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Developing the collections together – Tools for the nationwide collection management

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Main challenges in collections management

- Mass production society produces huge amount of potential museum objects
- Museum storages are filling up. Physical storage space is very limited
- Museum´s knowledge of their existing collections and their contents is often rather limited
- Lack of shared knowledge of the collections on a national level
- Collecting material ”blindly” without knowing what museum has in it´s own collections and what other museums are collecting
- All this has significant effect on acquisition and deaccession/disposal activities and processes

National collection networking in Finland

- National network for collections management co-operation and present day documentation (called TAKO) in Finland was established in 2009
- Network is a part of National Board of Antiquities and The National Museum of Finland
- Network has two main themes for the co-operation and development work: present day documentation and national division of collecting
- Network is a forum for new innovations and joint projects regarding the collections management

TAKO: Present day documentation

- TAKO-network was originally formed around present day documentation activities
- A model was formed where cultural and social aspects of the surrounding world were divided into seven categories that were called pools
- Museums were invited to join the pools of their desire and begin to execute joint present day documentation projects with other museums of the same pool
- Excellent way to introduce museums to each other and to launch co-operation
- Today in total of 82 museums are operating with the present day documentation activities

Present day documentation pools

1. Man and Nature
2. Individuals, communities and the public sector
3. The everyday life
4. Production, services and the working life
5. Communications, traffic and tourism
6. Art, education and the personal experience
7. Trends, prominent figures and national turning points

Developing the co-operation

- With the present day documentation the network was formed and ground for national collections co-operation was established
- Next step was to tackle much harder issue: how to divide the collecting themes and responsibilities nationwide
- The Finnish Museum Association launched project for creating the model of nationwide division of collecting tasks in 2012
- All the professionally run cultural-historical museums in Finland (total 114) were interviewed. Art museums, natural history museums and non-professional museums were left out of at this point

Creating the model of nationwide division of collecting tasks

- Aims of the model:
 - Create a overall picture of field of collecting in Finland
 - Find out the most overlapping areas of collecting themes
 - Reduce the the amount of collection of overlapping themes
 - Find out the themes that are not collected at all
 - Create a division of collecting between museums – shared themes of collecting and shared responsibility
 - Create concrete co-operation between museums and develop joint collections management
 - Change the mindset of museums and encourage openness regarding the collections

