

**HISTORY CENTER OF OLMSTED COUNTY  
REVISED COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY 12 May 2010**

**PURPOSE OF THE COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY (CMP)**

The History Center of Olmsted County (HCOC) strives to collect objects and materials from individuals and organizations relating specifically to Olmsted County, and South Eastern Minnesota in general. To fulfill the role of “Olmsted County’s Storyteller” HCOC endeavors to use these items, which re-present the spirit and many faces of our shared home, to enable visitors to understand the past and its relevance to today, to enlighten the decisions of tomorrow.

As part of this Policy, HCOC Collections Department Staff and the museum Staff in-general will strive to provide leadership in the responsible preservation of, and public access to, HCOC Collections, while encouraging excellence in research, documentation and interpretation of the same. This document serves as a guideline in that regard.

**1) THE COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE**

The Collections Committee meets regularly (preferably on a monthly or bi-monthly basis) to process objects and materials in relation to the HCOC Permanent Collections. The three main functions of the Collections Committee are:

***a) General Responsibilities***

- i) To approve or disapprove recent donations recommended for accession by the Curator of Collections.
- ii) To approve/disapprove objects recommended for de-accession from HCOC Collections, by the Curator of Collections.
- iii) To provide comment on donation or collections management issues at the discretion of appropriate HCOC Staff.

As a requirement, the Collections Committee shall contain “voting” representatives from the Board of Directors, Museum Volunteers and/or the general public. HCOC Staff will serve on the Collections Committee in an advisory capacity, to make professional recommendations and to guide discussion when necessary. On a case by case basis, the Committee will invite external expert advisors to attend meetings when necessary.

***b) Individual Responsibilities***

- i) The Curator of Collections – supervises and approves all Staff recommendations; he/she will present 3D objects to Committee.

- ii) The Archival Specialist – will present 2D objects under the direction of Curator of Collections.
- iii) The Program/Education staff – will present objects for the Education Collection in special circumstances.
- iv) The Executive Director- provide administrative guidance.
- v) Board member(s)- review and discuss items individually; vote for or against inclusion of items into Permanent Collections- recommend the former to Board of Directors and discuss items at Board Meetings when necessary.
- vi) Volunteers and/or general public- same as Board Members.

Approval/disapproval will be on a case-by-case basis. Approval/disapproval will be through a majority of those voting members. Recommendations from the Collections Committee will be forwarded to the Board of Directors for final approval.

## 2) COLLECTIONS

### *a) Permanent Collections*

The Permanent Collection consists of items with significant intrinsic historic value to the HCOC, due to their provenance, technological and aesthetic merit, individual history, and manufacture as they relate to the Mission and CMP. Items from the Permanent Collection comprise the following sub collections: 3D, Archives, and Photographs.

Donations given to the History Center must include a signed Deed of Gift (which also includes a Temporary Custody Receipt) signed by the donor relinquishing all claims to the object. All tax matters dealing with donations will be handled by the donor. The Curator of Collections is primarily responsible for determining when to accept Temporary Custody of an object(s)/materials into the possession of the HCOC, based upon due diligence of Collections Research and the relevance of the item(s) to the Mission and CMP, and specifically the scope of the three and two dimensional (Archives and Photographs) Permanent Collections of the HCOC. At this time, and under the guidance of the former, the Archival Specialist will also perform these duties. The Curator and Archival Specialist will be responsible for all registration, cataloguing, and follow-on paper work concerning the donation.

All items in this category will be cared for by the highest standard of Museum Collections Management (Care, Preservation, Documentation and Storage), and therefore restrictions of handling and use are in effect.

### *b) Non-Collection*

The Non Collection consists of items that are considered consumables and may be used for research and programs without special regard for their care. Items accepted

into the HCOC Non-Collection may arguably contain historic value in their own right, but they do not meet the collecting goals of the organization and may fall outside the parameters of the CMP and Mission. Items from the Non-Collection comprise the following sub collections: Education, Exhibit Props, and Library.

At this time, the Curator of Collections, Archival Specialist and the Program Manager have the ability to accept items into the HCOC Non- Collection at their discretion. A Temporary Custody Receipt and Deed of Gift will be used to transfer ownership, however, these items will not be Accessioned into the Permanent Collection. All Non-Collection items must be clearly marked and under most circumstances separated from the Permanent Collection when stored.

All items in this category are considered “durables” to be handled, used, and consumed for educational programs, events, display and research without restriction.

