

Guidelines for the Museum Courier during the Pandemic

These guidelines are for loans that would normally require a courier per their loan agreement. By publishing these guidelines, we are not encouraging or discouraging couriers for other loans.

What is a Book End Shipment Courier?

- A. A courier may perform some elements of traditional courier duties in person, as long as museum/transport/cargo terminal personnel allow their presence alongside the crew or airport supervisor. They may be a member of the lending or borrowing museum's staff, or a contracted freelance registrar, conservator or art handler, but it is likely they would need to travel independently to the warehouse or museum. They would be present at the offloading or loading of the crates from the truck and they would oversee palletization/depalletization of the crates or loading/unloading in containers. Should a qualified contractor be appointed, then recording or live streaming may not be needed. The agent and the courier would be in constant communication until the plane departs or the truck is loaded and *en route*.
- B. Should it be impossible for a human courier to be present at the museum or warehouse, then an alternative would be to work through the transport company airport supervisor or the local crew to provide a photograph, before a crate is in its final palletization stage at the airport, for example. By viewing this way, questions and approval for how crates are secured and palletized can be communicated before the final netting and shrink-wrap are applied. Each port will have different security policies in place, filming may be prohibited, so it is important that the registrar works closely with their agent in this scenario, by pre-briefing and telephone calls (with still images if at all possible). This scenario will change constantly.

What is an Installation Courier?

- A. As with the shipping courier, if a museum cannot send their staff, and a courier is allowed to be in the gallery space with borrowing museum staff, then hiring a contract registrar, conservator or art handler acting on behalf of the lender would be an option. The contract courier's duties could include overseeing the unpacking/packing, the condition check and installation/deinstallation of the objects. A digital condition report is essential in this scenario, as it can be emailed to the lender immediately upon completion, even before the courier leaves the museum setting, allowing the lender to ask any questions as needed at that time.
- B. If a human courier cannot be present in the gallery space, then the lender should work with the borrower to conduct a "live stream" of the unpacking/packing, the condition check and the installation/deinstallation of the objects as needed. Note that these tasks might take place at different times of the day, so issues with time zones and technology should be discussed prior to confirming the appointment times. In this scenario, the digital condition report can be edited and electronically signed by both the lender and borrower upon completion of the tasks. However, this will only be possible if the report (usually a PDF) is accessible to both registrars, potentially using a shared file application such Box.com, Dropbox, or Google docs, for example.

These guidelines were compiled from discussions with registrars and collection managers from around the world via a weekly Zoom call. These guidelines are posted on various websites (June 2020). For more information please contact us at registrarhour@gmail.com.

