

# **McCandless/Northern Allegheny Heritage Center Collections Management Policy**

## **Categories of Collections**

### **A. Permanent Collection**

The Permanent Collection shall contain accessioned items that have been considered under the criteria established below:

1. Objects that fit the geographic, temporal, and thematic limitations set by the mission.
2. Objects that can be cared for in perpetuity.
3. Objects that are in reasonably good condition.
4. Objects that are not duplicated in the collection, unless such duplication is desirable.
6. Objects which complete and clear title can be secured. Restrictions on objects will not be accepted in most cases. Once an item is donated it cannot be returned.
5. Objects for which historical significance can be established. Historical significance is enhanced by accompanying documentation, association with well-known time periods, events, or individuals.

This collection is maintained for research, educational and exhibit purposes. Objects assigned to this collection shall be accessioned and numbered according to proper museum practices. Items shall be stored and exhibited under standards of best practice as established by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM).

### **B. Reference Collection**

The Reference Collection shall include objects intended specifically for the Research Library, and is intended for use on the Center's premises only. Exceptions may be made in accordance with the Center's Outgoing Loans Policy. Additions shall be considered under the following guidelines:

- Books and archival material pertaining to Northern Allegheny area history
- Books and archival material considered as important research resources

This collection is maintained for research and educational purposes. These items are not considered part of the permanent collection. Objects assigned to this

collection shall be accessioned according to proper museum practices and marked with an “R” in front of the accession number.

## **Acquisitions/Accessioning**

### Acquisition

Acquisition will be defined as the formal act of legally accepting and acquiring an object(s) for any of the McCandless/Northern Allegheny Heritage Center collections.

The Center shall seek and consider additions to the permanent collection that enhance and strengthen the collections and mission and promotes the political, social, and economic history of the Northern Allegheny area. As such, objects may be acquired through gift, bequest, purchase, exchange or other transaction which transfers title and the object to the Center. In accessioning any object, the Center acknowledges that it has the resources to properly care for, store, and use the object.

All objects accepted into the collections become the Center’s exclusive property and may be exhibited, loaned, retained, or disposed of in the best interest of the museum and the public it serves. The object or collection shall not be accepted with legally binding restrictions without approval from Town Council.

The staff at the Center shall not provide appraisals of an object or collection. Appraisals for the purpose of establishing tax-deductible value shall be the responsibility of the donor.

### **A. Criteria for Acquisition**

1. The acquisition of the object or collection of objects furthers the purposes and activities of the Center as stated in the Mission Statement and would strengthen the collection and/or exhibitions of the Center.
2. The Center can provide adequate storage, care, and security as well as the maintenance and conservation for the object or collection of objects. Objects or collections that cannot be properly cared for shall not be accepted into the collection unless the object or collection is recommended under special circumstances by Town Council.
3. All donations are considered outright, unconditional gifts unless determined otherwise by Town Council at the time of accessioning and cannot be encumbered by restrictions either expressed or implied, thereby allowing full and complete ownership of use as permitted by the extent of the law.
4. No object or collection shall be accepted unless accompanied by all rights, copyrights, title, and other interests.

5. The conveyor of the object or collection is the legal owner or authorized agent for the legal owner. Title and all rights to acquisition should be granted free and clear, with the exception of partial and or promised gifts.

6. The Center shall not knowingly acquire objects that are unethically collected, imported, or removed from their society of origin as described by the provisions of the ICOM Convention of 1973.

### Accession

Accession will be defined as the formal act of legally transferring ownership an object or collection for any of the McCandless/Northern Allegheny Heritage Center collections. Acquisitions cannot be accessioned into the collection until they have been documented, registered, and catalogued.

#### A. Documentation

The Center is responsible for maintaining accurate and current records of the identification, location, and condition of objects in the Permanent and Reference Collections or left in the custody of the Center.

The primary purpose of these records is to control and document the collection and must include as a minimum:

1. Identification number and description
2. Legal status
3. Provenance, as far as determinable, including date acquired by Center
4. Actions taken regarding the object, including records of location, conservation, exhibition and loan

The Center shall assign a permanent accession number when the object is accepted. A Deed of Gift and thank you letter shall be sent to the donor (in accordance with IRS regulations), which is signed by an officer of Town Council or the Town Manager, a copy of which shall be kept in the object or collection's file as additional proof of ownership. When a Deed of Gift is returned, it must be signed by a Center representative. Additional pertinent information is to be included and referred to in the accession file.

The following records shall be completed for all acquisitions objects and/or collections:

- Deed of Gift
- Accession Register
- Condition Report

All records must be safeguarded from hazards such as fire, water, vandalism, and/or loss. A list of all permanent and loaned objects, a back-up copy of the electronic database and a duplicate copy of all collections records shall be maintained at an off-site location.

## B. Registration

A Center representative shall record important historical information in the collections database and number the object according to professional standards within 60 days of acquisition.

