



Collections Management Policies

Carbon County Museum

Approved by CCM Board of Directors on 5/23/2019

1. Introduction

The Carbon County Museum (hereafter CCM) is a public institution located in Rawlins, Wyoming. It is overseen by a 5-member Board of Directors that reports to the Carbon County Board of Commissioners. It was founded in 1940 by the Reverend Hugh Fulton and was located in the county courthouse until 1975, when it moved to its current location on Walnut Street. In 2013, Carbon County purchased the Hugus-Ferguson building on Cedar Street in anticipation of the Museum eventually moving to that site.

These Collections Management Policies are intended to outline museum best practices for the care, management, and use of the CCM's physical and intellectual collections in order to achieve the Museum's mission as well as provide a guide for future decisions regarding the collections.

2. Mission Statement

The mission of the CCM is to preserve and interpret the rich history of Carbon County and the diversity of its communities to inspire an appreciation of the past, and to spark curiosity about the future.

3. Authority and Collections Functions

3.1. Statements of Authority

3.1.1. The CCM is governed by the Carbon County Board of Commissioners and the CCM Board of Directors.

3.1.2. The CCM collections staff consists of the Director, Senior Registrar, and Assistant Registrar. They have been empowered by the Board with the authority to make all decisions regarding acquisitions, accessions, registration procedures, deaccessions, and disposal (section 4). Other staff such as the Curator and the Education and Outreach Coordinator may be asked to consult on these decisions. Board approval of a decision is required where specified.

3.1.3. The Educational Collection is not subject to the authority defined in the previous section, and instead falls under the control of the Education and Outreach Coordinator. (See section 3.3.5)

3.2. Scope of Collections

3.2.1. The CCM was founded in 1940 in order to preserve artifacts and archival materials owned and/or created by prominent local citizens. As of the end of 2018, the collections consist of approximately 30,000 individual objects resulting from approximately 1,600 accessions. The collections management was nonprofessional in nature for much of the Museum's early existence, particularly before its relocation from the county courthouse to the Walnut Street building. This has had a dramatic impact on the Museum's collecting history. Grant funding allowed for a complete inventory of the Museum's collections between 2010 and 2013.

3.2.2. The CCM seeks to collect artifacts and archival materials in fair to excellent condition that have a direct tie to the history of Carbon County and its residents. This includes:

- Unusual or unique artifacts owned by residents of Carbon County, particularly those artifacts for which definitive provenance exists;
- Photographs, business correspondence, and personal correspondence of residents of Carbon County;
- Identifiable artifacts from historic buildings and historic sites in Carbon County, such as signs, or images of said buildings and sites;
- Identifiable artifacts from and images of historic businesses in Carbon County.

3.2.3. The CCM does not collect:

- Artifacts or archival materials that are not directly related to the history of Carbon County or its residents;
- Artifacts possibly owned by residents of Carbon County but for which no definitive provenance exists;
- Artifacts or archival materials that present the Museum with unreasonable requirements for physical care or storage;
- Artifacts or archival materials which would raise ethical questions of possession for the Museum.

3.2.4. Objects that fall with the collecting scope but are in poor condition should be evaluated to determine whether they can still contribute to the Museum's mission. Objects that do not fall into the collecting scope should not be accepted or accessioned into the collections. Objects currently in the collections that do not fall into one or more of the collecting categories (section 3.2.2) should be considered for deaccession (section 4.5).

3.3. Categories of Collections

Section removed; internal use only.

3.4. Ethics

The CCM endorses and follows the codes of ethics created by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and the International Council of Museums (ICOM). These can be referenced in Appendix A.

3.5. Documentation

3.5.1. All activities involving collections should be thoroughly documented and produce either a physical report or a digital record. Wherever possible, physical reports should either be scanned or be transferred to a digital record. For preservation and security purposes, digital records should be backed up to an external memory device on a regular basis. Activities requiring documentation include, but are not limited to: acquisition, accession, research, environmental monitoring, pest management, object movement or relocation, publishing or reproduction, and deaccession or disposal. (See section 4.2)

3.5.2. All documentation, regardless of format, should be written in clear, simple prose wherever possible. It should also be legible and as comprehensive as possible.