### 3) ***DONATIONS***

#### ***a) Acquisition***

At this time, in-person donations by appointment are required: “walk-in” or “drop off” donations (those encounters without an appointment) will not be accepted by Museum Staff. Initial interviews, photos, and other pertinent documentation will be initiated during the initial appointment. Subsequently, if there will be a forthcoming positive recommendation to the Collections Committee by either individual above, a second meeting will be scheduled for the Deed of Gift to be signed, the physical transfer is made into the possession of the museum, and final disposition options decided upon by the donor. Exceptions to this rule are made at the discretion and judgment of the Curator of Collections and the Archival Specialist, only when their knowledge of the Collection and the history of the object(s)/material(s) allow them to make an on-the-spot determination that they would recommend the above to the Collections Committee for approval into HCOC Collections.

In the case of a very large or special donation, where the preservation and storage of the items will position the HCOC to incur significant monetary, time and resource costs involved in its care, it is appropriate for the institution to negotiate a gift from the donor to alleviate this circumstance.

#### ***b) Building a Culture of Philanthropy and Common Good***

All donations to the HCOC will be conducted in a professional and courteous manner, consistent with the institution’s Donor Bill of Rights. As stewards of the public trust, it is the responsibility of the HCOC to seek and maintain healthy relationships with its constituencies and community partners towards the greater good.

#### 4) PURCHASES

Purchases on behalf of the HCOC- for its Permanent Collection, must be initiated and approved by both the Curator of Collections and the Executive Director. Monies used for the above will be through the Collections Acquisitions Fund. All items must be processed through the Collections Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

#### 5) SCOPE OF COLLECTING

The HCOC will strive to collect those objects and materials that illuminate the ordinary and extraordinary stories of our past and present. As tangible histories in their own right, any object or materials collected will have intrinsic research value that can stand alone, such as their individual technological or aesthetic merit. However, HCOC also places great importance on the human-personal histories of artifacts- the biographical, anecdotal, and popular relevance they have towards society, community and identity.

A strong aspect and the focus of HCOC collecting efforts will be tied to local geography, i.e. Olmsted County, but HCOC will also incorporate the collecting of objects and materials from the larger region of Southeastern Minnesota. Secondly, HCOC will supplement the above with collecting from the State of MN and the Nation, as it will enhance the understanding of events that shape where the community is today and where it is headed tomorrow. In this respect, HCOC recognizes that the spheres of influence start from the circles of own communities outward, and certainly in the opposite manner.

##### *a) Discriminate Collecting*

As the HCOC matures as a professional organization based upon collecting, it will indentify those genres, stories, populations, and time periods that are under-represented in the Collections and produce a more focused, active scope of collecting effort in the CMP. The key to the above endeavors will be museum wide inventory projects. Thereafter, a Collections Summary will be published followed by a Collecting Actions Plan.

It is recognized that a more focused collecting effort will better serve the public trust by allotting time, money and resources towards those items that truly fit the HCOC Mission and CMP. It will also help alleviate pressure towards the need to deaccession items in the future.

##### *b) Conflict of Interest*

Special care should be taken by all HCOC Employees, Volunteers and Board Members to not personally collect items in competition with the organization.

Furthermore, the storage of personal items of cultural value, artifacts, on museum grounds is strictly forbidden unless for educational purposes and approved by the Curator of Collections and Executive Director. Instances of the above will be recognized as a conflict of interest detrimental to the HCOC's CMP and Mission. Differentiated from the above, museum staff may display items of personal value in their office areas that are clearly marked with the owner's name.

Special care should be taken by Collections and Administrative Staff and to see that HCOC Permanent Collections are not habitually mixed with any other outside organizational collections [those not belonging to the HCOC by Deed of Gift]. The storage of other organizational collections on museum grounds is generally not preferred and in cases where this is the circumstance, it will be HCOC policy to require a Memorandum of Agreement outlining the responsibilities of both parties to the collection in question, to include a comprehensive inventory that details each object contained within it. Other organizational collections not documented in this fashion will constitute a conflict of interest to the HCOC CMP and Mission.

### ***c) Registration***

A Temporary Custody Form and Deed of Gift are used to transfer ownership of any object or material into the possession of the HCOC. Formal accessioning of the above into the Permanent Collections will be undertaken after final approval by the Board of Directors. This will be followed by the cataloguing of the item(s) into electronic and hardcopy data sets, and the placement of the items into permanent storage. All specific aspects of registration procedures will be outlined in the HCOC Registration Methods Manual.

## **6) RESTRICTIONS ON DONATIONS**

The HCOC will not accept certain objects into its Permanent Collections because of its Mission and generally accepted Museum Collections Management Policies. These items will include:

- a) Organic criteria:
  - Natural history specimens, to include any material relating to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.
  - Infested objects (mold, insects, etc.).
  - No textiles with fur or feathers.
  - Objects containing hazardous materials (fertilizers, radioactive material, etc.)
  - Defective or potentially harmful objects (to include non-deactivated ammunition and large machinery)
- b) Historical criteria:
  - Objects/archival materials lacking adequate provenance and/or anecdotal evidence.

