NASA Advisory Implementing Instructions: Exhibit Managers Procedures

1. Objective:

This procedure establishes a standardized framework for the identification, evaluation, retention, and disposal of heritage assets and historically significant items within NASA's holdings. It ensures that potentially historically significant items are systematically assessed, documented, and managed in accordance with NPD 1387. This process enables Exhibit Managers and Property Teams to make informed decisions while preserving NASA's legacy and supporting public outreach.

2. Purpose

The NASA inventory consists of items that have been assessed for historical significance and items intended for outreach purposes.

3. Current Inventory

- The Exhibit Manager at each NASA Center, including NASA Headquarters, in close coordination with the Center Property team, shall conduct an annual review of current inventory.
- **Review inventory:** Examine lists of items no longer needed for missions, such as potential artifacts, excess equipment, and documents. Exhibit Managers shall review items that are no longer in active use for mission purposes with the intent to verify items that should be retained by NASA.
- **Categorize items:** Categorize items, including current holdings and new acquisitions, as "historically significant" or "non-significant."

- **Assess for outreach use:** Categorize items that are non-significant but are important to the agency for outreach purposes.

4. Evaluation of Potential New Acquisitions

- **Assess historical significance:** Consider if the item represents key milestones, technology, or notable events in NASA history. If item is not historically significant, assess for outreach use.
- **Condition Assessment:** Inspect the item for damage or wear and decide if it can be restored or preserved.
- **Authenticity Verification:** Ensure each item is properly documented and its history is clear.

5. Criteria for Determining Historical Significance

- **Cultural and Historical Significance:** Assess the item's role in shaping or advancing scientific knowledge, space exploration or aerospace technology.
- **Technological Milestones:** Determine whether the item represents groundbreaking innovations or engineering achievements critical to NASA's mission.
- **Mission Relevance:** Identify whether the item was associated with a notable space mission, research program, or aerospace initiative.
- **Impact and Legacy**: Evaluate the item's influence on subsequent missions, aerospace policies, or industry advancements.
- **Symbolic Value**: Consider the item's role in public engagement, scientific recognition, and symbolic significance in NASA's history.

- **Public and Scientific Interest:** Assess public and scientific interest or recognition of the item as an enduring symbol of space history.

6. Determination Schedule for the Retention or Disposal of items

- **Retained as a historically significant item:**
  - o Items designated as historically significant are accessioned into NASA's permanent collections.
  - o Collection procedures herein pertain only to the historical objects related to and located within such properties
  - o NASA exhibitions utilize items from these permanent collections, and when deemed appropriate by collections and exhibition staff, in collaboration with items received on loan from other individuals or institutions.
- Retained for Outreach Purposes:
  - o Items designated as useful for outreach purposes are retained for outreach use
  - o NASA exhibitions and outreach events utilize items from the permanent collection
- **Deaccessioned for Disposal:**
  - o Items deemed unsuitable for retention shall be deaccessioned through the Artifact Program
  - o The Artifact Working Group shall oversee the transfer of deaccessioned items to museums, libraries, planetariums, universities, and schools around the country to benefit community outreach
  - o Items not allocated through the Artifact Module shall be subject to General Services Administration (GSA) excess property disposal procedures.

7. Documentation and Record Keeping

NASA Center Exhibit Managers and Property Managers shall maintain comprehensive records of all items in the inventory historically significant evaluations, including:

- **Asset Identification Records:** Documentation of the evaluation process and classification rationale
- **Retention or Disposal Justifications**: Justification reports supporting retention or deaccessioning.
- **Inventory Database (SAP)**: Digital inventory management tool used for retained inventory items for tracking and accessibility.

8. Communication and Collaboration

To ensure a consistent and unified approach to artifact management, NASA Centers shall:

- **Share Evaluation Findings:** The agency Exhibit Program Manager shall lead a pan-agency group of Exhibit Managers to promote best practices and alignment.
- **Collaborate with Property Teams:** Ensure Exhibit Managers coordinate with appropriate Center Property Teams and review items not selected for retention for consideration for the Artifact Transfer Program

9. Conclusion

This procedure ensures that NASA's assets, including historically significant items and those intended for outreach purposes are preserved, properly evaluated, and displayed in ways that promote dissemination of the NASA story and honor the agency's legacy in space exploration. By systematically verifying the historical significance and condition of items, NASA can make informed decisions about which items to retain, showcase, and preserve for future generations. This streamlined process helps Exhibit Managers and Property Teams evaluate and decide which items should be permanently accessioned while ensuring that NASA's legacy is preserved for future generations. Moreover, the systematic deaccessioning of non-

essential items through the Artifact Program further advances NASA's commitment to ensuring that valuable space exploration artifacts remain accessible to future generations.

Glossary of Terms

Accession
 The official process of adding an artifact to NASA's permanent collection.

Artifact Module
 A web-based tool jointly administered by the Office of Strategic Infrastructure (OSI) and the Office of Communications (OCOMM) for screening, tracking, and allocating NASA artifacts to eligible recipients.

Deaccession
The formal process of removing an artifact from the collection, typically due to redundancy, deterioration, or transfer to another institution.

Exhibit
An artifact or collection of artifacts displayed for public engagement. Exhibits typically include interpretive graphics, descriptive text, and audiovisual elements. These may be found in NASA buildings, Visitor Centers, museums, technical conferences, and other outreach venues.

Historical Significance
The relevance of an artifact based on its direct association with key NASA milestones, technological achievements, or influential figures.

Historically Significant Item
An object considered valuable due to its strong connection to pivotal NASA events, missions, innovations, or individuals. These items are generally intended for long-term preservation.

Holdings
All artifacts, materials, and documents in NASA's stewardship, whether officially accessioned or retained for research, outreach, or administrative purposes. This includes both permanent and non-permanent items.

Inventory
A comprehensive list of artifacts, including detailed descriptions, locations, and tracking data used to manage NASA's holdings.

NASA Artifact
A unique object that documents the history of NASA's aeronautics and astronautics programs. Artifacts are significant due to their association with historic flights, programs, technological advancements, scientific discoveries, or notable individuals.

Permanent Collection
The core group of NASA artifacts officially accessioned and preserved for ongoing research, public display, and educational outreach.

Appendix

Artifact Review Process

Categories
- Existing inventory
- New acquisitions

Review cadence
- Annual
- Upon acquisition

Review Steps
- 1. Review list of items
- 1. Assess condition
- 2. Verify authenticity
- 3. Categorize items

Criteria
· Cultural and Historical Significance
· Technological Milestones
· Mission Relevance
· Impact and Legacy
· Symbolic Value
· Public and Scientific Interest

Decision
- Historically significant
- Non-significant

Disposition
- Retain as Historically Significant Item
- Assess for outreach use
  - Yes → Retain for outreach use
  - No → Deaccession for Disposal