Upon completion, object information shall be entered into the accession register and collections database. Information in the accession register shall include: the accession number, date received, object name, donor, date accessioned, description, and other comments. The register shall serve as another source of ownership and as an alternative back-up copy to the database and collections records.

## C. Numbering

Each object acquired for the Permanent and Reference Collections is given a permanent, unique number. This number is applied to the object and to all documentation. The accession number consists of a sequential three-part numbering system used for objects assigned to the permanent collection. The first part of the number indicates the year that the object is accessioned and is the four digits of the year. The second part designates the number of the acquisition/donation for that year as assigned by the order the objects are accepted. The third part of the number represents the object number in the accessions. Each part of the accession number is separated by a decimal.

For example, the third object of the second acquisition/donation in 2009 would be assigned the number 2009.02.03

Objects in the Reference Collection shall be numbered in the same way, but preceded by an (R). Objects loaned to the Center shall be numbered in the same way, but preceded by an (L).

## **Deaccessioning/disposal of collections/use of proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned collections**

Deaccessioning will be defined as the formal act of permanently removing an object(s) from the Center's collections.

Objects shall be deaccessioned only if they have lost their physical integrity, usefulness, or relevance to the Center's purpose. There must be no legally binding restriction contained in the original terms of gift or purchase that prohibit disposal. Deaccessioning and disposal of any item in the Center's collections will adhere to the American Alliance of Museum's Code for Ethics for Museums and will ensure that disposal of collections through sale, trade, or research activities is solely for the advancement of the Center's mission.

#### A. Reasons for Deaccession

In order for an object to be considered for deaccession from the collections it must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. The object is outside the scope of the Center mission and collections policy.
2. The object is a duplicate without intrinsic value.
3. The object lacks physical integrity.
4. The object cannot be properly preserved by the Center.
5. The object is composed of materials hazardous to the safety of persons or of other objects in the collection.
6. The object has been discovered to be a forgery, replica, or reproduction.
7. The object has failed to retain its authenticity.
8. The object's legal ownership has been discovered to be other than the party from whom the Center obtained the object.

#### B. Means of Deaccession

Objects in the collection may be deaccessioned only upon recommendation and approval by the Town Council. Deaccessioning an item shall follow the following procedures:

1. Completion of a Deaccession Worksheet.
2. Evaluation of the Deaccession proposal by the Town Council.
3. Final approval of deaccessioning an item is subject to a majority vote by the Town Council. For a deaccession to be complete the Deaccession Worksheet must be signed by a member of the Town Council.

#### C. Disposal of Deaccessioned Objects

The manner of disposal shall represent the best interests of the Center, the public it serves, and the public trust and communities it represents. The Center will consider the following methods for disposal:

1. Transfer without compensation or exchange for other objects relevant to the Center Mission Statement. When appropriate, deaccessioned items shall be offered to other non-profit institutions that can adequately care for the object and can ensure public access.
2. Sale of deaccessioned items to the public, with preference given to a forum that will protect the interests, objectives, and legal status of the Center.
3. Return to donor or legitimate owner if possession of the deaccessioned item by the Center is found not to be legitimate.
4. Destruction of the deaccessioned may be necessary because of biohazard or deterioration beyond repair. Method of destruction must comply with local, state, and federal codes.

#### D. Proceeds from Deaccessioning

All proceeds from deaccessioned objects shall be exclusively used for the acquisition of new objects or the direct care of the collection as prescribed by AAM's Code of Ethics.

#### E. Documentation of Deaccessioning

The Center shall maintain permanent records of all deaccessioned artifact specifying the justification of removal and means of disposal. When the deaccession is approved, the Center shall update all records relevant to the deaccessioned object.

#### F. Requests for Return of Collected Objects

Occasionally, a request to return a collection object to the original donor or donor's heirs shall be received. In such cases, the Center shall research all files and information regarding the object to determine that the Center has free and clear title of the object. Return of objects shall be at the discretion of the Town Council.

### **Loans, incoming and outgoing**

#### A. Incoming Loans

The Center may request the loan of an item from an individual or another institution for the purposes of exhibit or research. Incoming loans must be approved in advance by the Town Council. The Center shall be responsible for

maintaining all documentation pertaining to the loan. Loaned objects shall be evaluated by the Center upon arrival. At the expiration of the loan, the object shall be returned to the owner within 30 days.

Items loaned to the Center shall receive the same care given to objects owned by the Center. Condition of the loaned objects shall be established through writing by means of a Condition Report. Evidence of damage at the time of receipt or while in the Center's custody shall be immediately reported to the lender. No repairs, alterations, or conservation treatment of loaned objects shall be undertaken.

The Center shall properly acknowledge the lender on all publicity and exhibit labels. The Center has the authority to photograph the loaned objects for educational, catalogue, record, and publicity purposes.

The Center shall insure the loaned items. Insurance values shall be consistent with fair market value whenever possible. Loaned objects shall be insured while in transit and on location during the period of the loan. The lender agrees that in the event of loss or damage, recovery shall be limited to such amount as may be paid by the insurer, thereby releasing Center from liability for all claims arising from such loss or damage.

