



**museum of
danish america**

Collections Management Policy

Revised February 2021

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1. Overview

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Collections Management Policy establishes and documents the Museum of Danish America's policies and guidelines concerning all collections-related activities including acquisition, development, management, and use. The Collections Management Policy, hereafter referred to as the Policy, deals with all major aspects of collections stewardship, which is the careful, sound, and responsible management of the collection of the Museum of Danish America, hereafter referred to as the Museum. Collections are held in trust for the public and are made accessible for the public's benefit.

A comprehensive collections management policy helps to facilitate adherence to the standards and best practices recommended by the American Alliance of Museums, through which the Museum is accredited. It is a guide for Board, staff, and volunteers as they perform their individual and collective duties.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Museum's Mission provides the focus, context, and direction for all collections activities.

Mission Statement: The Museum of Danish America explores the Danish-American experience, the historic and modern influences of Denmark on the United States, and the continuing story of how a nation of immigrants shape American identity. (Approved by the Board of Directors, October 2019)

Collections as Embodiment of Museum's Purpose: The Museum collects examples of material culture which illustrate the history of Danish immigration. Topics include but are not restricted to life in Denmark before emigration, travels to and means of reaching America, and life in the U.S. including occupations, social organizations, schools, churches, and homes. The Museum also collects representations of subsequent generations of Danish Americans, artifacts which reflect their achievements and contributions, continuing ties to Denmark and Danish traditions, and efforts to maintain communal expressions of Danish heritage. Since Danish immigration is ongoing, both historic and contemporary artifacts are appropriate for the collections.

1.3 SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS

In scope and content, the Museum's collections will always be consistent with and supportive of the Mission Statement of the Museum of Danish America.

The Museum has two distinct artifact collections within the Curatorial Department: the permanent collection and the utility, education, research/reference (UER) collection. The Museum's Genealogy Center has two collections: the library collection and special collections. More details about the latter are found in a supplementary document written by the Genealogy Center called the "Collection Development Guidelines" (see Addendum E).

Permanent Collection: Artifacts added to this collection may be used for exhibition, research, and documentary purposes. These artifacts relate closely to the Mission and purpose of the Museum. Artifacts have strong provenance and/or associations with specific people, institutions, or events. The Museum commits to long term care of these artifacts, which may only be removed from the collection through formal deaccessioning. Artifacts in the permanent collection may be loaned to other institutions.

Utility, Education, Research/Reference (UER) Collection: UER artifacts are “hands on” artifacts. This collection focuses more on purpose and support for exhibitions and less on provenance. Such artifacts are allowed to “live out” their normal lives through use and handling. Pieces in this collection may be used as general reference material for the public, serve to illustrate talks and demonstrations, or may be touched by visitors and program participants. Such artifacts may be used in exhibit situations where the environment and/or security might threaten the preservation of a permanent collection artifact. UER artifacts may be loaned to other institutions. Artifacts will be removed from the collection once they are no longer useful for Museum purposes.

Excluded from this collection are objects with no interpretive function that are donated or purchased specifically for general use by the Museum for hospitality events (e.g. dishes for receptions). Items that do not go through the donation process with associated paperwork are not considered donations to either collection.

Special Collections: Materials added to this collection are similar to the Curatorial permanent collection. They are original materials that relate closely to the Mission and purpose of the Museum. They are intended to be preserved long term, and require formal deaccessioning. These materials may be loaned to other institutions.

Library Collection: Materials in this collection are similar to the Curatorial UER collection. This collection consists largely of publications and files and other resources created in-house. It is intended to be used for research by staff and Genealogy Center patrons. These materials do not require special care and are removed from the collection when no longer useful. They may be loaned to other institutions.

1.4 STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY

Board of Directors: The Board of Directors is the legal entity responsible for the governance of the Museum of Danish America. The Executive Director and Museum staff are responsible for implementation of established strategies, policies, and practices, and are accountable to the Board for such.

Board’s Collections Committee: This committee, in collaboration with the Executive Director and professional staff, works to establish and develop the strategies, policies and long-term planning goals for the collections. Curators serve as “ex-officio” members of the Collections Committee.

