

**Collections Management Policy  
Aberdeen Museum of History (AMH)**

**Interim Policy  
February 28, 2024**

**I. Authority**

The Standing Committee shall have the authority to temporarily accept material and objects to AMH collections. These may be acquired by gift, bequest, temporary loan, exchange or abandonment. No materials or objects shall be knowingly or willfully accepted or acquired which are known to have been illegally imported or collected. Final inclusion in the AMH collection will be authorized by Aberdeen City Council.

**II. Criteria**

Collection materials need to meet the following tests:

- A. Present owner must have clear title.
- B. AMH must be in a position to properly care for the proposed acquisition.
- C. Significance and relevance of the material or objects to Aberdeen or Grays Harbor must be determined and documented as to provenance, in so far as possible.
- D. Acquisitions must, except for compelling reasons which are approved by the Board, be free from donor imposed restrictions.
- E. Deed of gift must be signed and filled out as completely as possible. An original copy will be filed.
- F. All new acquisitions shall be entered in the Past Perfect system.

**III. Appraisals & Authentication**

- A. No staff member shall offer appraisals of the monetary value of materials or objects to donors, or reveal insurance value, for the purpose of establishing fair market value of objects offered to the AMH. Donors wishing a tax deduction must obtain an independent appraisal.
- B. Staff may attempt to attribute, identify or authenticate items, free of charge; as time permits.

**IV. Conflict of Interest**

- A. All persons involved with collecting or approving items to be added to the collection shall have on file a record of their personal collection.
- B. These individuals should avoid the appearance and reality of collecting items in competition with the AMH.
- C. Personal collections should not be brought to the AMH and shall not enter collection storage areas. The only exception is if the items are part of a documented loan for the purpose of display or research.

D. If a person has an opportunity to obtain an object which corresponds to the AMH mission, it should first be offered to the AMH. Only if declined, can it be obtained by the involved individual.

E. In all activities, staff must make clear whether they are speaking for AMH in their professional association or as individuals.

## **V. Deaccession Policy**

A. Definition of Deaccession – the process of removing permanently from the collection accessioned museum objects and library materials. The process shall be cautious, deliberate and scrupulous. Periodic evaluation of the collection will be undertaken in order to identify and eliminate items duplicated or inappropriate to the mission of AMH.

B. Criteria – Objects to be considered for deaccession must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. Object or material is outside the scope of AMH; items do not relate to Aberdeen or Grays Harbor history.
2. Object or material lacks physical integrity (incomplete or damaged) or has deteriorated beyond repair.
3. The object or material is an unneeded duplicate.
4. AMH is unable to preserve it properly.
5. Object or material presents a hazard or danger to the facility or staff.
6. Object or material, although listed in the records, has not been found in inventory of the collection and has been missing for more than 2 years (after the initial inventory of AMH collection has been completed).

C. Restrictions

1. Before any material or object is recommended for deaccessioning reasonable efforts shall be made to ascertain that AMH has legal rights to do so.
2. All deaccessions shall be approved by Board.

D. Procedures

1. After determining an item meets deaccessioning criteria, the Parks Director or his/her designee will complete the Deaccession Form and submit it to the Standing Committee for presentation to the City Council for determination. Parks Director or his/her designee will include any information relating to the collection itself, donor, heirs, or prospective recipients which might affect the deaccessioning process.
2. Staff may determine the value of an item if able to do so through research and consultation. If the material appears to have a value over \$1000, then an appraisal shall be obtained.
3. If the material has not been documented previously, then photographs or photocopies should be completed before disposition. (Representative samples are sufficient in the case of voluminous paper or photograph.)

E. Ethics of Sale

1. Objects and material from the AMH collection shall not be given, sold or otherwise transferred publicly or privately to employees, officers, board members or their immediate families or representatives.

2. Methods of disposal will be standard and not determined for each case by the nature, value, and provenance of an item. Methods include: sale, exchange, and transfer to another institution, public auction, destruction, or repatriation (that is, return to donor or heirs).

