

# COLLECTIONS POLICIES

## I: Accessioning (Approved 2022)

**Definitions.** The offer of artifacts to the Museum, and the acceptance of those artifacts by the Museum, whether as *acquisitions* (items owned by the Museum as part of its permanent collection) or *loans* (items temporarily in the custody of the Museum, to be returned later to the lenders), is known as *accession*. *Artifacts* are objects of historical significance or interest, and include letters, diaries, ledgers and account books, ephemera, other documents, photographs, maps, engineering and architectural diagrams, blueprints, books and other printed material, clothing and other fabrics, tools, machines, furniture, and other items. In this policy, the terms *collection* and *historic collection* refer to the Museum's collection of historic artifacts. The term *education collection* refers to items that are not historic artifacts, such as reproductions and exhibit signage, used by the Museum's educational staff exclusively for teaching purposes and which are not covered by this policy.

Throughout this policy, the title *Senior Curator* refers to the Museum staff person (whether paid or volunteer) who has been placed in charge of the Museum's historic collection, whatever their actual job title may be at that given moment. In the absence of the Senior Curator, the responsibilities and authority of Senior Curator under this policy shall be deemed to be vested in the Executive Director, or a person designated by the Executive Director.

**Responsible Parties.** The Senior Curator (as defined above) has the responsibility and authority to accept or refuse artifacts offered to the Museum for its historic collection. Artifacts shall be accepted or refused based on their appropriateness, size, condition, and redundancy to the Museum's collection.

**Scope of the Collection.** The Museum collects artifacts that depict or represent: (a) the history of the town of Windham and surrounding communities; (b) Connecticut textile and industrial manufacturing, mills, and life during the Industrial Revolution; or (c) objects related to textiles, clothing, and textile production.

**Processing.** When the Museum first accepts a donation or loan, a representative of the Museum should complete an Accession Sheet and give a copy to the donor or lender. All artifacts that are donated or lent together should be kept together throughout accessioning.

Acquisitions should be placed in the Museum's Processing Area for processing, along with the Accession Sheets. At that point, they may be assigned temporary Accession Numbers.

**Loans.** Loans should be placed in the custody of the Senior Curator or the Executive Director,

along with the Accession Sheets.

The Museum does not normally accept long-term or open-ended loans. Rather, the Museum normally accepts loans only for limited and specific periods of time, either for particular exhibits or to be reproduced. Exceptions to this policy may be made only in special circumstances.

The Museum takes reasonable precautions to protect artifacts accepted on loan, including keeping or exhibiting the artifacts in secure and fire-protected areas. The Museum's insurance coverage for such artifacts is limited, however, a circumstance that must be disclosed to any lenders.

If the Museum is unsuccessful, after using its best efforts for twelve (12) months, in returning borrowed artifacts to the lender, the ownership of such items shall pass to the Museum, to be treated as if the artifacts had been donated to the Museum as acquisitions.

## **II. Deaccession and Disposal (Approved 2022)**

**Definitions.** *Deaccession* is the process used to permanently remove an object from the Museum's collection or to document the reasons for an involuntary removal (one required by law or due to circumstances not controlled by the Museum). *Disposal* is the official mode of transferal.

**Purpose.** Normally, accessioned objects are held in perpetuity for as long as they support the Museum's mission; retain their physical integrity, identity, and authenticity; and can be properly stored, preserved, and used. However, deaccession, when carried out in an appropriate manner and with thoughtful consideration, is an integral part of responsible collections management. This policy governs the deaccession and disposal of previously accessioned objects, including "found objects," held by the Museum.

**Responsible Parties.** The Senior Curator (as defined above), with the concurrence of the Curatorial, Exhibits, and Education Committee, has the responsibility and authority to approve deaccessions from the collection.

In the case of an object with a market value over \$1,000, the Board of Directors must also approve.

All decisions will be made pursuant to state and federal law.

The Senior Curator is responsible for researching all legal and ethical considerations surrounding a proposed deaccession.

The Senior Curator is responsible for maintaining all written documentation regarding the deaccession and disposal process.

The Senior Curator, with the concurrence the Collections, Exhibits, and Education Committee, has the authority to approve the mode of disposal.

No artifact can be deaccessioned to a volunteer, staff, or other individual associated with the Museum, nor can a volunteer, staff, or other individual associated with the Museum benefit or profit from the sale of any deaccessioned artifact.

***Deaccession Criteria.*** Artifacts may be considered for deaccession under one or more of the following circumstances:

The artifact does not support the mission of the Museum.