Executive Director: The Executive Director is directly accountable to the Board for the overall administration and management of the Museum of Danish America including all programs and business operations. As such, the Executive Director is responsible for the effective custody and administration of the Museum's collections and the implementation of the Collections Management Policy. He/she shall delegate day-to-day administration and management of the collections to the Curator of Collections and the Registrar, and other professional staff as appropriate. The Executive Director, in collaboration with designated staff, identifies specific priority needs of the collections and communicates those to the Board of Directors.

Curator of Collections: The Curator of Collections' primary responsibility is to care for and manage the Curatorial collections consistent with professional standards. He/she participates in focused collecting and deaccessioning, and develops, updates, and implements detailed policies relating to the collections. He/she is responsible for controlling both physical and electronic access to the collections. The Curator of Collections conducts scholarly research, and works together with the Curator of Exhibitions to ensure appropriate use of artifacts.

Registrar: The Registrar's primary responsibility is to maintain, consistent with professional standards, all records pertaining to the permanent collection and the UER collection artifacts, both as collections and loans. He/she is responsible for the development, administration, and retention of all legal forms pertaining to collections management. Additionally, the Registrar is responsible for obtaining necessary signatures, maintaining deaccessioning records, and monitoring the locations of artifacts. The Registrar also develops, updates, and implements specific procedures relating to the management of records. He/she is responsible for approval of all loan requests.

Genealogy Center Manager: The Genealogy Center Manager's primary responsibility is to maintain, consistent with professional standards, all records pertaining to the genealogical, local history, and library collections. He/she is responsible for the development of the collections including processing donations for accession and deaccession; conducting scholarly and historical research; and tending to the book collection, local history collection, and genealogical physical collections and databases. He/she is also responsible for replying to prospective donors with proper documentation and responding to any research requests for the collections.

Archivist: The Archivist's primary responsibility is to maintain, consistent with professional standards, all records pertaining to the documentary collections, particularly the accession and donation records. He/she is responsible for the development of the collection including processing donations for accession, deaccession, updating records and day to day care of the archival collections. He/she is also responsible for replying to prospective donors with proper documentation and responding to any research requests for the collections

Curator of Exhibitions: The Curator of Exhibitions ensures that all exhibitions, programs, and other interpretive activities maintain a level of professional care and preservation for collections involved. This includes, but is not limited to: 1) planning appropriate artifact installation methods involving cases and protective barriers as needed; 2) being mindful of the physical condition of artifacts when selecting pieces for exhibitions; 3) in collaboration with the Curator of Collections, ensuring that environments for on-site and traveling exhibitions meet the preservation and security needs of the collections involved.

Collections Review Committee: The staff's Collections Review Committee consists of the Executive Director, Curator of Collections, Registrar, Genealogy Center Manager, Archivist, and Curator of Exhibitions, and other professional curatorial staff such as contract positions. This Committee is responsible for following the Collections Management Policy with respect to recommending artifacts for acquisition to the Curatorial collections, designating placement of accepted artifacts into the permanent or UER collections, and determining disposition of those artifacts not approved for acquisition. It is also responsible for considering deaccessioning recommendations for all collections. Voting members shall be employees of the Museum, though interns and volunteers sitting in on meetings may participate in discussions.

2. Legal and Ethical Standards

2.1 LEGAL STANDARDS

The Museum was incorporated pursuant to Chapter 504A of the Iowa Nonprofit Corporation Act of the Code of Iowa in November 1983. The Museum acquired tax exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service under the Internal Revenue Code Section 501c3.

Donations may qualify as tax deductible contributions consistent with the provisions of IRS Code Section 501c3.

In policy and in practice, the Museum shall follow all applicable local, state, federal, and international laws and regulations, including U.S. copyright law incorporated in Title 17 of the U.S. Code and all subsequent legislation pertaining to copyright and other issues of intellectual property.

2.2 ETHICAL STANDARDS

The Museum is responsible for seeing that collections in its custody are “lawfully held, protected, secure, unencumbered, cared for, and preserved” (AAM 1993). The Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers will follow the Museum’s Code of Ethics, and reference the American Alliance of Museum’s Code of Ethics (found in Addenda F and G).

