

# Essential Policies and Procedures for Collecting Organizations

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# The Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts (CCAHA)

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- Housing, framing, and digital imaging
- Preservation Services Office Outreach



# Why Policies and Procedures?

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- ❖ **Support Standards / Best Practices**
- ❖ **Formalize**
- ❖ **Consistency**
- ❖ **Guidance**
- ❖ **Assign Responsibility**



# SAA Code of Ethics for Archivists

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“...Archives are created by a wide array of groups and provide evidence of the full range of human experience. Archivists endeavor to ensure that those materials entrusted to their care will be **accessible** over time as evidence of human activity and social organization. Archivists embrace principles that foster the **transparency** of their actions and that inspire confidence in the profession. A distinct body of ethical norms helps archivists navigate the complex situations and issues that can arise in the course of their work...”

<http://archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics>

# International Council of Museum (ICOM) Code of Ethics

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## Collections Care:

“The museum should establish and apply policies to ensure that its collections (both permanent and temporary) and associated information, properly recorded, are available for current use and will be passed on to future generations in as good and safe a condition as practicable, having regard to current knowledge and resources.”

# Policy or Procedure?

Concept	Policy	Procedure
<b>Principles</b>	General guidelines that regulate the institution's activities	Detailed method for performing an action
	Standard for exercising good judgment	Steps for implementing a standard as a professional practice
	Guidelines for decision-making	Protocol to follow when implementing the policy
<b>Functions</b>	Who, what, why	How
	Rule, standard, philosophy, guideline	Instruction, protocol, steps

# Policy or Procedure?

Concept	Policy	Procedure
Purpose	Broad philosophical statement; justification for decisions	Succinct directions for accomplishing a specific task
	What the rule is; why the rule exists; justification for the rule	Action steps necessary for implementing the rule
Scope and Content	When it applies	Conditions for action and alternatives
	Whom it covers	Procedural function. If this then
	How to get help or interpretation	Instruction, protocol, steps, Direction
	Responsibility and Enforcement	Warnings; consequences

# Getting Started

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- ❖ Assemble policy teams
- ❖ Determine necessary policies
- ❖ Review literature and samples







## Collections Management Policy

# Collections Management Policy

What is a Collections Management Policy (CMP)?

**A series of policies that govern what a museum does to grow and care for their collections and make them available to the public.**

Includes:

- ❖ Mission Statement/  
Statement of Purpose
- ❖ Acquisition and  
Accession
- ❖ Deaccession and  
Disposal
- ❖ Documentation
- ❖ Loans and Temporary  
Custody
- ❖ Collections Care
- ❖ Access and Use
- ❖ Risk management
- ❖ Intellectual Property
- ❖ Ethics

# Collections Management Policy

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## Purpose:

Articulates professional standards

Serves as a guide for staff

Describes the relationship among the organization and its collections, its authorities and staff, and the outside world

Provides legal and ethical framework

# Collections Management Policy

## 6 Basic Principles

- ❖ All acquisitions are properly documented
- ❖ Collections are inventoried and monitored regularly
- ❖ Collections are stabilized for long term storage and housed in a proper environment
- ❖ Collection storage environment is monitored regularly
- ❖ Each specific collection element is put in a specific place
- ❖ All collection related activities and monitoring are documented

Simmons, John E. 2006. *Things Great and Small*

# Introductory Sections

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- ❖ Mission Statement
- ❖ Purpose
- ❖ Scope of Collections
- ❖ Vision
- ❖ History
- ❖ Stewardship

# Mission Statement

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A mission statement should:

**Communicate identity**

**Define the purpose of the institution**

**State the audience**

**Role and responsibility of the institution**



# Mission Statement: Musical Box Society International

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The mission of the Society is to:

- ❖ Foster a genuine public interest in the collection, restoration, preservation and creation of automatic music instruments.
- ❖ Publish information about automatic music instruments.
- ❖ Cooperate with individuals and other organizations in exhibiting automatic music for the education of the general public.
- ❖ Collect and preserve for posterity examples of automatic music instruments and historical and current information about automatic music including books, pamphlets, catalogs, manuscripts, films, tapes and other recordings and make such information accessible to museums, educational institutions, students and collectors.
- ❖ Disseminate information regarding the mechanism and the repair of automatic music instruments.