Inadequate documentation or absence of documentation (including provenance) critically reduces the cultural or historic value or significance of the artifact.

The artifact has deteriorated and is no longer of any cultural or historic value.

The artifact represents an unacceptable hazard to personnel or to other artifacts in the collection.

The artifact has been approved for repatriation under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

The Museum is instructed to deaccession the artifact by the owner, e.g., a state agency that owns historical collections.

The artifact has been destroyed or damaged to the extent that it no longer conforms to the Museum's accessioning criteria.

The Museum can no longer properly store or preserve the artifact.

The Museum has one or more other artifacts similar to or the same as the object in question, rendering it redundant.

The Museum determines that another non-profit or public museum, agency, or archive would be a more appropriate place for the artifact.

**Disposal.** Disposal of artifacts through sale, trade, or research activities is solely for the advancement of the Museum's mission. Any object that has been selected and approved for deaccession should be transferred or disposed of as follows (this list is not hierarchical and does not imply an order to follow):

*Exchange or Donation:* Museums or educational institutions should be contacted regarding the suitability of artifacts for exchange or donation depending on the nature of the items. In the event of shipping costs in excess of \$25, the recipient institution is expected either to pay for the cost of shipping, or to pick up the object.

*Transfer:* Consideration will be given to placing the artifact in the Museum's Education Collection.

*Return to Donor(s):* If the donor or donors requested that the artifact be returned to them in the event that the Museum no longer wanted it, then the Museum will make good faith efforts to respect the donors' wishes. Good faith efforts will include notifying the donors at the addresses provided at the time of donation and waiting at least three months for a reply. If the cost of shipping objects to the donors exceeds \$25, the Museum will expect the donors either to pick up the object or to pay for the cost of shipping it.

*Sale:* In accordance with American Association of Museum policy, artifacts in the collection may be deaccessioned and sold to enhance the overall quality of the Museum. Deaccession of an object for sale is a serious matter that should only be undertaken only after considerable deliberation. Among the issues to be taken into consideration are: the object's potential use in research, education and exhibition; the possible impact of deaccession on future donations; and the object's status under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. Proceeds from the sale of artifacts are to be used consistent with the established standards of the Museum's discipline, but in no event shall they be used for anything other than supporting the Museum. Except in instances where deviation is intended to advance an appropriate public benefit, such as deaccession for sale to another public museum, objects deaccessioned for sale will be disposed of by the most profitable means. Objects purchased with money acquired from the sale of collection material may be attributed to the original donor(s).

*Destruction:* If the object cannot be disposed of in any of the above manners, it shall be destroyed by the Senior Curator. Destruction is defined as the obliteration of an object or specimen by physical or mechanical means. Prior to destruction, the object will be evaluated to ascertain whether it contains any hazardous materials. If any hazardous materials exist, the object will be destroyed in accordance with all federal or state laws and/or environmental health and safety procedures. This disposal method must be both documented and witnessed.

Deaccessioned objects will not be given, exchanged, or sold to employees of the Museum, members of the governing authorities or their representatives, members of Museum support

groups, or volunteers.

The Museum is required by the Internal Revenue Service to hold donations for a minimum of three years in consideration for donors making a declaration for tax purposes.

If donor-imposed conditions restrict disposal, the Museum may offer the object to the donor(s) or donor's family in lieu of disposal.

**Procedures.** The Senior Curator will identify an object for deaccession/disposal based on the above criteria.

The Senior Curator will investigate all legal and ethical considerations surrounding the proposed artifact(s).

The Museum must hold free and clear title to the artifact, or the object must be a "found object" as defined in the Museum's accessions policy. In the case of a "found object," a reasonable and good faith effort will be made to determine the object's accessions history before disposal occurs. A reasonable and good faith effort will include documenting how long the object has been in the Museum's collection, examining Museum correspondence, asking long-term or former staff, and/or contacting likely potential donors.

There must be no restrictions placed on the use of the object (e.g. copyright, MOA/MOU, trust agreements, donor-imposed restriction, etc.).

The Senior Curator will prepare all required paperwork, including a Deaccession & Disposal form.

The Senior Curator (or as above), with the concurrence of the Collections, Exhibits, and Education Committee, will determine the method of disposal, taking into account the reason for deaccession. The Senior Curator and Curatorial, Exhibits, and Education Committee will exercise their best reasonable and good faith judgment on a case-by-case basis, taking into account such factors as the monetary and/or historic value of the object, expenses related to shipping, historical relevance of the object to the collections of other museums, agencies, or archives, etc.