As the museum holds its collection in the public trust, all activities surrounding the acquisition, documentation, care, storage, display, use, and disposal of the collection must meet professional museum industry standards and be outlined formally in this Collections Management Policy, approved by the Board of Directors. All actions will occur in accordance to the guidelines found herein.

All details of the Code of Ethics will be adhered to by all staff, volunteers, and Board members. None shall use his/her position at the Museum for personal gain or benefit at the expense of the Museum, its mission, its reputation, and/or the community it serves.

2.3 APPRAISING DONATIONS / TAX DEDUCTIONS

The Museum’s staff or representatives will not act as appraisers for donations offered and/or accepted for collections. Appraisals are the sole responsibility of the donor. A licensed appraiser may conduct appraisals for insurance purposes once artifacts are accepted for and processed into the collections.

Internal Revenue Service forms related to donations will be completed by the Museum according to the following steps: 1) formal acceptance of the artifacts by the Museum, 2) signature on IRS reporting forms by the Donor, 3) signature on the IRS reporting forms by the Executive Director or Registrar, and 4) compliance with other applicable laws.

2.4 PERSONAL COLLECTING

Board members, staff, and volunteers will not compete with the Museum in any personal collecting. These individuals will use their best judgment, in consultation with the Executive Director and/or the Curator of Collections, to determine whether an object represents an artifact of current interest for the collections.

If such an object comes to the attention of board members, staff, or volunteers, either through gift or possible sale, the Museum will be informed of its availability and will have the first option to accept or reject it. If such an object is purchased by board members, staff, or volunteers, it will be offered to the Museum as a donation or for the price of purchase. Objects collected prior to an individual's association with the Museum, bequests, or personal gifts will be exempt from this policy.

Board members, staff, and volunteers may not participate in any dealing in objects similar to those objects collected by the Museum. For the purposes of this Policy, a dealer is defined as someone who buys and sells objects for profit on a regular basis.

3. Acquisitions

3.1 ACQUISITIONS OVERVIEW

The Museum of Danish America will build its collections primarily through donations, and through occasional strategic purchases. The collections are consistently built in an active and focused manner, which continually strives to reflect the evolving and changing story of Danish immigration.

Specific acquisition strategies will be employed to strengthen and/or expand collections in areas that are weak, limited, or missing entirely (e.g. artifacts representing contemporary Danish design or the post-World War II period).

Objects may be received by the Museum for the specific purpose of sale or trade, but only such objects as are not considered appropriate for the existing collections. Those objects accepted specifically for sale or trade will remain outside of all collections procedures.

3.2 TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR DONATIONS

All donations to the Curatorial collections are subject to the terms and conditions found on the reverse of the Deed of Gift. These include, but are not limited to, the following: 1) all donations to the Museum will be outright and unconditional gifts, and donors may not issue restrictions; 2) the Museum does not guarantee exhibition of donated artifacts; 3) no security interest is held by any third party against the donation; and 4) donations may be tax deductible, but the Museum assumes no responsibility for providing an appraisal.

All donations to the Genealogy Center collections are subject to the terms and conditions found on the face of the Donation Form. These include, but are not limited to, the following: 1) donations become property of the Museum; 2) materials not accepted will not be returned to the donor; and 3) attempts will be made to find appropriate homes for materials that are not accepted.

3.3 ACQUISITION RESTRICTIONS

The Museum may be restricted in its acceptance of some artifacts for any collection for a number of reasons such as lack of support for the Mission, lack of accurate and/or significant documentation, duplication, physical size, and need for excessive conservation care.

3.4 CURATORIAL ACQUISITION PROCESS

Comprehensive procedures dealing with the review, acceptance, and accessioning of materials into this collection are maintained within the Curatorial Department. The policies that direct those procedures are outlined here.

3.4.1 Temporary Artifact Receipt:

When a donation is offered, a Temporary Artifact Receipt is issued and requires the signature of both the owner/donor and the Museum staff member receiving the donation. It lists the artifacts being offered, establishes the conditions of the donation, and officially gives the Museum permission to consider artifacts for the collections. Appropriate documentation is acquired at the time of donation and during the subsequent cataloging process.

