

Workers' History Museum

Collections Management Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Workers' History Museum is a public institution that provides Ottawa residents, visitors to the city, and interested parties with opportunities to experience and learn about the history of workers' heritage and culture in Ottawa and the Ottawa Valley. As a museum and interpretation centre, it will recognize, honour, preserve and interpret the experiences and contributions of working people – their work, home life, and their cultural and political contributions to our city.

Purpose

The Workers' History Museum's (WHM) Collections Management Policy sets forth the goals of the museum with respect to managing its collections and the acquisition of artifacts and archival material through its Acquisitions Committee. The policy provides standards and consistency for the selection, acquisition, preservation, use, and documentation of artifacts and archival material in the collection, and, if necessary, for disposal.

This policy recognizes the nature of the collection and collection management responsibilities, and it considers present practice, professional and museological standards, collection management issues, and planning for the future.

This policy provides the framework for guidelines and procedures, which are contained in the *Collections Management Policy - Procedures Manual* related to this policy.

Ethics

The WHM will be guided by established professional standards and ethics. The Museum has adopted the *Canadian Museums Association's Ethics Guidelines* (2006), and will adhere to the ethical guidelines outlined in this document except when WHM policies take precedence over professional ethical guidelines.

Ontario provincial legislation and Canadian federal legislation take precedence over WHM policies.

Standards

The WHM subscribes to professionalism in all aspects of collections management and seeks to maintain best practices through reference to published standards and consultation with professionals in the museum and archival communities.

Collections Committee

The WHM will have a collections committee that will be responsible for;

- Ensuring the collections policy is kept current through periodic review
- Recommending changes to the policy to the WHM board of directors
- Reviewing and approving, where appropriate, all proposed acquisitions to ensure they meet the museum's mandate, budget, and are manageable with the resources available.
- Recommending acquisitions to the WHM Board of Directors for final approval.

Other Roles and Responsibilities

In cases where there is no curator, a designate or designates will be appointed to specific positions

2. COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT

The Workers' History Museum collects cultural material pertaining to workers' history and labour history in the Ottawa region from the earliest times to the present day. The material must be in reasonable condition and must not pose a threat to other objects in the collection. The WHM does not collect historic buildings, or parts of buildings that are in a fixed location outside the grounds of the museum.

The WHM only collects material for the collection when there are sufficient human and financial resources available to administer proper care for the material. This includes the ability to document, conserve, store, research, exhibit and interpret the object being considered. All material is acquired for the collection only on the recommendations of the Collections Committee

The WHM will have three active collections: a collection for research and display (including Archival material), a reference collection, and an education collection for programming.

3. ACQUISITIONS

The Workers' History Museum will acquire material for the purpose of research, preservation, display, education, and interpretation. All material acquired for the collection will follow the Collections Development plan outlined above. The WHM will collect individual items, or groups of items acquired through the Methods of Acquisition listed below.

Methods of Acquisition

- Gift / donation
- Bequest (the WHM accepts items donated through bequest, provided the donation has been arranged prior to the death of the donor and the execution of the will)
- Purchase
- Fieldwork

Ethical Collecting

The WHM collects items that have clear legal title, and provenance and does not contravene any existing laws or treaties. The WHM does not acquire any materials that have questionable circumstances or origins.

Process

The WHM will follow standard museum practices for acquiring objects, including the completion of all appropriate documentation.

4. DOCUMENTATION

For their record keeping, the Workers' History Museum is committed to following the professional standards set forth in the Museum field. The responsibility for creating and maintaining records belongs to the Curator and/or designate.

Terminology

The Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloguing based on Chenhall's System for Classifying Man-Made Objects will be used to catalogue objects. A list of common terms will be developed by the

Museum in order to consistently name and classify their objects. Archival material will be catalogued according to the *Rules for Archival Description*.

Access

While some documentation may be subject to restrictions, under Ontario's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPOP), the WHM will ensure that non-restricted information about the collection can be made available to the public, based on the guidelines outlined in **Section 10**.

Access and Use.

5. CARE OF COLLECTIONS

The WHM is responsible for the continuing care and preservation of the collection. This includes proper storage, exhibition facilities, environmental control systems, and the mechanism for monitoring such systems. A portion of the WHM annual budget will be allocated for collections care.

The Curator or designate is responsible for ensuring that professional standards for the care of objects (such as housekeeping, proper handling, packing, and shipping) in storage and on display are adhered to at all times. If objects in the collection require special care that cannot be provided by the Curator or designate, outside expertise will be consulted.

