

WALWORTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT AND

ACCESSIONS POLICY

I. INTRODUCTION

The Walworth County Historical Society Collections Management and Accessions Policy establishes formal guidelines for the acquisition, deaccession, loan, care and use of the Society's collections. These policies shall not replace any state or federal law, statute or regulation under which the Society is legally or ethically bound to operate.

II. MISSION OF THE SOCIETY

The Walworth County Historical Society [consisting primarily of the Webster House Museum, Doris M. Reinke Resource Center, Boyd Carriage Barn and buildings at the Walworth County Fairgrounds] is a major research and exhibition center for the public and for scholars. The Society's mission is to acquire, conserve, investigate and interpret specimens and collections relating to the natural, artistic and cultural heritage of Walworth County and southeastern Wisconsin. Through education, research and public exhibits, the Society serves the state and national community of residents, visitors, students and scholars and is a repository for specimens from many sources. The Society develops and uses botanical, zoological and cultural collections; these collections form the basis for understanding past and present issues unique to Walworth County, and meeting the challenges of the future.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. As used in this policy:

1. The collections of the Society are defined as anthropological, fine arts, historical, and geological objects and related supporting documentation acquired and conserved because of their scientific and cultural significance and value.
 - a. The term "object" refers to, but is not restricted to, all collection materials, including specimens, artifacts, photographs, and works of art.
 - b. "Supporting documentation" includes, but is not limited to, archival and library materials, field records, notebooks, maps, photographs, exhibits and electronic databases.
2. "Accessioning" is defined as the process of creating a permanent record of an object, assembly, or lot received from one source at one time for which the Society has permanent custody, right or title, and assigning a unique control number to said object, assembly or lot.

3. "Deaccessioning" is the action of removing an accessioned object by due process from the permanent collection. The process is documented and made part of the permanent record.
- B. The collections are managed by a Curator or Acquisitions Director, who is knowledgeable in fields related to the collections, and who is responsible for all aspects of curation and maintenance of those collections, including acquisition and recommendation for deaccessioning, conservation, interpretation, approval for exhibition, loan access, research, and publication.

IV. ACQUISITION OF OBJECTS FOR THE SOCIETY'S COLLECTIONS

Donor's restrictions, conditions, or encumbrances:

Generally all objects entering the Society shall be without any restrictions, conditions, or encumbrances. The Society reserves the right to use all gifts in the manner which best serves the Society and the Society's Mission Statement.

- A. Objects accepted and accessioned into the collections must support the mission of the Walworth County Historical Society.
 - a. The objects must represent or relate to the cultural and natural history of Walworth County and southeastern Wisconsin.
 - b. Objects should be acquired in a manner that respects the public trust and does not damage the natural or cultural resources of the area.
- B. The Society may acquire objects by purchase, contract, gift, bequest, exchange, field collecting or other appropriate means. Objects will be accepted and accessioned into the Society's collections when the following conditions are met:
 - a. The Society can provide proper care, conservation, and storage under conditions insuring their preservation and availability, in keeping with professional standards.
 - b. Title to all objects acquired for the collections shall be obtained free and clear, permanently, and without restrictions as to the use, exhibition, loan, or future disposition.
- C. Approval to accept and accession an object into the collections can only be granted by the Curator or Acquisitions Director, that person to be appointed annually by the Board. All acquisitions that require additional resources to house or maintain will require approval of the Board prior to acceptance by the Society.
 - a. Since the Society has space and financial limitations, it subscribes to a policy of selective acquisitions.
 - b. Objects for which it is anticipated that no foreseeable use for exhibition, research, education or exchange, will not be accepted.

- D. Biological and natural resources are protected by a variety of statutes, e.g., the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The Society will only acquire such specimens collected in compliance with all pertinent regulations.

V. **DEACCESSION AND DISPOSAL OF OBJECTS FROM THE COLLECTIONS**

- A. Accessioned objects are held in trust for the public in perpetuity as long as:
 - 1. They retain their physical integrity, their identity, and their authenticity.
 - 2. They continue to be relevant and useful to the Society's purposes and programs.
 - 3. They can be properly stored, preserved, and used.
- B. Only the Curator or Acquisitions Director of a collection has the authority to recommend objects to be deaccessioned. That person must fill out a Museum Deaccession Form, which in turn must be approved by the Board. Once approved, an entry will be made into the permanent records stating that the objects have been deaccessioned.
- C. Objects will be considered for deaccessioning under one of the following circumstances:
 - 1. The object is no longer relevant to the mission of the Museum.
 - 2. Inadequate documentation or absence of documentation critically reduces the cultural or scientific value or significance of the object.
 - 3. The object cannot be preserved, or has deteriorated and is no longer of any cultural or scientific value.
 - 4. The object represents an unacceptable hazard to personnel, or to other collections.
- D. Disposition of deaccessioned objects.

Any object(s) selected and approved by the Board for deaccessioning should be transferred or disposed of as follows:

- 1. Museums or educational institutions should be contacted regarding the availability of the items for exchange or donation depending on the nature of the items.
- 2. Consideration will be given to placing the object(s) in the Museum's Education Collection or teaching collections, or with other educational institutions.
- 3. If the object cannot be disposed of in any of the above manners it will be destroyed. Destruction is defined as the obliteration of an object or specimen by physical or mechanical means. The disposal method must be both documented and witnessed.

E. Deaccessioned objects will not be given, exchanged, or sold privately to employees of the Museum, members of governing authorities or their representatives, members of Museum support groups or volunteers without the approval of the Board.

VI. LOANS

Loans are transfers of objects from one institution to another in which there is no transfer of ownership. The Society sends or receives loans for the purpose of research, education, or exhibition. The Society will exercise the same care of objects received on loan as it does in safekeeping its own objects.

A. Incoming Loans

1. All objects borrowed by the Society are its responsibility and care will be taken to house the specimens properly and to have all documentation available.

2. The Society will not knowingly accept incoming loans of

Objects acquired or collected illegally or not in compliance with all applicable international, national, state, and local laws and regulations.

3. The Society will not transfer possession or alter in any way objects it has received on loan without the express written approval of the lending institution.

4. The Curator or Acquisitions Director is responsible for the loan arrangements, shipping/receiving, insurance and conservation of traveling exhibits.

5. The Society will insure incoming loans for exhibit and

Research purposes once the loan is in the care, custody and control of the Society. Coverage will be through the general Society policy for its holdings; other coverage can be obtained for loans through written contractual agreements.

B. Outgoing Loans

The Society lends objects to qualified institutions for scholarly research and exhibition, subject to policies and practices within each collection. The following conditions apply to all loans:

1. The borrowing institution will not transfer possession, repair, clean or restore objects it has received on loan without the express written approval of the Board.

2. Loans promoting the Society in public buildings are permitted, providing the objects in such loans are displayed under approved environmental and security conditions.

3. Outgoing loans will be for a period determined by the Board.

4. The Society does not grant loans of its collections to private or corporate establishments, except for educational, non-profit purposes.

5. The borrowing institution will assume full responsibility for any loss of or damage to the objects.
6. The Society requires that the borrower insure objects loaned for exhibition.
7. The Society does not require that the borrower insure loans for research purposes unless the Curator or Acquisitions Director specifically requests such coverage.
8. Objects on loan from the Society will not be reproduced/replicated in any manner without permission of the Curator or Acquisitions Director.