



## **Collections Management Policy**

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### I. Statement of Purpose and Mission Statement

The Blairstown Museum was founded on July 1, 2015. The State of New Jersey formally incorporated the Blairstown Museum on September 16, 2016, "to acquire, collect, research, document, protect, preserve, exhibit and promote the unique history and heritage of the Township of Blairstown, New Jersey for the benefit of residents and visitors."

This statement of purpose continues to guide the Blairstown Museum.

### II. Purpose of the Collections Management Policy

This Collections Management Policy (the "Policy"), is intended to document the policies that guide the development and care of the Museum's collection consistent with the mission of the Museum and with professional museum standards. Detailed procedures implementing this policy are distributed annually and accessible to all committee members upon request.

Through this Collections Management Policy, the Museum ensures that:

- its collections are accounted for by annual inventory and documented in the collections management database;



- its collections are protected, secure, cared for, and preserved;
- acquisition, deaccessioning, and loans of artifacts in the collections are conducted in a manner that conforms to the Museum's mission, complies with applicable law, and reflects the highest ethical standards;
- disposal of artifacts from the collection through sale, exchange, or other means is solely for the advancement of the Museum's mission;
- access to the collections in the museum, galleries, and traveling exhibits, and access to collection information is permitted and appropriately regulated; and
- collection-related activities promote the public good rather than individual financial gain.

### III. Duties of the Board of Trustees

#### A. Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees has the following powers with respect to the collection:

1. The power to accept or decline gifts or bequests of artifacts is vested in the Board of Trustees. (Article IX, Museum By-Laws).
2. The power to deaccession artifacts for sale, exchange, or other means of disposal irrespective of market value is vested in the Board of Trustees upon the recommendation of the Collections Management Committee. The Board of Trustees must approve the deaccessioning of any artifact with a current market value in excess of \$1,000. (Section VI below.)
3. The Board of Trustees must approve all loans of Class One objects as well as most loans outside the United States and Canada. (Section X below).

#### B. Collections Management Committee

The Collections Management Committee has the following powers with respect to the collection:

1. The committee shall be responsible for reviewing potential acquisitions and deaccessions, proper care and documentation of accessioned items, and regular assessment of preservation and conservation needs.
2. The committee shall be responsible for maintaining current exhibits and creating new exhibits and may recommend to the Board of Trustees that an ad hoc committee be established for specific exhibits.



3. The committee shall provide for and oversee public access to the collections. Proper procedures shall be followed for removal and return of exhibit items, such that the location of each item is known at all times.

#### IV. Acquisitions

##### A. General Principles

The curator should propose exceptional artifacts for acquisition to the collection that significantly further the Museum's stated mission. All artifacts should be in, or capable of being returned to, an acceptable state of preservation, unless the deteriorated physical condition is integral to the meaning of the artifact. The Museum must be able to display, store, and care for the proposed acquisition according to generally accepted museum practices.

The Museum is committed to the principle that all collecting be done according to the highest standards of ethical and professional practice.

##### B. Purchase Procedures

For all purchases, the curator recommending the artifact to be purchased writes a detailed report, including a description of the artifact, its condition, publication history, importance to the Museum's collection, justification for acceptance, provenance, intentions for display (and/or storage) and publication and the gift or fund against which the purchase will be charged.

Currently, the Collections Management Committee has established the following limits for purchases of artifacts:

- a. *Purchases \$100 and under:* Purchases of single artifacts up to and including \$100 may be made on the authority of the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee alone.
- b. *Purchases from \$100 through \$500:* Purchases of single artifacts \$100 but up to and including \$500 may be made by the committee with the prior approval of the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee.
- c. *Purchases from \$500 through \$1,000:* Purchases of single artifacts over \$500 but up to and including \$1,000 may be made by the committee with prior approval of the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee and the Board of Trustees.



d. *Purchases over \$1,000*: All purchases of single artifacts over \$1,000 must be approved by the Board of Trustees.

#### C. Procedures for Accepting Gifts or Bequests

For all gifts and bequests, the curator recommending acceptance writes a report, including a description of the artifact, its condition, history, importance to the Museum's collection, justification for acceptance, provenance and intentions for display (and/or storage) and publication.

The Chairman of the Collections Management Committee must examine all proposed gifts or bequests and sign this report. The Chairman of the Collections Management Committee then reports the gift to the Board of Trustees, which decides whether to accept or decline the gift.

The Museum generally does not accept restrictions on gifts; any exceptions require approval by the Board of Trustees.

