

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF  
STATE HISTORY MUSEUMS**

**COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY**

**Revised 3/15/2024**

## **Table of Contents**

- I. Mission Statement
- II. Purpose of the Collections Management Policy
- III. Scope of Collections
- IV. Acquisitions
- V. Deaccessions
- VI. Loans
- VII. Access to the Collection
- VIII. Appraisals
- IX. Insurance and Risk Management
- X. Inventory
- XI. Recordkeeping and Documentation
- XII. Public Disclosure
- XIII. Care of Collections
- XIV. Integrated Pest Management
- XV. Policy Approval and Change

*The Division of State History Museums (also referred to as “the Division”) resides within the Office of Archives and History and as a subsection of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR).*

## **I. Mission Statement**

The Division of State History Museums collects and preserves artifacts and other historical materials relating to the history and heritage of North Carolina in a local, regional, national, and international context to assist people in understanding how the past influences the present. The Division interprets history through exhibitions, educational programs, and publications available to the visitor on site or through distance-learning technologies.

## **II. Purpose of the Collections Management Policy**

This Collections Management Policy document establishes policies for the management and care of the tangible collections owned and borrowed by the Division of State History Museums. The policy is intended to serve as instructions to the staff responsible for collections management and as general guidelines and information for interested members of the public.

### **A. Responsibilities**

The Division of State History Museums holds the responsibility to collect and preserve objects of historical and cultural value that help tell the stories of North Carolinians. According to approved museum practices, museums in the Division classify, accession, preserve, and, when feasible, exhibit such materials and make them available for study (N.C.G.S. § 121-7). Therefore, the Division has sole authority to accession gifts and loans of collections utilized by the Division. The Division’s flagship museum is the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh, with the following branches: the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum in Hatteras, the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort, the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Southport, the Mountain Gateway Museum and Heritage Center in Old Fort, the Museum of

the Albemarle in Elizabeth City, the Museum of the Cape Fear Historical Complex in Fayetteville, and the North Carolina Tobacco Farm Life Museum in Kenly.

#### **B. Code of Ethics**

In all matters dealing with the collection, the staff will ascribe to the standard ethics policies set forth by the American Association of Museums (AAM) and the American Institute for Conservation (AIC). Under no circumstances shall staff members use their positions for personal financial gain. Museum staff should strive to avoid situations in which there is a potential for a conflict of interest that may affect the quality of work, lead to the dissemination of false information, or give the appearance of impropriety. No staff member will appraise artifacts for any purpose. Division staff and their immediate families shall not acquire objects through the deaccessioning process.

### **III. Scope of Collections**

**A.** The permanent collections of the Division of State History Museums contain artifacts that reflect North Carolina's rich and diverse history. Artifacts are collected in the following general categories:

1. Agriculture and Industry
2. Community and Social History
3. Decorative Arts, Arts, and Household Furnishings
4. Military History
5. Political and Economic History
6. Sports and Leisure, Household Technologies, and Popular Culture
7. Textiles and Clothing

**B.** No expansion of the collections beyond what is outlined in III.A is permitted without the formal approval of the North Carolina Historical

Commission, DNCR's Acquisitions Committee, and the director and chief curator of the Division of State History Museums.

### C. Types of Collections

1. The *permanent collection* contains accessioned items that have been considered under the criteria established in the scope of collections above. These objects have been acquired by the museum for preservation, study, exhibition, and programming purposes in fulfillment of the Division's mission. The highest degree of care and documentation is given to the objects, and the greatest degree of accountability is attached to this collection. Only those objects deemed suitable for acquisition into the Division's permanent collection are accessioned, curated, and managed by the Collections Management Section.
2. The *non-accessioned collection*, composed of the education collection and the prop collection, contains materials that are not accessioned into the Division's permanent collection and have been designated for use in educational programs or exhibitions. The objects may be reproductions or historical pieces and do not meet the criteria established in the scope of collections. These collections are managed by the Education Section and the Exhibits Section.

## IV. Acquisitions

Collection-building activity is fundamental to the long-term success of the Division of State History Museums. Objects are considered for acquisition on the basis of various factors that include: use history showing a strong connection to North Carolina or North Carolinians; historical significance; clear attribution and provenance; condition and quality; rarity; prevention of duplication of items already in the collections; price; cost of conservation,

storage, and maintenance; restrictions of use; and potential for use in exhibitions, educational programming, publications, and research.

Objects may be added to the collection by means of gift, bequest, purchase, transfer, or any other transaction by which title to an object passes to the Division. All objects accepted into the collection become the Division's exclusive property and may be displayed, loaned, retained, or disposed of in the best interest of the Division and the public it serves. DNCR has the responsibility and authority to accept artifacts without limiting conditions as defined in N.C.G.S. § 121-7.