3.6. Risk Management

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3.7. Intellectual Property

3.7.1. The CCM assumes possession of clear title on all artifacts in its collections, unless the objects are on loan to the Museum. Materials created or installed by Museum staff in their capacity as employees of the CCM are considered the property of the Museum, including but not limited to exhibit materials and digital scans or images of artifacts and archival materials. A select number of the CCM's archival materials are unpublished writings and photographic images for which copyright has been transferred to the Museum. Permission to reproduce or publish images of artifacts or archival materials for which the Museum holds copyright is defined using a Permission to Publish Contract (section 4.2.7) and the associated fee schedule for use.

3.7.2. The majority of the CCM's archival materials are published material for which the CCM does not own the copyright. Museum staff will take reasonable precautions to identify and document these rights so that they are not infringed, exercise due diligence in informing researchers and licensees of use restrictions on all copied materials, and provide appropriate credit information for such materials as necessary. The Fair Use provisions of federal copyright law should be followed so as not to unduly restrict the use of materials. Museum staff, at their discretion, may choose to reduce or waive use or licensing fees for usages related to the Museum's mission, such as educational use.

4. Collections Management

4.1. Collections Plan

4.1.1. Section removed; internal use only.

4.1.2. Strengths of the collections:

- Textiles—period clothes, quilts, furs
- Pioneer/early furniture
- Native American objects
- Saddles
- Maps
- Industrial and commercial tools
- Pioneer personal effects—combs, jewelry, watches, dishes, dolls

Any donations of objects belonging to the above categories may be accepted, but should be carefully examined to determine whether they fill a gap in the Museum's collection. Duplicates of objects already held by the Museum should not be accepted unless the condition of the potential donation surpasses that of the equivalent object currently held by the Museum.

4.1.3. Weaknesses of the collections:

- Artifacts owned by Carbon County residents who are members of underrepresented populations
- Pioneer diaries, memoirs, or historic firsthand accounts
- Oral histories of Carbon County residents
- Quality artwork depicting Carbon County or artwork by Carbon County residents
- Music and musical recordings by Carbon County residents

Any donations of objects belonging to the above categories should be seriously considered. If Museum staff is aware of privately held objects belonging to the above categories, they should consider encouraging the owner to donate or bequest the objects to the Museum.

4.2. Documentation

The CCM utilizes the collections management system PastPerfect, which has replaced many of the manual procedures for managing and tracking collections. However, some documents still exist in physical format and must be kept and appropriately filed. All documents potentially necessary for each collections task are listed below, regardless of format. Current copies of paper documentation marked with an asterisk (*) can be found in Appendix C.

4.2.1. Acquisition—*Potential Donation Form, *Deed of Gift, Deed of Gift (On-Going), *Permanent Receipt

4.2.2. Accession—PastPerfect accession record, PastPerfect object record

- 4.2.3. Research—*Research Request Form, copy fee schedule
- 4.2.4. Environmental monitoring—*Temperature-Humidity Tracking form
- 4.2.5. Pest management—*Pest Control Monitoring form
- 4.2.6. Object movement or relocation—*Object Transfer Form, PastPerfect object record
- 4.2.7. Publishing or reproduction—*Permission to Publish Contract, publishing fee schedule, copy of published material (provided by user)
- 4.2.8. Deaccession—*Object Deaccession Form, PastPerfect deaccession record