The Chairman of the Collections Management Committee has the authority to accept gifts during the period after the December meeting of the Board of Trustees through December 31. These gifts are referred to as "Year-End Gifts" and reported to the Board of Trustees at its January meeting.

The Museum requires donors to transfer all rights of reproduction unless the donor does not own such rights. In such cases, the Museum will seek a nonexclusive right of reproduction from the copyright owner.

#### D. Provenance Guidelines

##### 1. Guidelines for all Acquisitions

###### a. Inquiry and Research

For all acquisitions, the Museum shall make an effort to obtain from sellers and donors all available information and accurate written documentation with respect to the ownership, exhibition, and publication history of the artifact.

###### b. Publication and Display



For significant acquisitions (above \$1,000) and any acquisition of archaeological material, the Museum shall publish an image (or representative images in the case of large groups of objects) and relevant provenance information online and display the acquisition as soon as practicable.

#### c. Legal Considerations

Museum acquisitions must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal U.S. laws, most notably those governing ownership and import of artifacts, such as the National Stolen Property Act (NSPA), the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act (CCPIA), sanctions enforced by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Since the status of artifacts under foreign law may bear on its legal status under U.S. law, the Museum shall review relevant foreign laws before making an acquisition.

#### d. Warranty and Indemnification

When purchasing artifacts, the Museum will seek representations and warranties from the seller that the seller has valid title and that the artifact is free from any liens, claims and encumbrances. The Museum will also seek indemnification for a full refund for the artifact in the event of any breach of warranty. These requirements apply to all purchases of \$500 or more and to other purchases as appropriate in the judgment of the curator.

### V. Staff Policies Related to Acquisitions

#### A. Appraisals

It has been the Museum's longstanding policy not to provide appraisals to donors. Under current IRS guidelines, the Museum cannot act as a qualified appraiser because of the inherent conflict with its role as a donee. If a donor asks for assistance in locating an appropriate appraiser, the curator may suggest several qualified appraisers, including auction houses. More than one name must be given. The Museum should not make arrangements for the appraisal and cannot pay for the appraisal. Upon request, the Museum should provide the appraiser with access to the artifact, images of the artifact or any appropriate relevant factual information in Museum files.

#### B. Personal Collecting by Staff



The Museum recognizes that its staff members may and do collect artifacts for their personal enjoyment. The Museum's staff members, and in particular those closely associated with the Museum's curatorial functions, occupy a position of trust in this regard, however, and must exercise care to assure that no conflict of interest can arise between themselves and the Museum.

A staff member who learns of an artifact available for purchase that is reasonably likely to be of interest to the Museum for its collection is expected to place the interests of the Museum ahead of his or her own in acquiring the object. Accordingly, in all such cases, the staff member shall bring the availability of the object to the attention of the curator; or if the staff member is the curator, to the attention of the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee; or if the staff member is the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee, to the attention of the Board of Trustees, in order to give the Museum the first opportunity to acquire the object. If this is impossible, as for example when the staff member learns of an object under circumstances in which it must be purchased immediately or not at all, the staff member is expected, if successful in acquiring the object, to give the Museum the opportunity to acquire the object within a reasonable time (not to exceed two months) from the staff member at cost.

Similarly, if a staff member desires to sell from his or her personal collection an object that is reasonably likely to be of interest to the Museum for its collection, the staff member is expected to give the Museum the first opportunity to purchase the object within a reasonable time at whatever price the staff member believes to be its then fair market value. The Museum will take whatever steps it deems appropriate to determine the fairness of the price proposed. If the Museum declines to purchase at the price proposed, the staff member may not thereafter sell or exchange the object (except at public auction) to a third party for a lower price unless the Museum has declined to purchase it at such lower price.

Each staff member is expected to exercise reasonable judgment in determining whether the scope of his or her personal collection and/or collecting activities is such that the matter should be discussed with the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee. Unless personal collecting activities are minimal, they should be discussed as indicated.

#### C. Dealing in Artifacts by Staff



A staff member may not act as a dealer in purchasing or selling artifacts, nor may a staff member use his or her influence at the Museum for personal gain in the artifact market. A staff member may not accept any payment from any collector, dealer, or institution, except in cases where prior permission in writing to accept such commission or stipend has been given by the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee. The Chairman of the Collections Management Committee may accept any such commission or stipend for themselves only with prior written permission from the Board of Trustees.

