



# INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS ADVISOR

A RESOURCE FROM IHS LOCAL HISTORY SERVICES

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## TEMPORARY RECEIPT VERSUS DEED OF GIFT

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When you ask someone to list the reasons they decided to volunteer or work at a museum the answers often reflect a love of history, historical objects and stories, or simply a desire to do something for their community. The reason is rarely, if ever, a love of paperwork. However, creating and utilizing various forms and paperwork are vital to the process of running a museum. While there is a wide variety of paperwork associated with a museum, from strategic plans to finances, we are going to focus in on two types of paperwork relevant to the intake of collections. Below are outlined the Temporary Receipt and Deed of Gift. Both are vital to necessary record keeping of collections departments but often confused with one another.

### TEMPORARY RECEIPT

The Temporary Receipt is a form provided to a potential donor when they bring into the museum an item they wish the museum to consider for donation. It is important to understand that the Temporary Receipt is different from the Deed of Gift (which we will get to next!). The Temporary Receipt is meant to tell the museum the donor's intentions for the item: donation, purchase, or other (such as study or information-gathering). It also serves as a receipt for the donor so they have a record of the items they have offered to the museum. Although some databases, like PastPerfect, can produce these forms for the museum, you may also need to tweak the form or create your own. Here are some things that should be included:

- Name and contact information (address, phone, and email if applicable) of owner.
- A place for the individual to initial their intention: donation, offer of sale, or other.
- Description of the items.
- A place for the individual to initial what should happen if the items are not accepted for accession: owner will pick up, or disposal or sale at the discretion of the organization.
- A date and signature line for the individual, as well as for the agent of the institution receiving the items.



### ONLINE RESOURCES

[A Guide to Deed of Gifts](#)  
(Society of American Archivists)

[There's a Form for That: Documenting Your Collections](#)  
(Connecting to Collections Care)

### UPCOMING TRAINING AND PROGRAMS

[Collections Management for Smaller Cultural Institutions](#)  
Feb. 12, 19, 26 and Mar. 5 -  
Connecting to Collections Care webinar.



WPA Worker. (Indiana Historical Society)

### DEED OF GIFT

The Deed of Gift is the legal document that transfers ownership of a donated item to the museum. Once a Deed of Gift is signed the item becomes the legal property of the organization and the organization is responsible for the item under the public trust. Donors should not sign a Deed of Gift until the museum is certain that they wish to accession the item. The space of time between the Temporary Receipt and the Deed of Gift allows both the organization and the donor to consider their comfort with making the item a final donation. It is better to have someone determine they are not ready to let go of this piece of family history before the Deed of Gift is signed than after, because "after" there is not much the museum can easily do. The Deed of Gift should include:

- Legal language that transfers ownership and any associated copyright held by the owner to the museum.
- The name and contact information (address, phone, and email if applicable) of the donor.
- The name and contact information for the organization accepting the donation.
- A FULL list of the items being donated. Include each individual item being donated so it is clear to both the organization and the individual if there are items from the original intended donation that are not being accessioned. This should also include the accession number if known as it will make it easier for the future reference of the donor.
- Credit line. The Deed of Gift can be a great place to provide the donor with the potential credit line that will be attached to the items and give them the opportunity to make changes (i.e.: if the donor wants to have the credit line be in memory of someone else).
- Signature and date line for both the individual and the institution.

I often hear from folks working in local museums around the state that one of the biggest concerns about doing a separate Temporary Receipt and Deed of Gift is that the donor will not return a signed Deed of Gift if they are not asked to do so on the day they bring in the item. Luckily for those in Indiana, the [Indiana Property Law](#) IC 32-34-5 (a synopsis of which you can find in [this](#) past Collections Advisor) outlines what to do in this instance. Essentially the item is deemed abandoned property and gaining title of it is simple. For those not in Indiana, check your state and local property laws and see if it may pertain to this type of abandoned property situation. It can be helpful to note on the Temporary Receipt or Deed of Gift any time the museum attempts to contact the individual so a record is already established if you later find yourself in an abandoned property situation.

Although paperwork is not most people's idea of a good time, it is essential in the proper functioning of a museum and of the collections department. Imagine how many current headaches could have been prevented with simple paperwork in the past.

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