#### Archaeological Collections

The Division does not collect belowground artifacts; instead, the Office of State Archaeology assumes responsibility for such collections within DNCR. This includes precontact, ethnohistoric archaeological objects.

The Division carefully considers culturally sensitive materials, including objects whose treatments, custodianship, or use is a matter of concern to contemporary cultural groups. These groups, or individual members of these groups, are defined by their ability to demonstrate cultural affiliation or legal cultural standing.

#### Acquisitions Committees Structure

Approval to acquire artifacts for the Division collection ultimately lies with the North Carolina Historical Commission, as specified in N.C.G.S. § 121-7. Before the commission reviews the slate of artifacts for a vote at its quarterly meeting, two other committees must have approved the artifacts.

First, the Division's Acquisitions Committee reviews recommendations from the curators on potential artifact donations and purchases. This acquisitions committee is composed of the Division director, deputy director, budget officer, chief curator, and the collections manager. This committee examines

each artifact that is recommended for the collection before it votes on acceptance. Many artifacts that are offered to the Division are not accepted for various reasons, including duplication of similar artifacts already in the collection, unsuitability to the mission of the Division, or poor condition.

After approval by the Division's Acquisitions Committee, a list of artifacts recommended for the collection is forwarded to the DNCR Acquisitions Committee for review and recommendations. This agencywide committee consists of the deputy secretary of the Office of Archives and History and various staff from North Carolina Historic Sites and the Division. Upon approval by the DNCR Acquisitions Committee, the slate of artifacts is forwarded to the North Carolina Historical Commission for a vote.

All acquisitions shall be considered and voted on by these three acquisitions committees for disposition with careful deliberation and emphasis placed on the Division's commitment to preserve the state's heritage and provide the time, space, and money for the stewardship of the collections.

#### Nonroutine Gifts

If the Division's Acquisitions Committee does not reach a decision, or chooses not to, regarding a nonroutine gift, bequest, or purchase, the issue shall be referred to the DNCR Acquisitions Committee and possibly the North Carolina Historical Commission for a decision.

Definitions for nonroutine gifts, bequests, and purchases include the following:

1. The acquisition occupies a space, singly or grouped, exceeding 125 cubic feet (5 feet × 5 feet × 5 feet).
2. The acquisition comprises more than 50 artifacts.
3. The acquisition represents a new area of collecting for the Division.
4. Funds must be solicited from private sources for the purchase, storage, or transportation of the acquisition.

5. The value of the acquisition exceeds \$20,000.
6. There are potential problems or circumstances not enumerated above.

### Copyright

The Division seeks to secure exclusive or nonexclusive copyright license on all acquisitions. In general, the fair use doctrine of the 1976 Federal Copyright Act permits the Division to carry out its exhibition programs, even when the Division does not hold copyright or a nonexclusive license. Rights to reproduce objects in the collection are reviewed by staff on a case-by-case basis.

### Ownership Documentation

The Division shall ensure that a valid deed of gift is created to document the transfer of ownership for donated objects and that a valid bill of sale is secured for objects purchased by the Division. These documents shall fully describe the objects to which they pertain, record the precise conditions of transfer, convey title of ownership (including intellectual property rights, when possible) to the Division, and be signed by the donor/vendor and an authorized representative of the Division. The museum registrar shall keep all documentation related to objects as part of the permanent accession process.

Objects promised to the Division as future gifts or bequests will not be presented to the Division's Acquisitions Committee unless the intent of the donor is expressed in a written instrument that is irrevocable and binding.

## **V. Deaccessions**

Deaccessioning is the formal process of permanently removing an acquisition from the permanent collections of the Division. The purpose of deaccessioning an acquisition is to allow for the improvement of the overall quality of the collection. The deaccessioning process for artifacts is thorough and may be lengthy to discourage random or rash decisions. Curators generally initiate the process of deaccessioning. It is the responsibility of the



Collections Management staff to dispose of deaccessioned items based on recommendations of the curator.

All deaccessions shall be considered and voted on by the Division's Acquisitions Committee. From there, the proposed objects are reviewed by the DNCR Acquisitions Committee and the North Carolina Historical Commission, and they, in turn, vote whether to concur with the proposed deaccessioning.

Criteria for deaccessioning include the following:

1. The artifact is no longer relevant and useful to the mission of the Division.
2. The Division cannot preserve the artifact.
3. The artifact has deteriorated beyond usefulness.
4. There is a need or opportunity to upgrade the collection.
5. The object poses a hazard or risk to other objects in the collection or to staff.