For purposes of this statement, automatic music instruments include musical boxes (instruments which play music via the plucking of teeth on a tuned steel comb through various mechanisms); musical automata; orchestrions; player and reproducing pianos and organs; phonographs; and self-playing stringed, wind, and percussion instruments of any kind.

# Short Mission Statements

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“The purpose of our museum is to preserve for public benefit the natural, historical, and artistic heritage of our region.”

“The purpose of our institution is to increase understanding and appreciation of the particular heritage of our (ethnic, racial, or religious) group.”

“The purpose of our institution is to elucidate the history of our community from the time of original inhabitants to the present.”

- *Taken from George, Gerald and Cindy Sherrell-Leo, Starting Right: A Basic Guide to Museum Planning.*

“The New York State Archives leads efforts, on behalf of all New Yorkers, to manage, preserve, ensure open access to, and promote the wide use of, records that support information needs and document the history, governments, events and peoples of our State.”

“The objectives of the Dryden Town Historical Society shall be the discovery, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge about the history of the Town of Dryden in the State of New York.”

- *Real world examples*



# Introductory Sections

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## Statement of Purpose

Describes the mission of the institution

Summarizes the goals of the collections management policy

“This Collections Management Policy is intended as a public statement of the principles and procedures which underpin all aspects of collection care. The policy provides guidelines for the HMRC’s archival collections-related activities, insuring that these activities meet high professional standards. The HMRC collections policy is a public statement of HMRC’s commitment to care for and manage its collections properly.”

- Houston Metropolitan Research Center

# Introductory Sections

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## Scope of Collections

**GEOGRAPHY** – regional area of interest.

**SUBJECT** – subject area of interest.

**TIME** – chronological period of interest.

**THEME** – subject related themes (e.g. voting rights, medical developments, community history) that cut across time and geography.

**USE** – intended use of collections; it is generally accepted that collection material will not be collected if it will not be used.

# Introductory Sections

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## Statement of Authority

Who is responsible for making collections management decisions

Who is responsible for implementing collections-related policies

Names the individual or groups involved

Summarizes their roles regarding the collections

# Introductory Sections

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## Statement of Authority

### Howland Stone Store Museum (excerpt)

#### II. Collections Committee

##### Committee Charge/Purpose

The Collections Committee will monitor the Collections Committee Policy including the scope and emphasis of current collections:

1. monitor collection care, storage, cataloging, use and maintenance;
2. work with the Board of Trustees on de-accessioning inappropriate items;
3. make recommendations to the Board of Trustees on any special collections management issues;
4. recommend expenditures related to oversight of the collection. ....

[http://www.howlandstonestore.org/HSSM\\_Collections\\_Management\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.howlandstonestore.org/HSSM_Collections_Management_Policy.pdf)



# Acquisition & Accessions

# Acquisition

n. ~ Materials received by a repository as a unit; an accession.

- v. ~ 2. To take legal and physical custody of a group of records or other materials and formally document their receipt. - 3. To document the transfer of records.

n. ~ 1. Materials physically and legally transferred to a repository as a unit at a single time; an acquisition.

- v. ~ 2. To take legal and physical custody of a group of records or other materials and to formally document their receipt.

