - devotional objects, vestments, parish records, confraternity material, feast-day objects, religious art, and material documenting Maltese religious life in Canada.
- **Archives and digital heritage** - documents, photographs, audiovisual recordings, maps, publications, ephemera, born-digital files, websites, and social-media records of enduring historical value.
- **Maltese historical context** - material relating to Malta, Gozo, and Comino where it provides necessary context for Maltese-Canadian history, identity, memory, or community interpretation.

Special categories: Archaeological, palaeontological, geological, or natural-history specimens may be considered. Complete lawful-provenance and export/import documentation may be required. The Museum does not accept human remains or material acquired through looting, unauthorised excavation, or illicit trade.

What the Museum normally declines

- **Material outside the mandate** - items without a substantive connection to Maltese-Canadian history or the Museum's interpretive work.
- **Unclear or unlawful ownership** - material offered without authority from all owners, subject to liens or disputes, or lacking necessary provenance and legal documentation.
- **Hazardous or unstable material** - items containing active mould, pests, asbestos, explosives, ammunition, hazardous chemicals, radioactive components, or other undisclosed risks.



- **Duplicates and low-information material** - items already well represented, mass-produced material without a meaningful association, or material for which essential context has been lost.
- **Material beyond current capacity** - objects whose size, condition, conservation needs, digital format, security requirements, or ongoing costs exceed the Museum's resources.
- **Conditional gifts** - offers requiring permanent display, permanent retention, a fixed location, separation from related collections, guaranteed access, or another restriction the Museum cannot responsibly sustain.
- **Appraisals and authentications** - material offered solely for monetary appraisal, authentication, or certification. Museum team members do not provide these services.

| How offers are assessed

The Collections and Exhibitions Committee assesses each offer on its individual merits and in relation to the existing collection. The review considers:

- **Relevance** - the strength and importance of the connection to Maltese or Maltese-Canadian history, culture, or community life.
- **Significance and documentation** - association, rarity, representativeness, research value, provenance, and the quality of accompanying stories and records.
- **Legal and ethical status** - ownership, authority to donate, lawful export/import, cultural sensitivity, privacy, and any community or creator interests.
- **Condition and care** - stability, hazards, conservation needs, handling requirements, and the Museum's ability to provide appropriate long-term care.
- **Use and access** - realistic potential for research, exhibition, education, digitisation, publication, programming, or community engagement.
- **Fit with the existing collection** - duplication, gaps, relationships to other holdings, and whether the material improves the collection as a coherent whole.
- **Resources and sustainability** - space, equipment, staff time, rights management, digital preservation, insurance, security, and other long-term costs.

| How to offer a donation

1. **Contact the Museum first.** Provide a brief description of the material and explain its Maltese or Maltese-Canadian connection.
2. **Share useful information.** Include photographs, dimensions, condition, ownership history, provenance, names, dates, places, stories, known rights, privacy concerns, and any hazards.
3. **Allow time for review.** Staff may ask follow-up questions or request an appointment. A preliminary expression of interest is not a promise of acceptance.
4. **Use temporary custody when needed.** If material must be left for assessment, both parties sign a Temporary Custody Receipt. Ownership remains with the depositor.
5. **Receive a decision.** The Museum may accept all, part, or none of an offer. A declined offer is not a judgement on personal or family importance.
6. **Complete the transfer.** Accepted material becomes Museum property only after delivery and signature of a Deed of Gift by the donor and an authorised Museum representative.



| Important terms for donors

Display is not guaranteed. Acceptance does not promise that material will be exhibited, published, digitised, kept together, or continuously available. Most museum collections spend substantial periods in storage, research, or conservation.

Physical ownership and copyright are different. Donating an object transfers title to the physical property. Copyright and related rights transfer only when the donor owns them and the Deed of Gift expressly says so.

Valuation and official receipts. The Museum does not appraise proposed gifts. An official donation receipt can be issued only when the Museum is legally eligible to do so and all Canada Revenue Agency requirements are satisfied. A thank-you letter or Deed of Gift is not an official donation receipt.

Donor credit and privacy. The Museum will record donor and provenance information for collections management. Public acknowledgement, anonymity, restrictions on personal information, and culturally sensitive content should be discussed before the deed is signed.

Responsible stewardship. The Museum may catalogue, photograph, digitise, conserve, exhibit, publish, lend, store, or otherwise use accepted material in keeping with its mission, policies, law, and professional ethics.

Future deaccessioning. A gift is permanent, but no museum can promise perpetual retention of every item. Material may later be deaccessioned only through the Museum's approved policy and authority. Deaccessioned material is not automatically returned to the donor.

No return after completion. Once a Deed of Gift has been signed and the gift delivered, the donor cannot reclaim it except where the Museum agrees in writing or the law requires otherwise.

| If an offer is not accepted

The Museum will arrange return according to the Temporary Custody Receipt. When appropriate, staff may suggest another repository, digital copying, a short-term loan, or retention by the owner with improved documentation. The Museum cannot guarantee that another organisation will accept the material.

| Contact

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Version note: Collecting priorities and capacity change over time. The Museum may revise these guidelines when its mandate, facilities, policies, or legal obligations change.