## **VI. Care & Security of Collection**

A. AMH Staff & Board shall have a professional, ethical and legal responsibility to provide reasonable care of material and objects entrusted to them.

B. To protect the collection from theft or vandalism, AMH staff will continue to improve its procedures, as well as, security consciousness among staff and volunteers.

C. Material on loan to or from other institutions will be reviewed on at least an annual basis and loan documents updated.

## **VII. Documentation**

A. AMH staff shall create and maintain detailed records of the collection owned by AMH including: accession, deaccession, cataloging, condition reporting, storage, loan exhibition and inventory in a professional manner.

B. Description catalog information, which assigns unique numbers to specific items, or groups of manuscript items, shall be created in a timely manner following acquisition. Materials will be marked with their identification numbers and storage location recorded. Donor records and correspondence will be maintained.

C. As of the adoption of this policy, the records and cataloging from earlier accession is sorely lacking. Staff will continue to work to inventory and catalog existing collection and enhance records with photographs and location information, as possible. All new acquisitions shall meet new standards and also be entered in the Past Perfect system in a timely manner.

D. Selective inventories of the Past Perfect collection records by Collections Committee to check the accuracy of records and condition of the collection will be instituted.

## **VIII. Loans**

A. Outgoing – AMH can loan materials to other institutions under the following criteria:

1. Each loan and specific conditions will be approved by the Standing Committee for short term (six months), minor loans, longer term loans and major items for City Council approval.
2. Items will not be loaned to individuals or businesses except under unusual Board/Parks Director approved conditions.
3. Outgoing loan agreement between AMH and borrowing institution is required.
4. Loan will be for a particular period of time. The AMH can recall a loan for good cause at any time.

B. Incoming – Loans must be reviewed by the Director and approved by the City Council.

1. Loans will be accepted for a specified period of time. Value of the loaned item will be determined by the donor and will be recorded on the Loan Agreement. Donor will retain any desired insurance.

2. Due to shortage of space and liability, AMH will not store items not on display, nor will they store items for other institutions or individuals.
3. AMH will not clean, mark or repair loan material without written permission of the owner.
4. If the owner cannot be located or refuses to accept the return of material or item, the loan will be considered abandoned property, subject to the procedures of RCW 63.26.
5. Loaned items will not be reproduced in any manner without written permission of the owner.

## **IX. Temporary Custody/ Unclaimed Property**

A. Items deposited with the AMH for consideration for addition to the collection will be insured by the owner.

B. Value of the item shall be determined by the owner and recorded.

C. Items will remain in temporary custody for no longer than 60 days by which time the AMH Staff will send the owner written notice of disposition. If the item is not being added to the collection the owner must reclaim it within 60 days. Items not claimed by the owner within 60 days after notification is mailed, will be considered abandoned property subject to RCW 63.26.

D. Following steps in RCW 63.26, staff will attempt to either return loans to the original lender or heirs or convert them to a gift.

## **X. Access to Records / Collection**

A. Any publication, exhibition or lecture which utilizes records or research material from AMH collection must credit the AMH collection.

B. AMH will receive a complimentary copy of any publication or video/film that either describes or reproduces any material from the collection.

C. Collection objects, images or other material not on public display may not be photographed other than for cataloging purposes within the AMH records process without written advance permission of the Director.

D. Material on exhibit may be photographed for personal use only.

## **XI. Standing Committee**

The Standing Committee shall consist of five people that include an Aberdeen City Council member, two members of the Friends of the Aberdeen Museum, and two at large members including, but not limited to, members of the Friends of the Museum. Appointments to that committee shall be made by the Mayor as he/she sees fit and subsequently approved by the City Council. All accessions and deaccessions are to be evaluated by the Standing Committee for presentation to the City Council for approval. The committee is charged with adjusting the interim policy to incorporate different levels of scrutiny and authorization for artifacts and any other changes deemed necessary to improve the eventual permanent policy. Any and all changes to the interim policy and the eventual permanent policy are subject to City Council action, review and approval. The interim policy shall be used as a beginning document to lead the City Council to a permanent Collections Management Policy.