- Incomplete, missing, or damaged sets of objects and/or archival materials unless there is an overriding historical, cultural, or aesthetic reason. (If exceptionally rare or archival, then consideration may apply.)<sup>1</sup>
- c) Legal criteria:
  - American Indian objects not properly vetted per federal requirements of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).
  - No human remains (bones, skeletons, etc.).
  - Looted or stolen cultural or fine art objects to include the transport of cultural material covered under the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations Convention of 1979 relating to materials originating in European countries during WWII.
  - No fake, forged, or counterfeit objects and/or archival materials.
- d) Financial Criteria
  - A large collection or item that requires extraordinary means outside the organization's ability to care, preserve, and store in perpetuity.

Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis: the HCOC retains the right to accept any/all donated items.

The HCOC will under no circumstances provide monetary appraisals for donated items.

## 7) LOANS

### *a) Loan Conditions*

The History Center will not accept incoming loans or authorize outgoing loans longer than one (1) year in length. Loans will have a clear start and end date, the end date being no longer than one (1) year after loan form is signed.

Any loan items left at the museum after written notification of this loan's expiration and attempts to return the items listed on the form, and after a period of thirty (30) days, shall become the property of the History Center.

The History Center may terminate the agreement of the loan upon written notice. Loans can be updated on an annual basis.

### *b) Incoming Loans*

Loans for temporary exhibits: The History Center will accept objects on loan from individuals and organizations of good standing for exhibit purposes. The History Center will take responsibility for the loaned objects for the allotted time written out in the temporary exhibit contract. The History Center has the right to refuse

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temporary exhibits for reasons of: cost, risk, and/or other factors that may be detrimental to the History Center and the public trust.

The History Center will not accept objects as long term loans. These items must be given to the History Center either as donations or not at all.

***c) Outgoing Loans***

Outgoing loans will be evaluated on a case by case basis and only to museums or like institutions in good standing. Exceptions to this policy need to be approved by the Curator of Collections and Executive Director. An example of exception: a special event for a community group where a relationship has been established. In this case, an appropriate HCOC Staff Member must be present during the event to ensure the safekeeping of loaned material.

The Curator of Collections will ensure that all paperwork concerning the loan is complete, to include signatures from both parties and the dates of the loan clearly stated.

Conditions of loans are to be specifically stated in a Loan Agreement Form.

The HCOC may require the borrower to insure any loaned material at its discretion. Any costs incurred for the above will be the responsibility of the borrowing institution.

**8) COLLECTIONS INVENTORIES**

An inventory is a systematic review of collections whereby individual items are physically located and inspected in storage, their location and condition status are reconciled with the collections database, and their individual object catalogue records are updated according to description, provenance and other pertinent catalogue fields. At this time “Found in the Collections” objects are recorded and reconciled with the electronic and hard copy data sets to discover accession provenance, and sub collections are reviewed for duplication. Any of the above information can be used to annotate items that will later be reviewed for recommendation of de-accession.

A proper Inventory Policy will not only enable the HCOC to elevate its role of stewardship to a higher level, it will allow us to fulfill its responsibilities to the communities served by managing the Collections to the best abilities, specifically where the documentation of the said Collections are concerned.

At this time, it is recommended that the Permanent Collection undergo a comprehensive inventory process, followed by an annual “spot-check” or “rolling” inventory.

## 9) DE-ACCESSION POLICY

According to accepted standards institutionally and within the Museum Field in general, the HCOC recognizes the de-accession process as a legal, ethical, and practical aspect of museum operations. As a policy particular to the museum, no deaccessioning process should be initiated by itself, but as a result of an inventory process.

All objects approved for de-accession are property of the HCOC, and will be processed by the Curator of Collections, Executive Director, Collections Committee and the Board of Directors. The de-accession policy will give the Curator of Collections, the Executive Director, and the Collections Committee the flexibility to accept other potential objects more relevant to both the community and the Mission of the History Center, but also focus the efforts of collecting in-general, to include highlighting weak areas of the Permanent Collection.

Initiating the de-accessions process because of a circumstance such as running out of collections storage space is not recognized as an acceptable justification. This would be an indication that the current CMP needs to be revisited.

Transfer of de-accessioned items to another non-permanent internal collection, or to another museum, or like institution, is generally the most desirable final disposition. In this way, some of the original intent of the donor is satisfied, and the story behind the items preserved in a possibly similar manner, sometimes more appropriate environment. In the case that a transfer of an item is not possible, the HCOC has the right to publicly sell the object at fair market value to potential buyers. Because the HCOC does not capitalize its Collection, Internal Revenue Service rules require that all proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned items be used strictly to acquire new collection items. This is known as the Collections Acquisitions Fund. (CAF).