Features of the Model

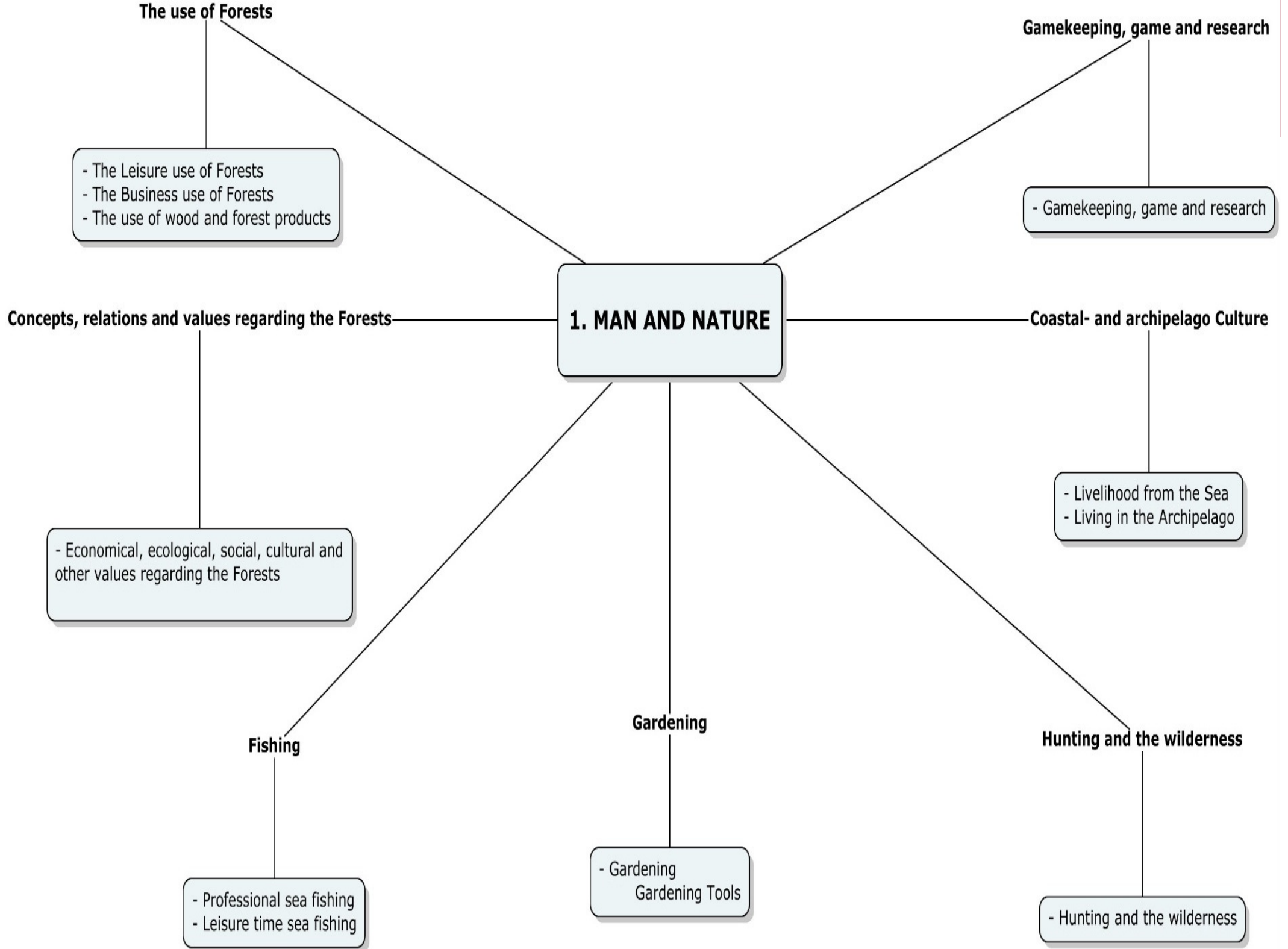
- The model consists of individual collecting tasks that museums were free to choose
- The collecting tasks are divided under seven main topics that include several sub-topics
- The existing structure of present day documentation was exploited