3.4.2 Collections Review Committee:

The Collections Review Committee meets monthly to consider artifacts for the permanent or UER collections, or to be returned or otherwise disposed of. Donation offers and purchase recommendations are reviewed according to the following criteria: 1) consistent with the Mission and purpose of the Museum; 2) level of provenance or documentation; 3) duplication; 4) physical size; 5) physical condition; and 6) the potential hazard or risk to other artifacts in the collections and/or to people. A majority of Collections Review Committee members must approve of the acquisition of an artifact.

3.4.3 Deed of Gift:

A Deed of Gift is issued to donors for artifacts that are accepted by the Collections Review Committee. The Executive Director signs the Deed of Gift after the donor has done so. This completes the donation.

If the Deed of Gift is not signed by the donor within 90 days after acceptance by the Collections Review Committee, the artifacts listed on the Deed will automatically and completely become the property of the Museum according to the Terms and Conditions listed on the Temporary Artifact Receipt previously signed. Reminder letters are mailed to donors after 30 and 60 days.

3.4.4 Declined Artifacts:

Artifacts that are not accepted are returned to the donor, transferred to other institutions, or otherwise disposed of according to guidance provided by the donor on the Temporary Artifact Receipt. Artifacts that donors do not want returned to them may not be acquired by Museum board members, staff, interns, or volunteers.

3.4.5 Purchasing for the Collection:

While most additions to the collections are made through donations, purchases are also useful in acquiring important artifacts. The Executive Director, curatorial staff, board members, or others may identify artifacts that are available to the Museum through purchase.

All recommendations for purchases must be reviewed and approved by the Collections Review Committee prior to purchase. Purchases below \$5000 are agreed to by an affirmative vote of Collections Review Committee members. Prior to any transaction of \$5000 or higher, the Board of Directors or its Executive Committee will receive the

recommendation from the Collections Review Committee and must then review and approve the recommendation of purchase.

3.5 GENEALOGY CENTER ACQUISITION PROCESS

Comprehensive procedures dealing with the review, acceptance, and accessioning of materials into this collection are maintained within the Genealogy Center Department. The policies that direct those procedures are outlined here.

3.5.1 Donation Form:

When a donation is offered, a Donation Form is issued and requires the signature of the owner/donor. It lists the materials being offered, establishes the conditions of the donation, and officially transfers ownership to the Museum. Materials are considered for acceptance into the Library Collection or Special Collections by the Genealogy Center Manager, Archivist, and other Genealogy Center staff.

3.5.2 Declined Materials:

Materials that are not accepted are transferred to other institutions or otherwise disposed of. Materials may not be acquired by Museum board members, staff, interns, or volunteers.

3.5.3 Purchasing for the Collections:

As with Curatorial collections, purchases are appropriate ways to add to the Genealogy Center's collections. The Executive Director, Genealogy Center staff, Archivist, board members, and others may identify materials that are available to the Museum through purchase.

All recommendations for purchases are reviewed and approved by the Genealogy Center Manager prior to purchase. Prior to any transaction of \$5000 or higher, the Board of Directors or its Executive Committee will receive the recommendation from the Genealogy Center Manager and must then review and approve the recommendation of purchase.

4. Deaccessioning

4.1 DEACCESSIONING OVERVIEW

The Museum of Danish America's collections are never intended to be static. The Museum is committed to continually strengthening the collections. One of the most important ways to do this is by thoughtful, disciplined, and continual refinement to remove duplicate or damaged artifacts, as well as those that are no longer consistent with the mission or have insufficient documentation. Such actions make available space, funds, and staff time to devote to the existing collections and new acquisitions.

The deaccessioning process will follow all legal requirements and professional standards. Nothing may be removed from the collections without going through the accepted deaccessioning process detailed in this Policy. The deaccessioning process for permanent collection artifacts and Special Collections materials is different than that for UER artifacts and Library materials.

4.2 CRITERIA FOR DEACCESSIONING

Materials may be removed from Curatorial or Genealogy Center collections if specific criteria are met. These include the following: 1) it has been proven that the piece did not belong to the donor at the time of donation; 2) the piece is no longer consistent with the Mission of the Museum; 3) the authenticity of the piece has been disproved; 4) the piece has deteriorated beyond usefulness or the ability of the Museum to care for it; and 5) the piece presents a potential hazard to others in the collections and/or to people. Pieces that meet one or more of these criteria, or similar to above, may still be retained in their collections.