- SAA Glossary

# Accession

# Acquisition Policy

- ❖ Guides staff and persons interested in donating their records or papers
- ❖ Outlines conditions or terms that affect the acquisition or materials
- ❖ Defines who makes acquisition decisions
- ❖ States collections categories

# Acquisition Policy

## **Acquisitions may be made by:**

- ❖ Gift
- ❖ Bequest
- ❖ Purchase
- ❖ Field collections
- ❖ Conversion/Found in collections
- ❖ Transfer from within the institution



# Acquisition Policy

## The Mint Museum

**Internal collections:** Internal collections will be added to the Mint Museum Archives by means of deposits according to the organization's established records management program. The records management system for the museum facilitates the management of active records and the transfer of inactive ones to the Archives. Retention and disposition schedules created for each department clarify the record keeping responsibilities and ensure that valuable records are saved and outdated files with no archival value are routinely destroyed or discarded. Standards were developed in collaboration with museum staff and legal counsel in order to accommodate the administrative needs of each department and the fiscal and legal obligations of the museum. The records management process is reviewed every two years.

**External collections:** External collections may be added to the Mint Museum Archives by means of gift, purchase, bequest, promised gift, exchange, or abandonment, and are initially approved by the Archivist, in consultation with the Librarian and appropriate museum staff. Every potential acquisition of archival material will undergo rigorous scrutiny, with close consideration given to the following guidelines...

# Deed of Gift

“An agreement transferring title to property without an exchange of monetary compensation.”

- *SAA Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*

- ❖ This is a legal document
- ❖ Owner needs to have legal title
- ❖ Copyright information
- ❖ Clarify any restrictions
- ❖ Institution requirements and rights

# Accession Policy

- ❖ Formal process used to legally accept an object and to record it as part of a collection
- ❖ Creation of a permanent record
- ❖ Includes everything acquired at the same time from the same source
- ❖ Calls for a unique, identifying control number to be assigned to an object, marked on the object (if possible) and used in all documentation
- ❖ Outlines how the institution obtains custody, right or title

# Accession Policy

## Accession Number

“A number or code assigned to uniquely identify a group of records or materials acquired by a repository and used to line the materials to associated records.”

A wooden board with a 6x6 grid of numbers. The numbers are arranged in a 6x6 grid, with each cell containing a single digit. The numbers are: Row 1: 28, 4, 3, 31, 35, 10; Row 2: 36, 18, 21, 24, 11, 1; Row 3: 7, 23, 12, 17, 22, 30; Row 4: 8, 13, 26, 19, 16, 29; Row 5: 5, 20, 15, 14, 25, 32; Row 6: 27, 33, 34, 6, 2, 9.

28	4	3	31	35	10
36	18	21	24	11	1
7	23	12	17	22	30
8	13	26	19	16	29
5	20	15	14	25	32
27	33	34	6	2	9



## Deaccession & Disposal

# Deaccession & Disposal

## **Acceptable reasons to deaccession**

- ❖ Change in collections scope
- ❖ Unable to provide proper care
- ❖ New information regarding provenance or title
- ❖ Determined to be a fake or forgery

# Deaccession & Disposal

## **Responsibilities and Basic Procedures**

- ❖ Board or collections committee approval
- ❖ Outline clear title
- ❖ Remove accession numbers
- ❖ Retention of deaccession number

# Deaccession & Disposal

Methods of disposing of deaccessioned collections materials:

- ❖ Educational, study or use collections
- ❖ Exhibition prop
- ❖ Transfer to another institution
- ❖ Sale
- ❖ Physical destruction





## Deaccession & Disposal

“ Proceeds from the sale of nonliving collections are to be used consistent with the established standards of the institution's discipline, but in no event shall they be used for anything other than acquisition or direct care of collections.”

*AAM Code of Ethics for Museums*

# Abandoned Property

<http://www2.archivists.org/groups/acquisitions-appraisal-section/abandoned-property-project>

*South Carolina Code of Laws, SECTION 27-45-10 to 27-45-100*

The object has been at the institution for at least 10 years.

- ❖ Publication in a “legal newspaper of general circulation” in the county of the last known owner OR the county of the organization.
- ❖ If no response after 65 days, republish.
- ❖ If no claim after the second published notice, “title to the property vests in the museum or [historical] society, free from all claims of the owner and of all persons claiming through or under him.