#### D. Gifts to Staff

A staff member must obtain the written consent of his or her department head prior to accepting any gift from a person engaged in a Museum-related activity, such as, but not limited to, a dealer, trustee, donor, collector, or supplier of goods or services to the Museum. If the gift is an artifact that is of the type and quality the Museum collects, consent must also be obtained from the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee. In general, the only gifts which would be appropriate for staff to accept are those of nominal value (\$150 or less). Gifts of cash are never appropriate. Requests for exceptions to this policy must be submitted to the Board of Trustees in writing. Staff members are also prohibited from owing money to or borrowing money from any dealer, trustee, donor, collector, or supplier of goods or services to the Museum, except in the context of standard business agreements with financial services entities.

#### VI. Deaccessioning

##### A. General Principles

The term "deaccession" means that an artifact is removed from the collection and considered for disposal by sale, exchange or other means. Any deaccession of an artifact should be solely for the advancement of the Museum's mission. The criteria for determining whether an object should be deaccessioned include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The artifact does not further the mission of the Museum.
2. The artifact is redundant or is a duplicate and is not necessary for research or study purposes.
3. The artifact is of lesser quality than other objects of the same type in the collection or about to be acquired.
4. The artifact lacks sufficient aesthetic merit or historical importance to warrant retention.



5. The Museum is ordered to return an object to its original and rightful owner by a court of law; the Museum determines that another entity is the rightful owner of the object; or the Museum determines that the return of the object is in the best interest of the Museum.

6. The Museum is unable to conserve the object in a responsible manner.

7. The artifact is unduly difficult or impossible to care for or store properly.

The Museum may deaccession but generally does not dispose of artifacts determined to be forgeries. The curator generally retains these artifacts for study purposes or seeks the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee permission to destroy the objects; unless it can be determined that disposal can be accomplished in a responsible manner without confusion to a possible buyer. Artifacts incorrectly attributed or dated may be deaccessioned, provided that the new information or attribution is provided.

No Trustee, Officer, employee, volunteer or family member of such individuals may purchase deaccessioned artifacts directly from the Museum or at auction if consigned by the Museum unless prior written permission from the Board of Trustees is obtained.

#### B. Guidelines for Deaccessioning Gifts

The Museum shall honor all legal restrictions attaching to the gift or bequest of any artifact. In addition, donor requests which do not impose any legal obligation accompanying the bequest or gift of any artifact be respected to the extent feasible, unless modified by the donor, or if the donor is not living, the donor's heirs or legal representatives. Before proceeding to recommend that a donated artifact be deaccessioned, the curator first reviews the records of gift to confirm that the gift is unrestricted.

In addition, no artifact acquired by the Museum through gift or bequest valued by the Museum at \$10,000 or more will be disposed of within 10 years following its receipt if objected to, after appropriate notice, by the donor or the donor's heirs or representatives.

#### VII. Care of the Collections

The Museum is first and foremost a repository of artifacts, and its mission requires the care of artifacts in its collection. The Museum shall conserve artifacts in accordance with the highest standards. The Museum shall provide a safe and appropriate environment for the collections,



with effective security and environmental control, for the benefit of present and future generations. The Museum shall maintain a Collections Emergency Plan. The Museum's conservation standards shall be maintained for artifacts on loan to the Museum or borrowed from the Museum.

The Museum is charged with the long-term care of the collection and shall maintain exact documentation on all examination and treatment. The Museum recognizes the importance of scientific research in the examination and analysis of artifacts in its collection. The Museum's Board of Trustees share responsibility for the technical examination of the Museum's collection and for the development of long-term preventative methods and conservation strategies.

#### VIII. Records and Inventories

The Museum, through its Collections Management Committee, shall maintain accurate, up-to-date records on the identification, location and condition of all objects in the collection, as well as of ongoing activities such as exhibitions, loans, research and correspondence with donors, and scholars. These records should be recorded in the Museum's collections management database. Any original paper files regarding the acquisition of objects should also be retained. The Collections Management Committee maintains coherent, organized records on accessioned, non-accessioned and deaccessioned artifacts, departmental loans, exhibition loans, and artifacts brought into the Museum for possible purchase or gift. The Collections Management Committee is responsible for updating and maintaining records for their collections and for administering rights to ensure limited and appropriate access to confidential records.

All records created or received in the transaction of the Museum's proper business are the property of the Museum and must not be dispersed or destroyed except in accordance with its record retention policy.

The Museum shall make available to qualified researchers and scholars materials relating to the collections unless they are confidential or would suffer physical harm if handled.

It is the responsibility of the Collections Management Committee to make weekly inspections of its galleries and exhibition cases. The Collections Management Committee shall make an



inventory of the contents of its galleries, exhibition cases, and storerooms at least once during every calendar year; although in instances when the collection exceeds 1,000 artifacts inventories may be organized in two-year to five-year cycles. Exceptions must be approved by the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee. These inventories must be submitted in writing to the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee annually, who shall report the findings to the Board of Trustees. Every calendar year, the Collections Management Committee shall carry out an inventory of a limited number of artifacts and an inventory of all artifacts in off-site storage facilities and report his or her findings to the Collections Management Committee. The inventory is subject to review by the Board of Trustees.

