Module 12: Collections Management
Components of a Collections Management Policy

Mission statement
• Tells the public who you are and what you do

Scope of collections
• A statement which defines the objects you collect

Statement of ethics
• Shows the public that the museum values ethics and outlines acceptable actions

Acquisition
• Outlines the museum's rules on accepting objects to the collection

Deaccession
• How does the museum handle objects that will be removed from the collection?

Loans
• Outlines the museum's incoming and outgoing loan policies

Conservation/care
• Informs the reader on how the museum cares for its collection

Records and inventory
• Outlines the museum's procedures for record keeping and inventory
• Not detailed, leave this for the Procedures Manual

Access
• States who may have access to the collection and under what terms

Insurance
• Lists what type of policy the museum has
• Do not list amounts or policy numbers -- the CMP is a public document

Reproduction and copyright
• States copyright law and how the museum manages copyright issues

Compliance with state and federal laws
• Section stating the museum compliance with any applicable laws, including NAGPRA
Public disclosure
  • Brief statement supporting disclosure of the policy to the public

Policy authorization
  • States who authorized and approved the policy, what date

These are basic components but not an exhaustive list. See examples from other institutions when starting your draft.
Sample Collections Management Policy

Anywhere Museum Collections Management Policy

Mission Statement of the
Anywhere Museum

The mission of the Anywhere Museum is to establish a museum as a means to preserve and interpret the history of and the surrounding vicinities.

The purpose of the Anywhere Museum Collection Management Policy is to set forth the policies, procedures, guidelines and documentation for the Anywhere Museum Collection and to be in compliance with the highest standards of the museum profession.

I. Mission

The mission of the Museum Collection Department is to collect, preserve and interpret the history of the community.

II. Purpose

The Anywhere Museum Collection will include printed materials such as histories, directories, letters and diaries; illustrative objects including photographs, relic, maps, programs and the like; three dimensional objects illustrative of life, condition, events and activities of the past and present. The collection will be acquired by donation of objects or money.

III. Definitions

A. OBJECT: For the purpose of this policy, object is defined to include any artifact in the Anywhere Museum Collection.

B. ACQUISITION: The act of discovering, preliminarily evaluating, negotiating for, taking custody of, and documenting legal title to an object given by gift, bequest, purchase or conversion; discovering, negotiating for, recording information about borrowed objects. The mission statement and purpose of the Anywhere Museum Collection Policies shall be used to determine the acquisition of an object. Objects acquired by the museum may be used for the permanent collection, educational project, hands-on collection, library, research, transferred to another 501c3 entity, or sold as deemed appropriate by the Museum Collection Coordinator in consultation with the Executive Director.
C. REGISTRATION: The process of developing and maintaining an immediate, brief, and permanent means of identifying an object for which the institution has permanently or temporarily assumed responsibility. Registration has four aspects:

1. Accessioning: The act of recording/processing an addition to the permanent collection by assigning a unique number and compiling a file with all pertinent information.

2. Deaccessioning: The formal change in recorded status of an object. Criteria for deaccessioning include: not within scope or mission; beyond capability of museum to maintain; not useful for research, exhibition or educational program in foreseeable future; duplicate; poor or inauthentic example; physically deteriorated/hazardous material; originally acquired illegally or unethically; subject to legislative mandate; subject to contractual donor restrictions which can no longer be met. Upon reviewing written justification, the Board of Directors must approve the deaccession by a two-thirds majority vote. No deaccessioned item may be conveyed in any manner to a member of the Board, a member of the Collections Committee, or to any other office of trust or honor in the Society.

3. Lending/Borrowing: The process of contracting for the borrowing or lending, for temporary periods not to exceed three months, under terms of a loan agreement outlining respective responsibilities. If a loan requires a courier, the courier shall be a member of the Anywhere Museum staff or someone approved by the staff. Any cost incurred as a result of using a courier will be the responsibility of the borrower and shall be agreed to in writing before the loan is approved.

4. Inventorying: The process of locating and listing accessioned, loaned or borrowed objects to be done comprehensively every five (5) years, annually by specified location and/or object type and on spot check basis as needed.

E. MUSEUM REGISTRAR: The Museum Registrar is the person in charge of the museum's collection system, accepting the object, acknowledging the receipt of such object, and maintaining all records. There will be a Museum Collection Committee chaired by the Museum Registrar.

F. LOANS: The body of objects loaned or otherwise in the Society's possession for which the Society is legally responsible but is not part of the permanent collection for a period not to exceed three months, under terms of a written legal agreement outlining respective responsibilities.
G. OTHER PROPERTY: The following property owned by the society is not part of the museum permanent collection:

1. All real estate, including buildings and site improvements.
2. Equipment, supplies, and furnishings used in the day-to-day operations of the society. If, with the passing of time, these objects fulfill the collecting criteria of the society, they may be duly accessioned.
3. Library Collection
4. Education Collection
5. Hands-on Collection
6. Reference Materials

H. PERSONAL PROPERTY: Personally owned tools, books, equipment, etc., used in the day to day operations of the museum are not the responsibility of the Anywhere Museum.

I. APPRAISAL: Valuation of a property by the estimate of an authorized person. No staff member nor volunteer of the Anywhere Museum may appraise donated items nor become involved in arranging for an appraisal of donated items per IRS regulations. Signing a donee's acknowledgment of a donor's tax statement neither endorses nor validates the stated value.

Neither an employee, a volunteer, member of the Board, nor any other person associated with the Anywhere Museum shall be involved in activities which would financially benefit the individual or the individual's interests, professional or personal, as a result of the individual's position with the Anywhere Museum.

There will be review of the Anywhere Museum Collection Management Policy every three years or when necessary. With the Board of Directors approval, this document will be the museum collection policy.

The Museum Registrar will report monthly on all acquisitions to be accessioned for the Board's approval. At the monthly society board meeting, the coordinator will keep the board up-to-date on the state of the collection.

In pursuance of these policies, the museum collection department submits this document to the Board of Directors of the Anywhere Museum.

Adopted by the Board of Directors on this _____ day of ____________,

Executive Director    ____________  Board President ____________