4.3. Acquisition

- 4.3.1. The CCM may acquire artifacts and archival materials through donation, bequest, purchase, or transfer. Donation is the most preferable. The CCM may request documentation demonstrating proof of legal ownership by the donor, if necessary. Acquisition procedure is located in a separate document.
- 4.3.2. It is the preference of the CCM to only accept donated artifacts and archival materials given without restrictions or conditions. Only under extraordinary circumstances may the CCM accept artifacts and archival materials given with restrictions or conditions, and only on the recommendation of the collections staff (section 3.1.2) and the approval of at least two (2) members of the Board.
- 4.3.3. The CCM does not accept objects on a permanent loan basis. It does not guarantee that donated objects will be exhibited, permanently retained, or preserved in their current state.
- 4.3.4. Frontline staff may not accept walk-in donations on behalf of collections staff. Potential donors must fill out a Potential Donation Form (see Appendix C) so that collections staff may contact them about the object(s) they wish to donate. The Museum will not assume the cost of returning unwanted objects to the donor. Abandoned objects will be disposed of accordingly (section 4.5).
- 4.3.5. Collections staff are responsible for inspecting and researching potential acquisitions to determine whether the object(s) fit the institutional collections scope (section 3.2). Care should be taken to ensure that acquisitions do not duplicate objects already present in the collections.
- 4.3.6. Authority to approve acquisitions lies with collections staff, provided that the acquisition does not require more than the standard financial investment and storage space. Acquisitions that would require beyond the standard financial investment, such as objects in need of immediate conservation, or that would require excessive storage space, must be approved by at least two (2) members of the Board.
- 4.3.7. The CCM requires receipts for all acquisitions, regardless of type. Refer to Section 4.2 for acquisition documentation.

4.3.8. If collections staff makes the decision to decline a potential acquisition, the donor should be given the reason for the denial and offered alternative actions. Possible alternatives include: keeping the object(s) in the family, referring the donor to a more appropriate institution, selling the object(s), or offering the object(s) to another charitable organization. Depending on the type and condition of the object(s), disposal may also be suggested.

4.4. Accession and Registration

4.4.1. Regardless of acquisition type, all artifacts and archival materials acquired by the Museum must be formally accessioned, which means that the acquisition itself and the acquired object(s) must be recorded in the Museum's collection management system. Accessioning procedure is located in a separate document.

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4.4.3. Section removed; internal use only.

4.4.4. Section removed; internal use only.

4.4.5. Any and all physical documentation should be scanned and/or filed, as required by accessioning procedure.

4.4.6. Any and all additional actions taken regarding the accession or the object(s) should also be documented. (See section 4.2)

4.5. Deaccession and Disposal

4.5.1. Artifacts or archival materials that do not contribute to the mission and goals of the CCM should be considered liabilities and therefore subject to potential deaccession, the formal procedure by which objects are permanently removed from the Museum's collections. Disposal is the physical aspect of removing the object(s), whether by transfer, sale, or destruction. Deaccession and disposal procedures are located in a separate document.

4.5.2. Understanding that the Museum holds its collections in public trust, deaccessioning should be a careful, deliberate process. It is done in order to maintain the quality and safety of the Museum's collections, make the best use of available space, and best serve the public interest.

4.5.3. An object can be considered for deaccession for one or more of the following reasons:

- The object falls outside the institutional collections scope (section 3.2);
- The object is a duplicate of other items already in the collection, particularly if those other items are in better condition;
- The object is in poor condition, is deteriorated, or has inherent flaws that make it unsuitable for exhibition or research;
- The object is or has become beyond the Museum's ability to preserve or store;

- The object or its contents are deemed hazardous to visitors, staff, or other objects;
 - Removal of the object is mandated by local, state or federal law.
- 4.5.4. Only collections staff may select objects for deaccession. Other staff may recommend objects for deaccession, subject to a decision by collections staff. The list of objects referred for deaccession must be presented to the Board for approval. Only approved items may be disposed of, in the manner recommended by the Object Deaccession Form. All documentation for deaccessioned objects is retained as part of the object's record.
- 4.5.5. Deaccessioned objects may be disposed of in one of the following ways:
- Internal transfer to the Educational Collection;
 - External transfer to another cultural institution;
 - Returned to the donor at the donor's expense (only objects of significant material or intrinsic value will be offered back to the donor);
 - Auctioned or sold through a public service or public market outside Carbon County;
 - Sent for destruction (in the case of objects that are in poor condition or hazardous).
- 4.5.6. No deaccessioned object will be sold in the Museum gift shop, nor sold directly or given to any Museum employee, member of the Board, or member of the county governing authority. Proceeds from the sale of any deaccessioned object will be used for direct care of the collections.