#### IX. Access to the Collection

It is fundamental to the Museum's mission to provide access to the Museum's collection and promote appreciation of its significance.

Among the primary means for achieving this goal is the presentation of exhibitions of its own artifacts and those borrowed from other owners. The Museum shall provide additional access to its collections through study rooms and loans to other institutions. The Museum shall support continuing scholarly investigation and research in order to document, publish, and advance understanding of the Museum's collections as well as contribute to broader academic and public discourses.

The Museum shall support and encourage awareness and understanding of artifacts by disseminating information through the development of publications, programs, and its website for a variety of audiences ranging from children to adult audiences and scholars. These will draw upon its collection and research as primary sources for stimulating aesthetic engagement and promoting familiarity with artifacts in its historical, cultural, and material contexts.

#### X. Outgoing Loans

As an important means of fulfilling educational and scholarly purposes, the Museum lends artifacts from its collection to qualified institutions, in this country and abroad. The Museum wishes to cooperate with as many qualified institutions as possible to share its encyclopedic collection with the widest possible public, both general and scholarly. Loan requests must be



evaluated in light of the historical and scholarly value of the exhibition for which they are requested, as well as the condition of the object and the need for it to remain at the Museum.

All loan requests shall be initially reviewed by the Collections Management Committee. The Chairman of the Collections Management Committee and curator must review and approve all outgoing loan requests. The curator must be satisfied that the artifact will be properly cared for and protected adequately from fire, theft, mishandling, insects, and from extremes of light, temperature and humidity. The borrower must provide a facilities report meeting the Museum's standards and the curator shall conduct a physical inspection of the borrower's premises.

Approval for loans must be obtained in accordance with the system of classification established in loan resolutions by the Board of Trustees. Upon receipt, all artifacts to be accessioned must be classified by the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee as follows:

Class One: Artifacts which, because of their unique character, great importance, size, fragility or the nature of their installation, should only be lent in exceptional circumstances, if at all.

Class Two: Important artifacts often on exhibition or objects whose inherent nature prohibits frequent lending.

Class Three: All other objects.

The Board of Trustees must approve all loans of Class One objects, all loans outside of the continental United States and Canada, loans exceeding thirty-days, loans to governmental or quasi-governmental locations, and loans to dealers (see below). Such loans must be first approved in writing by the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee who shall in turn submit the request to the Board of Trustees.

The written approval of the Chairman of the Collections Management Committee is required for all loans of Class Two or Class Three objects within the continental United States and Canada. All such loans of Class Two or Class Three objects shall be reported to the next meeting of the Board of Trustees.



All loans should be for a specific period of time (normally not to exceed ninety-days) and may be recalled upon thirty days' written notice to the borrower (or immediately if the Museum's review of the borrower discloses unsatisfactory conditions or continuation of the loan is placing an undue administrative burden on the Museum). The object's condition should be documented and monitored in accordance with the detailed procedures approved by the Museum. All borrowers (with the exception of Tenants-in-Common) must agree in writing to the Museum's Conditions for Outgoing Loans (contained in the Borrower's Agreement) prior to shipment of the loan, and the Borrower's Agreement must be signed by both parties. No object shall leave the Museum unless adequate insurance coverage is provided by the Museum or, if authorized by the Board of Trustees, the borrower or through a governmental indemnity program. For all loans to countries that provide immunity from seizure, this protection must be secured by the borrower unless an exception is approved by the Board of Trustees. Long-term loans are subject to periodic review by the curator; the borrower must submit an inventory report to the Museum every thirty-days.

On an exceptional basis, loans may be made to dealers for scholarly examination or special scholarly exhibitions. Such loans are subject to the approvals required for other loans.

Loans may be made to individuals in two cases. First, if there was a specific agreement with the donor of the object allowing such a privilege at a time when the tax laws permitted such arrangements, a loan may be authorized. Second, the Museum may make loans of artifacts jointly owned with an individual (the Tenant-in-Common with the Museum) to that individual. Such loans are subject to the approvals required for other loans.

All exceptions to the Museum's loan policy must be approved by the Board of Trustees.

#### XI. Effective Date

This Policy shall be effective immediately upon approval by the Board of Trustees and shall supersede all prior policies on the topics addressed herein.

Last updated: 09/01/16