4.3 DEACCESSIONING PROCESS

Comprehensive procedures that deal with the recommendation and review of collections for deaccessioning are maintained within each department. The policies that direct those procedures are outlined here. All Curatorial and Genealogy Center collections follow these policies.

4.3.1 Review by Staff:

Staff will review all records for the artifact or collections material to confirm that documentation is accurate and complete. Incomplete records will be completed as much as possible before proceeding. If clear and unrestricted title cannot be determined from the available paperwork, the deaccessioning process may stop.

4.3.2 Review by Collections Review Committee (CRC):

Staff will recommend to the Collections Review Committee that the artifact or collection material be deaccessioned. At this time, the CRC recommends what disposition is to take place after deaccessioning. The Committee must approve the recommendation or the action will stop and the artifact will remain in its collection. This is the final step for UER artifacts and Library collections.

4.3.3 Review by Board's Collections Committee:

A recommendation from the Collections Review Committee will be presented to the Collections Committee at their next regularly scheduled meeting. The Committee must approve the recommendation or the action will stop and the artifact or collection material will remain in its collection.

4.3.4 Review by the Board of Directors:

A recommendation from the Collections Committee will be presented to the full Board for final approval. The full Board must approve the recommendation or the action will stop and the artifact or collection material will remain in its collection.

4.3.5 Documenting Deaccessioning:

All deaccessioning decisions and actions will be documented electronically and on paper. The original Deaccessioning Form will be signed by representatives from the CRC and by the Board President. Transfer Receipts and Witness of Destruction forms will be signed by the Registrar, Genealogy Center Manager, or Archivist. This paperwork and associated files will be retained.

4.4 DISPOSAL OF DEACCESSIONED COLLECTIONS

Collections being deaccessioned will be disposed of according to the action recorded on the Deaccessioning Form. The following are approved methods of disposal:

- Transfer of a permanent collection artifact to the UER collection, or vice versa, or to the Genealogy Center
- Transfer to another museum, archive, library, or other entity
- Public sales such as by auction, eBay, or professional dealer
- Discard/destroy

4.5 RESTRICTIONS FOR DEACCESSIONED COLLECTIONS

Deaccessioned collections will not be returned directly to original donors or their families or representatives. If collections are to be sold at public sales, donors may be notified of the impending sale. They may participate if they choose.

Monies from deaccessioning sales will be used only to acquire new collections. Materials removed from the collections will not be sold at any time to fund general operations. Consistent with museum industry ethical standards, the Museum of Danish America will not capitalize collections or treat them as financial assets.

Board members and staff should never personally acquire pieces deaccessioned from the Museum's collections unless the general public has first been given full access. For example, the first day of a sale of deaccessioned books will be restricted to the public only. Following that, board members and staff may make purchases from those books. Board members and staff may not purchase deaccessioned artifacts at public auctions due to the limited availability to the public prior to the beginning of the sale and the potential for a perceived conflict of interest.

5. Loans

5.1 LOANS OVERVIEW

Lending and borrowing artifacts for exhibition, research, and educational purposes is an integral part of the Museum's goal to make its collections accessible to the widest possible audience.

Artifacts are at risk while on loan. To reduce such risk, the Museum has developed policies which permit responsible use of artifacts while ensuring their physical integrity and security through proper care and handling.

All artifacts on loan to and in the Museum's custody are afforded the same level of care and attention as that afforded to artifacts owned by the Museum. The details of all incoming and outgoing loans are specified on the Loan Contracts managed by the Registrar, and will be followed unless changes are agreed to in writing by both parties.

Terms and conditions detailed in Loan Contracts include, but are not limited to, the following: 1) all artifacts will be afforded professional care and handling; 2) damages to artifacts will be photographed and reported to the Lender as soon as practical; 3) no alterations will be made to any artifact without prior written approval by the Lender; and 4) no loan period will be open-ended—all loans will be tied to the duration of the project for which they are intended.

All loan files will be retained permanently.

5.2 INCOMING LOANS

Incoming loans are solicited by the Curator of Exhibitions or the Executive Director for a specific purpose such as exhibition or research. The Museum does not store artifacts for other institutions.