6. LOANS

Loans of objects and exhibits will be made to other Museums, Heritage Institutions, and Educational Facilities for the purpose of exhibition, research, public programming, and education. Also, exhibits will be accepted into the WHM on loan from other institutions for the same reasons.

Criteria and Conditions

Incoming loans must coincide with the WHM's mission statement to recognize, honour, preserve and interpret the experiences and contributions of working people. All incoming loans will be recommended for acceptance by the Curator or designate and the Exhibition and Education Committee and approved by Board of Directors. Loans that do not coincide with the WHM's mission statement will be accepted on the approval of the Board of Directors, on the recommendation of the Curator and the Exhibitions Committee. The Board of Directors has the authority to reject loans that do not meet the mandate, based on those grounds alone.

All loans will be subject to a formal written agreement between the lender and borrower, which will address the following;

- specific purpose of the loan and a set period of time for the loan.
- copyright and reproduction rights.
- shipping considerations, costs, and insurance

Authority

The Curator or designate has the authority to authorize exhibits for outgoing loan and to arrange the loan agreement with the borrowing institution. The Curator is also authorized to arrange incoming loans from other institutions and is responsible for arranging the terms of the loan agreement with the lending institution.

7. INSURANCE

Items in the collection will be insured at the discretion of the Curator and/or Board of Directors, and as financial resources allow.

8. SECURITY

The staff, volunteers, and Board of the Workers' History Museum are charged with the responsibility to protect the collection from theft and damage. Because of this, the Staff and Board of the WHM will strive to identify and manage risks to the collection whenever possible.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

In order to reduce the risk of damage and danger to the collection, volunteers, and staff, the Workers' History Museum will engage in the following activities:

- Complete a Risk Assessment of the collection and facility and create a Risk Management Plan (that would be updated annually)
- Basic training for staff and volunteers about what to do in case of an emergency or disaster will be provided by the WHM to Ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of both the Risk Management Plan and the Disaster Plan
- A duplicate copy of all records will be kept in a secure location off-site. The database will be backed up onto an off-site server at the end of each week.

10. ACCESS AND USE

Access to the collection can be given through exhibitions, programs, events, and publications. The guidelines for specific access to will be described in the *Collections Management Policy - Procedures Manual*. The Workers' History Museum will not distribute or allow access to any information that is restricted through legislation such as the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. It will also not allow public access to objects that are restricted by legislation such as the *Canada Firearms Act*.

11. DEACCESSIONING AND DISPOSAL

The WHM recognizes that there may be circumstances in the future when deaccessioning objects from the permanent collection can improve the relevance of the museum's collection. The deaccessioning of objects that do not reflect the WHM's mandate or other criteria will result in a healthier, more pertinent collection.

Criteria

Objects can be deaccessioned from the collection provided they meet the following criteria:

- The object does not meet the WHM mandate or does not comply with the Collections Development Plan
- The object poses a physical hazard or health risk to the staff, volunteers, or public.
- The object has deteriorated to the point where it does not serve a useful purpose or poses a threat to other objects in the existing collection.
- The object is a duplicate and does not have proper documentation, or a definable purpose.
- The object type is over represented in the collection; documentation and importance to the collection must be taken into consideration when determining which over-represented artifacts to deaccession.
- The object has been misidentified, is found to be a fake, forgery, or copy, and/or has a fraudulent, unethical or illegal provenance.
- The object is of aboriginal origin and a request for repatriation has been made.

Conditions

When deaccessioning objects, the WHM must ensure that they (the WHM) have clear legal title to the object and that there are no restrictions that prohibit its deaccession. Detailed records of the object must be maintained, including all the object documentation in the accession file, and the deaccessioning information. This includes the criteria for deaccessioning, the date of deaccessioning, the approval for deaccessioning, and the method of disposal.

Methods of Disposal

When disposing objects, the WHM will do its utmost to ensure that the deaccessioned object remains in public domain. Objects that have been deaccessioned will be disposed of in the following manner:

- Accepted into the education collection.
- Offered to other non-profit institution as a gift or exchange.
- Sold at public auction. Any person involved with the museum cannot acquire the objects, due to conflict of interest. All proceeds resulting from the sale of the artifact will be sent to the WHM after the auction, and the treasurer will note the deposit in the financial records of the museum. All monies generated from the sale of an object should be used to further build the collection
- Repatriated to the appropriate aboriginal group.
- Physical Destruction

This method will be employed only if the object is in extremely poor condition, has no documentation relating to provenance, and cannot be disposed of by the above methods. Please see the Collections Management Policy Procedures Manual for the procedure for disposing of objects through physical destruction.