4.6. Appraisals and identifications

- 4.6.1. The CCM does not provide, and will not pay for, appraisals for tax purposes or as a service for visitors.
- 4.6.2. It is the responsibility of a donor to determine whether their donation is tax deductible under IRS regulations. If a donor intends to claim a donation for tax purposes, they must 1) have a qualified appraisal of the objects performed prior to the donation to the Museum, and 2) inform the Museum of their intent and provide the Museum with a copy of the appraisal or a detailed list of objects being claimed. At the request of a donor, the Museum will acknowledge receipt of the claimed objects on IRS Form 8283.
- 4.6.3. The CCM will not file tax paperwork on behalf of a donor, nor provide a list of objects for tax purposes unless the donor previously provided one to the Museum.

5. Collections Care

5.1. Preservation

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5.2. Security

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5.3. Inventory

5.3.1. A complete inventory of the CCM's collections was performed from 2010 to 2013, including reconciling paper documentation and updating corresponding digital records.

5.3.2. Collections should be inventoried on a rotating basis, such that collections staff will have completed a full inventory of all Museum collections every five (5) years. It is understood that a full inventory will be undertaken as part of any future building/renovation plans.

5.4. Access and Use

5.4.1. **Public access**

Less than ten percent (10%) of the CCM's permanent collections are on display at any given time. Efforts should be taken to rotate objects on display in order to limit the exposure of any single object and allow visitors to view and interact with a larger percentage of the collections. The majority of objects on display are in protective cases, behind rope barriers, or marked with "Do not touch" signs. In general, only collections staff is permitted to directly handle artifacts and archival materials. Other staff may handle objects with the permission of collections staff. Photography for personal use is permitted in most areas of the Museum, except where marked by signs. The sale of images of Museum objects, exhibits, or activities is strictly prohibited unless the photographer has filled out the appropriate documents (section 4.2.7) and paid the required fees. Video recording of Museum objects or exhibits is strictly prohibited.

The Educational Collection (section 3.3.5) is designed to provide direct public access to historical objects and encourage informal learning, and is thus exempt from the restrictions listed in this section.

5.4.2. **Professional use**

Professional researchers may be permitted to access artifacts, archival materials, and certain collections information with the permission of collections staff.

Requests for access are determined on a case-by-case basis, and staff time and the use of Museum resources are documented (section 4.2.3). Reproduction or publication of Museum resources is strictly prohibited unless the researcher has filled out the appropriate documents (section 4.2.7) and paid the required fees.

5.4.3. **Non-professional use**

Informal researchers may be permitted to access artifacts and archival materials with the permission of collections staff. Requests for access are determined on a case-by-case basis, and staff time and the use of Museum resources are

documented (section 4.2.3). Reproduction or publication of Museum resources is strictly prohibited unless the researcher has filled out the appropriate documents (section 4.2.7) and paid the required fees.

5.4.4. Commercial use

Commercial use of photographic images or video recordings of Museum objects, exhibits, or activities must be negotiated prior to photography or filming. The appropriate contract must be filled out (section 4.2.7) and the required fees paid prior to photography or filming.

5.5. Loans

5.5.1. Incoming

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5.5.2. Outgoing

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5.6. Objects in Custody

5.6.1. Objects being stored in the Museum that are not the property of the Museum, such as loans and potential donations, will receive the same consideration and treatment as all other artifacts and archival materials. However, the Museum is not liable for the objects unless an official document, such as a loan contract, stipulates such liability.

5.6.2. Objects found in the collections that lack an identification number are subject to Wyoming Statute 34.23 “Museums—Loaned Property”. Objects without identification numbers were given temporary numbers during the 2010-2013 inventory project and are subject to this statute.

6. Policy Review and Revision

In order to keep up with museum best practices and to maintain the collection in the best manner, these Collections Management Policies should be reviewed every three (3) years, at the beginning of the fiscal year. However, any member of the collections staff may recommend changes to the policies at any time, subject to review and approval by the Board.

These policies were reviewed and approved by the CCM Board of Directors on 5/23/2019.

The next scheduled review will begin in June 2022.

Appendix A: Codes of Ethics

ICOM (International Council of Museums) Code of Ethics for Museums

<https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOM-code-En-web.pdf>

AAM (American Alliance of Museums) Code of Ethics for Museums

<https://www.aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices/code-of-ethics-for-museums/>

Appendix B: Sources and References

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Appendix C: Documentation

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