The terms and conditions governing all incoming loans will be negotiated in advance to ensure that the Museum can comply with legal and other requirements. Questions or concerns will be addressed between the Lender and the Museum's Curator of Exhibitions, Registrar, and/or Executive Director. Details of loan terms and conditions will be communicated to the Registrar to ensure that all loan documentation is complete and accurate.

All incoming loans are covered by the Museum's fine art insurance policy while in-house and in-transit for the value provided by the Lender. In the event the Lender chooses to maintain his/her/their insurance coverage, the Lender is required to provide written, signed notice to this effect.

The Museum will not accept loaned material that is known to have been collected illegally, represents a hazard to the collections or staff of the Museum, or fails to conform to local, state, or federal law (e.g. human remains, sacred material, etc.).

The Museum is responsible for all costs associated with the transportation of incoming loans unless other arrangements are made.

5.3 OUTGOING LOANS

Requests for all outgoing loans require the approval of the Curator of Collections, Registrar, and/or the Executive Director.

The Borrower will sign and return the Loan Contract prior to the requested artifacts being transferred to the Borrower's custody. Once the Registrar signs the Contract, the loan is finalized, and the artifacts will be shipped or delivered.

All outgoing loans will be covered by the Borrower's fine art insurance while in-house and in-transit for the value provided by the Museum. The Museum may request a Certificate of Insurance from the Borrower in advance of the loan. If proof of insurance coverage cannot be provided, the loan request may be denied.

The Museum will deny requests for loans of artifacts that are inherently unstable or in such condition that traveling or exhibition would exacerbate the problem or subject the artifact to other unnecessary risks. Requests may also be denied if the Museum needs the artifact for its own use, or if the amount of time between the date of request and the date that the artifact is required by the borrower precludes the Registrar from making necessary preparations.

The Borrower is generally responsible for all costs associated with the transportation of the loan unless other arrangements are made.

Loans from the permanent or special collections will only be approved to professional museums, galleries, and other historical organizations that receive a satisfactory evaluation by the Museum based on information provided in an AAM Facility Report.

The Museum lends pieces from the UER or Library collections to museums, galleries, libraries, and other historical organizations. Pieces from this collection may also be loaned to groups that are not professional and/or historical in nature such as churches, schools, or social organizations.

6. Unclaimed Loans, Abandoned and Found Objects

6.1 Unclaimed Loans, Abandoned Property

Objects in these categories are typically unsolicited by the Museum. These are objects left in its custody without being requested or approved by the Museum. The Museum is guided in managing such objects by Iowa's Museum Property Act (See Addendum C—*Iowa Code Chapter 305B—Museum Property Act*).

Documentation of all attempts to contact the original owner/lender will be maintained permanently in the file for the object, as will copies of all public notices and/or subsequent paperwork relating to it.

6.1.1 Unclaimed Loans:

Unclaimed loans are objects for which a loan contract exists, but contact with the owner/lender has lapsed. For the Museum to terminate the loan or assume title to the object, the Museum must make a good faith effort to contact the lender to officially notify him/her of the termination of the loan.

Such loans will not be considered for termination and their titles transferred to the Museum unless the following requirements have been met: 1) The object has been on indefinite loan and held by the Museum for seven years or more, or 2) The object has been on loan through a contract with a clear termination date but no action has been made by the lender to claim the object once the loan period has expired and the Museum has given notice of the termination of the loan.

6.1.2 Abandoned Property:

Abandoned property is defined as any object held by the Museum for a period of seven years or more for which there is no formal paperwork, and for which the owners have made no effort to contact the Museum. Such objects shall become the property of the Museum if a good faith effort is made by the Museum to notify the owners of its intent to claim ownership and no reply is received.

6.1.3 Notice Requirements:

Notice of termination of loan or abandonment of property requires the Museum to do the following:

- Send a notice by certified mail (return receipt requested) to the last known owner at the most recent address on record
- If the address on file is not current, publish a notice in a newspaper in the area of the owner's most recent address
- If the Museum receives no written proof of receipt of notice within 30 days of the date mailed OR there is no current address on record, publish a notice, at least once each week for two consecutive weeks, in a newspaper of general circulation in both the county in which the Museum is located and the county of the last known address of the owner if available. This notice shall contain a description of the object, the name and last known address of the owner, a

request that anyone knowing the whereabouts of the owner provide written notice to the Museum, and a statement that if written assertion of title is not presented by the owner to the Museum within three years from the publication date of the second notice, the object shall be considered abandoned or donated and shall become the property of the Museum.