12. MUSEUM CLOSURE

If for any reason the museum closes permanently, the collection will be disposed of following the Deaccessioning section above.

13. POLICY REVIEW

The Workers' History Museum's *Collections Management Policy* will be formally reviewed annually until 2015 to ensure that the policy satisfies the needs of the organization. During this time,

amendments will be made as required. After 2015 the *Collections Management Policy* will be formally reviewed every five years, or as required.

14. APPROVAL

Signature: _____
For the Board of Directors

Date: _____

Signature: _____
For the WHM Collections Committee

Date: _____

Appendix- GLOSSARY (terms and definitions from the Alberta Museums Association's Standard Practices Handbook)

Accession: An object acquired by a museum as part of a permanent collection (noun); the act of processing and recording an addition to the permanent collection (verb)

Accession Number: a unique number assigned to every object in the museum's collections.

Accession Register: a sequential record that lists every object in the museum's collection. Entries are made in chronological order, as each object is entered at the time it was accepted into the museum. The accession register documents the museum's legal right to its collection.

Appraisal: an estimate of the fair market value of an object. Fair market value is the price the object would fetch on the open market between a willing buyer and a willing seller in an arms length transaction, where each party has full knowledge of the facts (noun). A process to determine the monetary value of an object at fair market value, used for insurance purposes or purchase (verb).

Bequest: Materials that are transferred to the museum under the terms of a will.

Collection: A group of related objects and the information resources associated with them, collected according to specific criteria based on the museum's mandate. A museum collection is accumulated and identified for purposes of preservation, study, exhibition, and interpretation.

Condition Report: A report documenting an object's physical status at a particular time.

Deaccession: The process, formally approved by the museum's governing authority, of permanently removing an object from the museum's collections. All deaccessions must be documented in the collection records.

Designate: An individual who has been assigned/appointed to a certain task by the Board of Directors

Donation: any material acquired by the museum as a gift. Any donor voluntarily transfers ownership of a material without any expectation of material benefit from the transaction. Donated material can include objects for the collections, financial gifts, or supplies and services required for the museum's operations. Donations can be made as bequests, where material is transferred to the museum under the terms of a will.

Fieldwork/Field Collecting: The practice of gathering objects from their native environment for the museum's collections. Field collecting brings artifacts and specimens to the museum's collection as a result of research and exploration undertaken by museum staff.

Gift Agreement: A signed, dated document that records the legal transfer of title. It may be referred to as a deed of gift or donation agreement. It includes a brief description of the object and a statement that the rightful owner gives up all rights and title to the object. The museum retains a signed gift agreement as proof of its legal ownership of the donation. A copy of the agreement is returned to the donor.

Loan: a term that describes objects temporarily released from the museum's collections to another organization, or temporarily borrowed by the museum from an individual or organization. Loans do not involve any change in ownership.

Loan Agreement: A legal, written contract between a lender and a borrower that should be completed for every loan, whether incoming or outgoing. The *loan agreement* specifies the object(s), and outlines the conditions of the loan and the responsibilities of each party.

Object: An artifact, specimen or work of art held in a museum collection.

Programming: A broad term that encompasses all efforts the museum makes to identify and serve its audiences. Programming generally includes three areas of museum work: public programs, exhibitions, and publications. Trustees and staff are accountable to the public for the manner in which these activities are planned, carried out, and evaluated.

Purchase: An acquisition made by the museum where an object is obtained in return for a price. The legal documentation of a purchased acquisition is the bill of sale which, along with other documentation relating to the purchase, should be retained with the collection records.

Record: A document or other permanent format used to provide evidence or an account of facts; a form on which information is recorded in an organized manner.

Record keeping: the various methods of recording and organizing information about objects in the collections. Record-keeping procedures are governed by conventions and standards that extend throughout the museum community.

Risk management: The process of analyzing and preventing possible hazards and the loss or consequences which would result from them. Examples of risks for museums include fire, flood, theft, vandalism, and accidents. For effective risk management, each hazard must first be identified, its possible consequences quantified, and then the most appropriate means of production or prevention selected.