### *a) Criteria for De-accessioning*

De-accessioning objects can be justified with one or more of the following criteria:

**Authenticity** The object has been demonstrated to not be true to its stated maker or origin, and/or has been altered from its original form to such an extent that that its historical significance has been lost.

**Condition** An object's physical integrity has degraded to an extent that it cannot be used for exhibition, is not stable enough for long term storage, and/or presents as a hazardous material that has become or will become a threat to the Permanent Collection or HCOC personnel.

**Cost of Care** Due to an object's condition it will require significant conservation costs in materials, labor, and expertise that are not within the means of the HCOC to provide in the long or short term.

**Documentation** The object is missing basic background history and/or accession paperwork, to include Deed of Gift. These criteria should be used in conjunction with other criteria from this list when possible. If Accession paperwork is missing clear Title and Ownership must still be established; see MN Statute 345.73 Acquiring Title to Undocumented Property; current as of 2009.

**Mission** Due to its provenance and individual history, an Object fails to meet the CMP guidelines and Mission of the HCOC. This would also include duplicates in the Permanent Collection.

**Program Strength** Due to its provenance and individual history, the Objects fails to meet the objectives of the HCOC Permanent and Non-Collection criteria and specifically is not included in, or does not enhance, an ancillary collection. This would also include duplicates in the same Collections. These criteria should be used in conjunction with other criteria from this list when possible, in particular *Mission*.

**Restitution and Repatriation** At this time, an Object that falls under NAGPRA, to include all human remains encountered.

All objects considered for de-accessioning will be reviewed individually using the above criteria, independent of previous work. When making the case for recommending an object for de-accession the Curator and Archival Specialist will caveat their arguments with considerations for keeping the object in HCOC Collections. When justified, the above Staff will utilize more than one criterion to build their case for de-accession.

***b) Ethical and Legal Consideration for De-accession***

- No de-accessioned object may be knowingly acquired by any Museum Employee, member of the Board, Volunteer, or by their representatives.
- Before de-accessioning an object, the Curator of Collections shall be responsible to verify that the History Center has legal ownership to the item and that there are no restrictions or title questions that would impede de-accessioning.
- If documented restrictions have been placed on the disposal of an item, they should, except in the case of hazardous material, be strictly observed.
- When necessary, the Collections Committee will seek legal advice in actions involving restrictions and de-accessions.

- No act of de-accessioning shall conflict with county, state or federal laws, or with the ethical principles established for the Museum in this or any other official document.<sup>2</sup>

***c) Methods of De-accession***

Methods of de-accession will depend on the condition of the object. Objects deemed a threat to the collection or the health of staff and volunteers will be pre-emptively de-accessioned, prior to formal de-accessioning if necessary.

At the beginning of a de-accession process (initial Staff recommendations) and certainly at its completion [Final decision by Board of Directors], it is recommended that the project be formally announced on at least a regional and local, if not also national level, using contemporary industry publications for the sake of transparency and the fiduciary responsibility of the HCOC to the communities it serves. By these means museums or like institutions will become aware of items that may fit their mission and collecting goals- that are being offered by the HCOC, and receive contact and procedural information about how to acquire those identified objects.

Objects for use and consumption in the HCOC Education Collection will also be transferred at this time.

Following a pre-determined schedule and deadline not to be less than 30 days, if no offers of transfer to a museum or like institution are made, then the HCOC can offer the de-accessioned object(s) for public sale. The monies from such sales will be placed in a CAF to help build the HCOC Collections.

Objects and materials left from the transfer and sale periods can either be recycled through that process once more, reconsidered for accession, or disposed of at the discretion of the HCOC.

***d) Priority List for Deaccessions***

- i) Transfer to HCOC Non-Collections [Education, Library, Exhibit Props]
- ii) Transfer to another museum or like institution with similar mission
- iii) Sale to the general public through public means
- iv) Recycle through above process when appropriate
- v) Destroy [may be pre-emptively employed when an items presents as a hazard to the Collection or museum staff]. This option also includes the physical recycling of appropriate materials based upon composition, to include paper and metals etc..

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## **10) EVOLUTION OF THE MISSION & POLICIES OF THE HCOC**

The HCOC is a dynamic institution influenced by both internal and external factors. As fiduciaries of the public trust, the HCOC Board of Directors, its Administration and Collections Staff should not allow the CMP to become inconsistent with the Mission of the organization and the Gift Acceptance Policy. Therefore, an annual review of this document by HCOC Leadership is encouraged.

Tom Garcia  
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12 May 2010