Disposal:

1. Once deaccessioned, an artifact's disposition shall be agreed upon by the North Carolina Historical Commission based on the recommendation of the sponsoring curator, the chief curator, the collections manager, and the Division director. While choosing a means of disposal, the Division must preserve and promote scrupulous adherence to ethical standards as observed by the profession.
2. The greatest benefit to the Division should govern the means of disposal, as long as there is no compromise or appearance of compromise in ethical conduct.
3. Preferred methods of disposal are as follows:
  - A) Transfer to a state institution

- B) Gift to another public institution
- C) Sale through publicly advertised auction

Every effort should be made to identify and evaluate the various advantages and benefits available through different means of disposal.

4. Any proceeds realized from the sale of deaccessioned objects shall be deposited in the Office of Archives and History's artifact fund to the credit of the museum and shall be used only for the expenses associated with the purchase, maintenance, or conservation of other artifacts as specified in N.C.G.S. § 121-7.
5. As a last resort, materials with a condition that is too poor for transfer, gift, or sale may be disposed of in a sensitive manner.

*Authority: N.C.G.S. § 121-7*

## **VI. Loans**

Loans are temporary assignments of collection objects from the Division or temporary assignments of similar objects to the Division for stated purposes, such as exhibition and research. These assignments do not involve a change in ownership.

The Division cannot hope to acquire title to all objects it needs in its exhibits and interpretive programs. Therefore, the Division will accept, for a limited time, custody of objects belonging to others for the purpose of exhibition, examination, authentication, and research. The Division also recognizes that it owns objects that can benefit the programs and exhibitions of other museums or sites, and therefore, the Division will lend objects to other agencies whenever possible.

It is the policy of the Division not to loan objects to individuals for any reason. **Loans are made only to public, educational institutions with the ability to properly care for artifacts.** The registrar must be notified of all loans so that proper records can be maintained.

### **Incoming Loans**

For exhibitions, research, or other stated purposes, the Division will make arrangements with institutions or individuals for the loan of materials to the Division. All nonexhibit loans are subject to the approval of the Division's Acquisitions Committee. Incoming loans will be accepted for a period of no more than two years, renewable, and only for exhibition or research purposes. It is the policy of the Division not to accept indefinite/permanent loans.

### **Outgoing Loans**

For exhibitions, research, or other stated purposes, the Division will agree to arrangements with other like institutions for the loan of items from the Division's permanent collection. Loans of objects from the collection can be made only to public, educational institutions and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. All outgoing loans are subject to the approval of the Division's Acquisitions Committee. Outgoing loans will be made for a period of one year or less, with the option of renewal.

To qualify for a loan, the borrowing institution must supply an AAM Standard Facility Report, provide a certificate of insurance, agree to bear all costs of packing and transporting objects in a manner agreeable to the Division, and agree to protect the object in ways consistent with sound museum practice, subject to stipulations by the conservation staff. The borrowing institution must file a request for a loan with the Division no later than 180 days in advance. An outgoing loan agreement will accompany all loans originating from the Division and will be signed by both parties. **The Division's collection will not be loaned to individuals.**

Both incoming and outgoing loans are subject to the conditions listed on the respective loan forms.

*Authority: N.C.G.S. §§ 121-4(6), 121-7, 143B-62(2)a*

## **VII. Access to the Collection**

The collection is an educational resource and will be made available to the public for research, close inspection, and photography, under proper control, subject to the approval of the collections manager. Access to storage and conservation areas is limited to those who are accompanied by a collections staff member or those who are authorized by the collections manager. The size of the group may be limited at the discretion of the collections staff. Food, drinks, and tobacco usage, including vaping, are not permitted in collection storage or exhibit areas.

Visitors wishing to access the collection must request an appointment in advance of their visit and obtain approval from the chief curator or the collections manager. Access to the collection will be decided using the following criteria:

1. The individual should have knowledge of appropriate techniques for handling objects or be given this instruction by staff before handling objects.
2. The individual must comply with the general security precautions for the collection and the Division's collection procedures.
3. The individual must provide necessary equipment to complete his/her project and expect to work during the Division's regular weekday operating hours.
4. If the individual wants to photograph artifacts, authorization from a collections staff member is required even for private and personal use. Patrons who wish to use images in publications must follow all divisional credit guidelines and copyright laws.

Exceptions to these criteria must be resolved in advance of the visit and be approved by the collections manager. Visitors who have previously abused their status or caused damage to objects may be denied access to all collections.

Collection storage units and areas, offices, and records will be locked or protected from public access when no staff members are present.