## B. Outgoing Loans

The Center lends works from the collection for education, exhibition, and scholarly purposes. Outgoing loans shall only be made to non-profit, cultural, or educational institutions. Then making decisions on loan requests, the Center must take into account the condition and conservation needs of the objects requested. Objects in poor condition shall not be approved.

Objects must remain in the condition in which they are received based on the Condition Report. Objects shall not be cleaned, repaired, retouched, or altered except with written permission from the Center. The Center must be notified immediately if a loaned item is damaged.

The Center shall be properly acknowledged as the lender of the object on loan. The borrower has the authority to photograph the loaned object for educational, catalogue, record, and publicity purposes.

The borrower shall be responsible for all insurance, packaging, and shipping expenses associated with the loan unless waived by the Center. Loaned items shall be insured at the value stated by the Center. For loans insured by the borrower, a Certificate of Insurance must be provided prior to shipment.

## **Access and/or use of collections**

Access will be defined as who has access to what and why, and denotes how those collections will be used and with what safeguards.

### **A. Collections and Records**

The collections of the Center exist for the benefit of the public. Therefore the public shall be granted reasonable access, by appointment, to the stored collections for research and educational purposes. To safeguard collections, the Center may limit the size of groups granted access to storage areas as well as determine which objects are suitable for viewing. Access to collections and records shall be monitored at all times by a Center representative.

Access to collection storage areas shall be as follows:

1. Collections storage areas shall be locked at all times.
2. All non-collections staff, volunteers, etc. are not permitted in storage areas without Center supervision.
3. Collections storage area shall not be entered without proper authorization from the Center, except in an emergency.

### **B. Photographs and Reproductions**

The Center complies with United States Copyright law concerning the reproduction and photographic activities and uses. Reproductions or photographs may be taken of the collections for personal use, but not for publication without prior written consent.

## **Collections care**

Care of collections is a continuing responsibility of the Center. Staff and volunteers of the Center are responsible for the care of the collections, loaned or donated to the museum. Such care includes maintenance, security, proper storage, exhibition, conservation, insurance, and emergency preparedness. The Center shall provide training to all staff and volunteers on the proper care of collection.

### **Environmental Controls**

Control of relative humidity (RH) and temperature is critical in the preservation of collections because unacceptable levels contribute to the breakdown of



materials. Environmental conditions shall be controlled to maintain a constant temperature and relative humidity based on ideal conditions for the collections.

**Temperature** should range between 65 and 72 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Relative Humidity (RH)** should range between 35 to 60 percent.

Neither temperature nor relative humidity should fluctuate more than 5 percent within a 24-hour period. Environmental information shall be monitored regularly and a continuous record shall be kept. The Center will periodically check RH and temperature in both exhibit galleries and collection storage areas.

Light also accelerates the deterioration of collections. Any exposure to light is damaging. Damage is cumulative and irreversible. To reduce the effects of ultraviolet radiation, all windows and bulbs need to be covered with films or filters. The maximum light levels should range from 50 lux to 300 lux (5 foot-candles to 30 foot-candles) depending on the type of materials. A continuous record of light levels shall be monitored and kept. The Center will use a light meter and ultraviolet monitor to periodically check light and ultraviolet levels in both exhibit galleries and collection storage areas.

Food and drink are not permitted in the Center except in the office. Smoking is prohibited.

### Conservation

Any repair or conservation treatment for objects shall be performed by skilled museum professionals/conservators upon recommendation by the Center.

Priority shall be based on the following considerations: historical significance, condition, feasibility, request for exhibition and financial resources.

Documentation must be recorded in justifying treatment of a collection or specific object including a pre- and post- treatment report.

### Handling of Objects

Professional standards and supplies should be utilized, if possible, when handling or moving objects within the building or for packing and shipping. Only trained staff and volunteers shall handle objects or collections records.

### Use and Activities

Awareness of collections shall be incorporated in all Center activities. No use or activity shall take priority over the care and safety of the objects or records. The

collections shall not be used for purposes or activities that do not further the mission of the Center.

## **Documentation and Inventories**

### **A. Documentation**

Documentation refers to the process for capturing an object's condition, use, and value and will ensure that the Center maintains physical and intellectual control over its collection.

The Center is responsible for maintaining accurate and current records of the identification, location, and condition of collections' objects. The staff and volunteers of the Center are responsible for accurately completing and recording all information for the collections' records and maintaining completed files of records and inventories pertaining to items which are in collections or left in custody of the Center.

### **B. Inventories**

Periodic inventory of the Permanent and Reference Collections is vital to maintaining the accountability for the objects the Center owns and cares for. An inventory shall take place at least every 10 years. Upon completion of inventory, the Town Council shall evaluate the collection to determine if objects are appropriate to the collection or if objects should be recommended for deaccessioning. When an inventory is undertaken, the following shall be recorded:

- Accession number
- Object name
- Object description
- Status (accessioned, pending accession, loan, unknown)
- Location
- Condition
- Digital Images