



About the Author

Spencer W. Stuart provides collection advisory services to private collectors as well as institutions where he aids in the design and execution of collection development, inventory, cataloguing, collection appraisals and de-accession strategies. Spencer's current client focus is the development and eventual placement of fine collections. To book a one-on-one consultation to discuss your collecting future, send him a message:

<http://spencerwstuart.ca/services/>

In concert with his advising, Spencer is an active researcher and writer, publishing articles on collecting and collection management in North America and Europe. In 2021, in addition to his radio work for the CBC, Spencer provided briefings and presentations to hundreds of collectors for more than 20 book clubs and bibliophilic organizations across North America and Abroad. To read or listen to more of Spencer's work go to: <http://spencerwstuart.ca/media/>

What Time Affords

Crucial to the 'late stage' of collecting is giving yourself adequate time to:

- a) Consider the future of your collection (sell or donate? Keep it together or break it up?) and,
- b) Find out the cultural and commercial systems of value within which your collection exists (ultimately resulting in a strategy for de-accession).

By developing an awareness and understanding of the position one's collection occupies, the collector can align the expectation of their collection's future. This anticipatory procedure, informed by comprehensive cataloguing of the collection, can mitigate the potential of 'emotional blowback' that can result from a collector faced with not enough time to properly part from their collections. This emotional resistance can result in a collector becoming overwhelmed by their circumstances and, refuting the act of collecting, casts themselves as the 'Obsessive/Impulsive' Collector as outlined previously.

Just as a collector owes it to their collections to take stock and care of them through the cataloguing process, a collector does a disservice to themselves, their collection's holdings, and those around them if they do not take the time to really consider its purpose and place within a greater context. At times, this can be difficult, however it is essential to maintaining the vital cultural work collecting provides to our communities.

Relatable or Eclectic?

These distinctions align with 'Object-Elicit' and 'Idea Oriented' collecting approaches. 'Relatable' collections consist of holdings that have precedent within a broader collecting community and thus often have markets through which comparable value can be generated and as a result have a reach that is national, if not international in terms of cultural and commercial recognition.

'Eclectic' collections, synonymous with 'Idea Oriented' collecting, by definition are incomparable. Formed on the basis of what is not represented within a culture, the individual and cumulative value of the collection's holdings can be difficult to ascertain making them hard, if not impossible (at first), to integrate into a commercial context. That said, the impetus for the collecting of this nature, and the stories told through these collections, make them valuable to Cultural Institutions with mandates to broaden their representation of underrepresented communities or alternative forms of cultural expression.

Questions for contemplation

As you read this article it may be of value to you if you consider a number of questions about your collection:

1. Have you catalogued your collection?
2. Have you thought about the future of your collection and what you want to do with it?
3. Is your collection relatable or eclectic?
4. Do you have some ideas about how and where you wish your collection to go (Sold by dealers or auction/donated to an institution or institutions/passed on through inheritance)?