6.2 Found in Collections

The Museum possesses objects with insufficient documentation to determine if they are or should be part of the permanent collection. Objects that are “Found in the Collection” (FIC) differ from abandoned property and unclaimed loans in that no record of past or current ownership exists.

Documentation of all attempts to contact the original owner will be maintained permanently in the accession file, as will copies of all public notices and/or subsequent paperwork relating to it.

6.2.1 Care and Documentation:

While in the Museum’s possession, FIC objects will be cared for in the same manner as artifacts in the collections, but will be stored separately as much as possible to avoid any confusion between accessioned artifacts and FIC’s. Such objects will be described, labeled and tracked by the Registrar.

6.2.2 Assuming Ownership:

Should the Museum wish to retain ownership of an FIC object, it will be accessioned into the collection following current accessioning procedures, though such objects must be designated as “Found in Collection”. The Museum recognizes the possibility that the object may be claimed as an old loan by the rightful owner at a later date and shall return the object upon presentation of adequate proof of ownership. The Museum’s legal counsel may be consulted for advice in such cases.

6.2.3 Disposal:

Should the Museum decide to dispose of an FIC object after all reasonable attempts to identify its owner have failed, it recognizes the risks involved, such as subsequent claims by rightful owners and the inability to sell with a guarantee of legal title.

FIC objects will be evaluated, recommended for removal, and disposed of following current deaccessioning procedures. These objects may be donated to another institution; such action is less likely to have repercussions for the Museum should the rightful owner make a claim. If FIC objects are to be sold, they must be done so with a statement expressly not warranting legal title. The Museum’s legal counsel may be consulted in any of these cases.

7. Care and Maintenance of the Collections

7.1 CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF THE COLLECTIONS

7.1.1 Permanent Collection:

All permanent collection artifacts will be housed in climate-controlled storage areas when not on exhibition. Permanent collection artifacts will only be handled with gloves by trained staff, interns, and volunteers, protected according to professional standards, and fully and properly documented and cataloged.

7.1.2 Special Collections:

The Genealogy Center's Special Collections will be housed in climate-controlled storage areas. They are not required to be handled with gloves, but are otherwise protected according to professional standards, and fully and properly documented and cataloged.

7.1.3 UER and Library Collections:

All UER artifacts will be afforded the highest level of care consistent with their status and use. Such artifacts may be housed in climate-controlled areas while not in use, but are allowed to be stored and exhibited in non-climate controlled areas (e.g. Jens Dixen House). Such artifacts will be handled with care to maintain their long-term usefulness. UER artifacts will be fully and properly documented and cataloged.

7.1.4 Conservation and Reproductions:

As the Museum does not employ a trained Conservator, collections staff will only provide preventative conservation, such as proper mounts for support of fragile artifacts, and will not attempt in-depth cleaning or repairs. The Museum will consult or contract with a trained conservator for these services.

Creating reproductions of artifacts may be considered. In some cases, an artifact may be in particularly fragile condition and, to share its history and information with the public, a reproduction may be appropriate. Photocopies or scanned copies of photos or archival material will be permitted if the material is not copyrighted. Collections staff will make such copies to ensure proper protection of artifacts.

The Museum is obligated to ensure to the best of its ability that images of collections objects and reproductions of photographs and documents are used in an appropriate manner and in accordance with all laws and regulations regarding copyright and intellectual property laws.

7.1.5 Pest Management and Environmental Conditions:

Collections staff monitor insect traps placed throughout the Museum, Bedstemors House, and the Genealogy Center. These traps will be monitored monthly when pest activity is normal and more frequently if problems are suspected or confirmed. The identity and quantity of the pests found on or in the traps will be recorded on Excel spreadsheets and retained permanently.