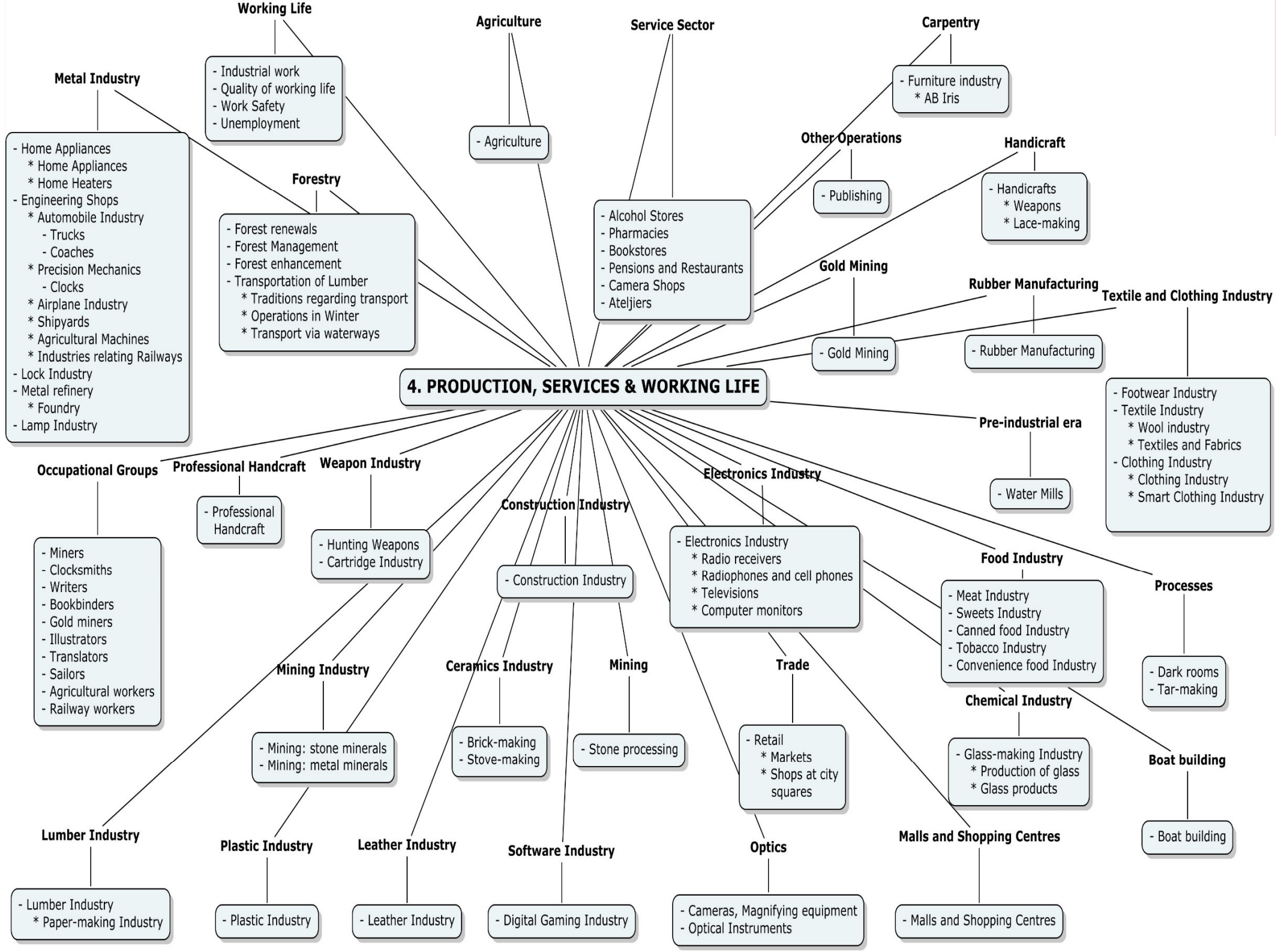
The Collecting tasks

- The collecting tasks are the particular themes that museums are willing to collect and take the nationwide responsibility for
- Naturally, these tasks are in the core of museum's own collecting themes and thus logical choice for taking the responsibility for
- The number of tasks taken per museum is not relevant, but the realistic number of tasks is
- The tasks are nationwide in nature, but the collecting may be regional (mass production and modern themes are mainly not regionally bound)
- Museums are allowed to collect material outside the model also

The seven main topics of the Model

1. Man and Nature
2. Individuals, communities and the public sector
3. The everyday life
4. Production, services and the working life
5. Communications, Traffic and Tourism
6. Education, art, culture and exercise/ sport
7. Trends, prominent figures and national turning points





Presenting the model

- The Model is presented using three different viewpoints:
 - A listing based on collecting tasks
 - A listing based on committed museums
 - Contents of the main topics as mind maps
- All the information can be found on the TAKO-web page as well as yearly reports of the completed collecting activities (tako.nba.fi)

Using the model

- Museums committed to the model, total of 93, have signed an agreement with the National Board of Antiquities
- There is a yearly revision of the model where museums may adjust and modify their collecting tasks
- Museums report every year the collection activities from the previous year
- First round of reports was carried out 2015

Experiences from the model

- New dialogues and co-operation between museums concerning the division of collecting
- New findings on the missing areas of collecting, "The Black Holes"
- Own Wikipedia for collection summaries – The Collections Map of Finland
- New tools for acquisitions, deaccessions and disposals
- The relocations of collections
- Co-operation has produced numerous joint projects regarding the development of collections management

Some thoughts and suggestions

- Museums should:
 - Get to know each other better
 - Share the information and knowledge of their collections
 - Clarify the collecting themes and agree of the division of collecting together
- This helps with:
 - Acquisitions – Museum is able better to coordinate it´s own collecting activities and forward donation offers
 - Deaccession/ disposals – Collection relocations instead of disposals. Seeing the National Big Picture helps in disposal process and judgements
- Which will show up as:
 - More specialized museums with versatile collections
 - Museums that actively develop their collection management
 - New fields for museum co-operation

Thank You!

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