The Senior Curator (or as above) will remove or cross-out the Museum catalog or accession number from the object prior to disposal.

The Senior Curator (or as above) will modify catalog and accession files and database entries to reflect the change in status of the object and the change in monetary value, if any, for the collection; the records will not be deleted or removed but maintained intact for future reference.

The Senior Curatorial (or as above) will place all documentation in the proper departmental files, where they will remain as part of the permanent record.

### **III: Digitization Policies and Procedures (Adopted in 2022, Adapted from the Library of Congress.)**

**Purpose.** Windham Textile and History Museum Executive Director, Senior Curator, curatorial staff and curatorial interns under the supervision of the curatorial staff are responsible for arranging, preserving, and making accessible its holdings to the extent that resources allow and to as wide an audience as possible. The curatorial staff are cognizant of the growing demand for digitally-reformatted material and the many benefits to be enjoyed by all parties from acquiring and creating digital resources and making them available over the long-term.

Both in terms of policy and principle, the curatorial staff at Windham Textile and History Museum will adhere as closely as possible to the standards and best practices established by such authorities as the Library of Congress.

The curatorial staff also strives to exemplify the traits of trusted digital repositories. To be trusted as a repository that can meet the needs and expectations of its users, a digital repository must:

- Accept responsibility for the long-term maintenance of digital resources on behalf of its depositors and for the benefit of current and future users;
- Have an organizational system that supports not only long-term viability of the repository, but also the digital information for which it has responsibility;
- Demonstrate fiscal responsibility and sustainability;
- Design its system(s) in accordance with commonly accepted conventions and standards to ensure the ongoing management, access, and security of materials deposited within it;
- Establish methodologies for system evaluation that meet community expectations of trustworthiness;
- Be depended upon to carry out its long-term responsibilities to depositors and users openly and explicitly; and
- Have policies, practices, and performance that can be audited and measured.

**Digitization Selection Criteria.** If an analog image or collection meets one or more of the following criteria, then it is a strong candidate for digitization; once captured, it should be added to the digital repository including required descriptive and technical metadata. Add as much optional metadata as resources allow.

- Use/demand for access: high frequency of demand or high retrieval costs
- Size of original, unusual or unwieldy dimensions
- Format: photographs, prints, maps, drawings, books, scrapbooks, postcards, etc.
- High intrinsic value

- Clear ownership of material and copyright to it or ease of granted permission
- Physical instability: items that are not serviceable because of damage or fragility; items stored on unstable media
- Representative example of document type
- Historical significance: high-value research materials
- Artifacts planned to go on exhibit

These criteria also provide guidance when selecting material for digitization grant proposals and online exhibition initiatives.

***Digitizing on Demand.*** If a researcher asks for digitized images, and as long as resources allow (time, human, monetary, etc.), then add the files to the digital repository including required descriptive and technical metadata. Add as much optional metadata as resources allow. Consider and document where the requested material fits into a larger context and let that be a guide for additional programmatic digitizing.

- Retain an analog version of digitally-reformatted items until there is confidence that the life-cycle management of digital data will ensure access for as long as, or longer than, the analog version. The analog version may be the original item, paper facsimile, or microfilm copy, and may be restricted for use after the digital reproduction is available.
- Ensure the appropriate handling and treatment of originals, and work with curators, recommending officers, and other personnel to make decisions about disbanding, housing, and related matters.
- Minimize handling of originals in the digital reformatting work to assure the best digital capture of an undamaged original, as well as the longevity of the original item, especially if it is to serve as the analog version.
- Ensure that the digital master file will allow a broad range of future use, including planned phases of delivery, by employing appropriate standards and best practices.
- Capture the highest quality digital image technically possible and economically feasible for large-scale production, while optimizing the potential for longevity.
- Archive a digital master file that is free of, or minimizes, artifacts introduced by the reformatting process, whenever possible.
- Ensure the completeness of all materials being digitally reformatted.
- Optimize digital images of paper-based text materials for use in creating a new paper facsimile, when appropriate.
- Employ economical, automated methods to create machine-readable text with minimal encoding to provide access with searchable text and allow for future expanded use and encoding, when appropriate.
- Employ standards and best practices for structural, administrative, and descriptive metadata that will optimize and facilitate the life-cycle management of the digital objects.
- Document digital master file with MS Excel database to record relevant documentation of all digital repository assets.