# Loan Policy

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## Incoming Loans

- Why materials may be borrowed
- Acceptable uses for borrowed materials
- Who may request materials to borrow
- Length of time materials may be borrowed
- Emergency conservation of damaged borrowed materials
- Packing, transportation and insurance
- Loan documentation

## Outgoing Loans

- To whom the institution will make loans
- Acceptable purposes for loaned materials
- Who is responsible for approving and monitoring outgoing loans
- Length of loan
- Emergency conservation of damaged loaned materials
- Packing, transportation and insurance
- Restricting some collections materials from all loans
- Loan documentation
- Requirements of borrower



## Collections Care

# Collections Care

## Purpose of Policy

- ❖ Establishes minimum standards for collections storage and exhibition environments
- ❖ Establishes a system of preventive conservation for collection
- ❖ Establishes intervals for collection inventories
- ❖ Allows for allocation of resources

## Components

- Staff responsibility
- Preventive conservation
- Handling
- Conservation treatment
- Packing and shipping
- Storage environments
- Pest control
- Off-site storage
- Collections inventories

# Inventory

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- ❖ Transmittal inventory – An inventory of a gift or loan being transmitted to the museum
- ❖ Time-based (i.e. annual or seasonal) inventory
- ❖ Random sample or spot inventory
- ❖ Section inventory or inventory of one collection, one physical area, or one exhibit
- ❖ Complete wall-to-wall inventory

*This is a bit different from a collection survey – in which you might be determining preservation needs, processing priorities, reformatting priorities, etc.*





# Housekeeping Policy

## Purpose:

- ❖ To inspect condition and housing of historic material.
- ❖ To control or remove dust, soil, cobwebs, dead insects and other debris.
- ❖ To maintain clean floors, ceilings, walls, windows, and woodwork surfaces.
- ❖ To identify and report current or potential problems and damage. Corrective action can be taken before problem worsens or has damaging effects on collections or the building.

## Procedure:

- ❖ Select a single room or area to clean.
- ❖ Inspect all surfaces and all historic objects.
- ❖ Plan housekeeping tasks, movement of objects, and equipment needed.
- ❖ Clean and put away equipment and supplies.

Courtesy **Fairfax County Park Authority Resource Management Division:**  
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/collections/HousekeepingManual.pdf>

# Handling Guidelines

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- ❖ Who may handle collections materials
- ❖ Necessary training
- ❖ What materials may be used around collections
- ❖ To use or not to use gloves
- ❖ Transportation and moving collection material
- ❖ Mounts for transport/use
- ❖ When materials will be restricted



**PLEASE  
WASH YOUR  
HANDS**



# Collections Development Policy

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# Collections Development Policy

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## Conceptual framework

- How collections support the institutional mission, interpretation, exhibitions, and programming.

## Strengths

- Core areas that you will continue to collect

## Gaps

- Mission-driven areas that are underrepresented

# Collections Development Policy

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## Needs

- Specify what you'd like to add to the collections

## Limits and Overlaps

- What won't be collected

## Collecting Philosophy

- Obtaining the materials in your needs

## Resources

- Space, finances, staffing

## Formats

# Resources

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Buck, Rebecca A. and Jean Allman Gilmore, ***Collections Conundrums: Solving Collections Management Mysteries***. Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2007.

Reibel, Daniel B., ***Registration Methods for the Small Museum***, Fourth Edition, Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press, 2008.

Simmons, John E., ***Things Great and Small, Collections Management Policies, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition***. Washington, DC: American Alliance of Museums, 2017.

Ohio Connecting to Collections Model Preservation Policies

<http://www.ohiomemory.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16007coll7>

Society of Georgia Archivists, Forms Forum

<https://soga.wildapricot.org/resource/forms>



CONSERVATION  
CENTER

*for Art & Historic Artifacts*

# *Questions?*

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