### **Electronic Access**

The Division maintains a computer database of its collection records. Division employees have access at various levels. Certain sections (Collections Management and Curation) have full access with the ability to add and modify records. Other sections have only partial access for research purposes and cannot make changes to records.

The Division's collection database is available to the public online. The public can see only data necessary for basic research (agency, accession number, object name, artifact description, date made, maker, place made, dimensions, use history, associations, full classification, and credit line). Data that provides sensitive information, such as location and value, are not made visible to the public.

*Authority: N.C.G.S. §§ 121-4(2)(6)(9), 121-5, 121-7, 143B-62(2)a*

## **VIII. Appraisals**

There is an inherent conflict of interest if the Division, its employees, or its representatives appraise the monetary value of artifacts for the public.

Therefore, no employee will give appraisals for the purpose of establishing the fair market value of objects owned by another institution or individual or offered to the Division. Donors wishing to take an income-tax deduction must have an independent qualified appraisal made of the value of their gift.

If requested to suggest an independent appraiser, staff will provide information without any recommendations for or against a particular appraiser.

Division staff shall not appraise, identify, or otherwise authenticate objects under circumstances that could encourage or benefit illegal, unethical, or irresponsible traffic in such objects. Identification and authentication may be given for professional or educational purposes and in compliance with the legitimate requests of professional or governmental bodies or their agents.

As a service to the public, Division staff may attempt to identify or authenticate objects brought to the various divisional museums.

Identifications are done by appointment, and the individuals should take their possessions with them when they leave the divisional museum. At the discretion of the curator or collections manager, individuals may leave objects temporarily, but they must first read and sign a Temporary Receipt Form administered by the registrar. Objects are not covered by the Division's insurance policy unless a signed receipt is issued.

*Authority: N.C.G.S. §§ 121-4(6), 121-7, 143B-62(2)a*

## **IX. Insurance and Risk Management**

The Division recognizes that insurance is not the best risk-management method for providing the protection required for the Division's collection and records. The Division acknowledges that careful handling, security, proper environmental control, conservation, and good housekeeping provide the first lines of defense against loss or damage to the objects. Many of the Division's collection objects are one of a kind and irreplaceable, even if insurance is available. It is recognized that insurance can be used to acquire similar objects, and for this reason, the Division maintains insurance coverage on its collections.

**Insurance and Risk Management Protocols**

1. The Division will carry insurance to cover all objects in the collection.
2. The Division will maintain insurance coverage on loaned items not owned by the Division.
3. Objects and traveling exhibitions loaned by the Division to other institutions will be insured by those institutions in the amount on the loan agreement. A certificate of insurance will be required from the borrowing institution.
4. The Division will not be responsible for the loss or damage of unsolicited objects left at the museum temporarily.
5. The Division's collection is insured at full value while at other locations, in transit, and on loan, unless alternate insurance arrangements have been made.
6. Full insurance coverage is also provided for objects on loan from other institutions during transit and while located at the Division.
7. Any theft or damage to collections or loaned objects should be reported to the collections manager, chief curator, and Division director.
8. The Collections Management Section is responsible for securing appropriate insurance coverage of all objects at the Division. The staff ensures that ethical and fair valuations are maintained, ensures that loan agreements and signed receipts are on file to document coverage, and coordinates the settlement of insurance and tort claims.
9. The Collections Management Section, in conjunction with the Division's budget officer, maintains all records pertaining to insurance matters relating to the Division's collection.

The Division strives to limit risk to its collection and ensure that resources are available for recovery in the event of damage or loss. Insurance against damage or loss to the collection is an added consideration in the care of the collection, but it must not supersede its physical care.

*Authority: N.C.G.S. §§ 121-4(6), 121-7, 143B-62(2)a*

## **X. Inventory**

A full collection inventory (including off-site storage facilities and regional museums) will be conducted periodically. A digital record and a paper record copy will be produced and stored in a secure location. If feasible, a digital photograph will be taken of each object and stored with the database information. Collection storage areas are spot inventoried annually.

*Authority: N.C.G.S. §§ 121-4(6), 121-7, 143B-62(2)a*

## **XI. Recordkeeping and Documentation**

Division collections documentation will be maintained in the Collections Management Section by its staff. The records relevant to the Division's collection serve several purposes: 1) to document the legal status of an object; 2) to document the object's condition, movement, and care; and 3) to provide information that establishes the historic and cultural significance of an object as provided by the Division's curators.

The collection records consist of the following:

### **Temporary Receipt Log**

When an object is brought into the Division, it is assigned a temporary receipt number. The log is the official record of receipt, in numerical order, with the following information: receipt number, date, description of the object(s), person(s) leaving object(s), reason for leaving, location, and disposition.