Collections staff also monitor the temperature and relative humidity levels throughout the Museum, Bedstemors House, and at the Genealogy Center with HOBO data loggers. Any problems that arise with the HVAC system will be reported to the service provider.

7.2 COLLECTIONS AREA SECURITY, ACCESS, AND RESTRICTIONS

At all times, the doors to collections spaces in the Museum will remain locked. Only Curatorial staff, the Executive Director, and the Facilities and Grounds Manager will have keys to these spaces. All others, including contractors, will gain access through one of these staff members and, if necessary, will be supervised while inside the secured area. Similarly, access to Genealogy Center collections will be provided and supervised by staff.

Visitors and/or researchers who have scheduled appointments will be supervised at all times while in collections areas.

The Museum's collections database View Our Collection is accessible to anyone via the website. Sensitive or confidential information will not be uploaded or accessible online.

All Curatorial and Genealogy Center staff, interns, and volunteers will be trained properly in the procedures and functions of the department and become familiar with all necessary policies. Volunteers will be supervised while working with artifacts.

Board members, staff, and volunteers are prohibited from borrowing or using collections for personal purposes. The only exception may be for an object in the education collection and the intended user obtains permission from Curatorial staff.

7.3 MUSEUM-WIDE PRESERVATION EFFORTS

One of the easiest ways to protect the Museum's collections is to make sure that as many risk factors are removed as possible. These include the following:

- No smoking inside any facility.
- No food or drink allowed throughout exhibition or collections spaces. Food and drink should remain in kitchens, conference rooms, and in some staff offices (only drinks with screw-on lids are allowed in the Curatorial Department offices).
- No pets or animals of any kind will be allowed in the buildings, with the exception of licensed service animals.
- No handling of artifacts at any time without prior approval by and supervision of collections staff, and none without gloves.
- No live plants in the buildings except for the front foyer of the Museum, kitchens, and conference rooms. This includes potted plants and fresh flowers, with and without vases of water.
- No flash photography without specific prior authorization by the collections staff.

Board members, staff, or volunteers observing infringements of these standards are requested to address such in a direct and timely manner.

7.4 RECORD KEEPING AND INVENTORIES

It is important to create and maintain complete and accurate collections records, particularly information on donors, and artifact histories, and status of the physical condition of each artifact in the Curatorial collections. The Registrar has primary responsibility for creating and maintaining artifact records, and the Genealogy Center Manager and Archivist have responsibility for library and special collections records.

No artifact will be relocated except by or with the prior knowledge of the Curator of Collections or Registrar.

Complete inventories should be conducted, at minimum, every ten years. Spot inventories will be conducted as needed, determined by the Curator of Collections, Genealogy Center Manager, and Archivist.

7.5 INSURING COLLECTIONS

The Museum maintains a fine art insurance policy through Huntington T. Block for its Curatorial and Genealogy Center collections, as well as for those artifacts on loan or in the custody of the Museum. Artifacts are covered while on the premises of the Museum and in transit, and incoming loans while in the Museum's custody. In some outgoing loan cases, the Museum's policy will cover its own collections while off site and in transit. The Borrower is responsible for a portion of the insurance premium in those cases.

8. Review of the Collections Management Policy

Regular review of the Museum's Collections Management Policy (CMP) is required to maintain currency, relevance, and usefulness. All revisions will be guided by current AAM guidelines and professional museum standards.

The CMP will be reviewed at least every two years in advance of the October meeting of the Museum's Board of Directors, or at such time as changes are needed. Such review will be conducted by the Curator of Collections. The Curator will advise the Executive Director and the Chair of the Collections Committee when a formal review of the CMP is recommended.

Review and revision of the CMP is a collaborative effort of the Curator of Collections, other designated staff, the Executive Director, and the Board's Collections Committee. The Collections Committee will review and approve draft revisions and will recommend them to the Museum's full Board of Directors for ratification.

All content and substantive format revisions of the CMP require approval and formal ratification by the Museum's Board of Directors. Addenda are not considered part of the formal CMP and do not require Board ratification for revisions.

History of Revisions of the Collections Management Policy:

*Original policy, October 13, 1984

*Revisions: October 1998
 June 2005
 June 2011
 October 2011
 October 2013
 February 2015
 June 2016
 October 2018
 February 2021