### **Item History File**

When an object is given a receipt number, the Item History File is immediately created. The file will contain the original Temporary Receipt Form, copies of all



legal documents, and any information relating to the care, condition, conservation treatment, and history of the object. The Item History Files are kept in the records room in fireproof cabinets.

### **Accession Register**

Once an object has been accepted into the collection (i.e., approved by the North Carolina Historical Commission), and the ownership has been legally transferred (i.e., a deed of gift has been signed and returned, or a bill of sale has been executed), it is assigned an accession number. The register is the official record of the accession, in numerical order, with the following information: accession number, date, description of object, from whom the object was received, how the object is held, and location.

### **Legal File**

Once paperwork (e.g., deed of gift or loan form) has been signed and returned, a legal file is created. This file contains original copies of all legal documents. The legal files are kept in fireproof cabinets, separate from the Item History Files.

### **Computer Database**

Accession records, conservation records, and catalog records are kept in electronic and paper formats. The computer database is backed up regularly.

All records maintained by the Division of State History Museums are subject to the North Carolina Public Records Law (N.C.G.S. § 132).

*Authority: N.C.G.S. §§ 121-4(2)(6)(12), 121-5, 121-7, 143B-62(2)a*

## **XII. Public Disclosure**

Public records refer to all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, films, sound recordings, magnetic or other tapes, electronic data-processing records, artifacts, or other documentary material, regardless of physical form or

characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance in connection with the transaction of public business by any agency of North Carolina government or its subdivisions.

*Authority: N.C.G.S. § 132-1(a)*

### **Disclosure of Collections Records**

The public records and public information compiled by the agencies of North Carolina government or its subdivisions are the property of the people. Therefore, it is the policy of this state that the people may obtain copies of their public records and public information free or at minimal cost, unless otherwise specifically provided by law. “Minimal cost” shall mean the actual cost of reproducing the public record or public information.

*Authority: N.C.G.S. § 132-1(b)*

No person requesting to inspect and examine public records, or to obtain copies thereof, shall be required to disclose the purpose or motive for the request.

*Authority: N.C.G.S. § 132-6(b)*

## **XIII. Care of Collections**

The Collections Management Section shall provide, manage, determine access to, and oversee the care, safety, and preservation of the collection according to current and acceptable museum standards. Collections Management shall be consulted regarding factors that may impact the collection: environmental controls, surveillance and security systems, security, fire detection and suppression systems, and routine building maintenance.

Any Division staff working directly with the collection shall adhere to written guidelines or instructions provided by Collections Management.

The collections work areas, collections storage, and exhibit areas shall be monitored or inspected periodically, and problems or concerns shall be addressed.

To fulfill its mandate to preserve the artifacts in its collection, Collections Management will use accepted professional methods of conservation, adhering to written conservation policy and procedure outlined in the Collections Manual to preserve and stabilize objects in its custody. Tenets of these methods include the following:

1. No conservation work done to an object shall be irreversible.
2. Artifacts shall be protected as much as possible from potentially harmful conditions such as extremes of temperature and humidity, light, dirt, improper handling, fire, water, and insects.
3. Artifacts shall be housed and stored in appropriate environments, and accepted archival materials shall be utilized for their care.
4. Materials detrimental to the collection shall be restricted from collection areas and exhibitions.

## **XIV. Integrated Pest Management**

Collections Management utilizes a written Integrated Pest Management plan, which makes use of a low-toxicity pest control approach. It is a systematic, environmentally responsible, practical process involving identification, monitoring, control, and evaluation.

Collections Management works to prevent insect and destructive elements, such as mold or mildew, from damaging the collection and implements procedures and guidelines for pest management programs.

Collections Management areas will be inspected periodically for pests. Implemented pest control measures shall pose no harm to persons or the

collection. Collections Management should be consulted regarding contracted general or specific pest control measures implemented in the building.

To maintain a pest-free environment, infested or problematic artifacts will be isolated to prevent damage to the collection. Incoming artifacts shall be quarantined for examination and/or treatment before inclusion in the collection.

## **XV. Policy Approval and Change**

The North Carolina Historical Commission; deputy secretary of the Office of Archives and History, DNCR; and the director of the Division of State History Museums initially approved this Collections Management Policy document on October 30, 2008. It was revised and updated in 2024. Any suggested changes should be submitted in writing to the collections manager of the Division of State History Museums. The collections manager shall submit any suggested changes to the director of the Division for approval. No changes may be made without the written approval of the North Carolina Historical Commission; deputy secretary of the Office of Archives and History, DNCR; and the director of the Division of State History Museums.