



COLLECTIONS POLICY

1. Mission Statement

The Mobile Medical Museum preserves and exhibits medical artifacts and archives to commemorate Mobile's prominent place in the history of medical education and public health in the State of Alabama and the Gulf Coast. The Museum's collections and exhibitions provide the public with a broad understanding of the evolution of the art and science of health care.

2. Purpose of the Collections Management Policy

This Collections Management Policy establishes policies for the management and care of the tangible collections owned by the Mobile Medical Museum. The policy is intended to provide guidance to the Museum staff responsible for collections management and explain the focus and direction of the Museum's collections activities for interested members of the public.

3. Code of Ethics

In all matters dealing with the collection, the staff will ascribe to the standard ethics policies set forth by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (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. Staff of the Museum and their immediate families shall not acquire objects through the deaccessioning process.

4. Collections Committee

The Collections Committee is a standing advisory committee composed of volunteers, who serve renewable one-year terms. As outlined in the Bylaws:

- a. The purpose of the Collections Committee will be to advise and assist the Executive Director on matters related to the growth, maintenance, and security of the museum collection;
- b. Any Trustee, Advisor, or community volunteer may serve on the Collections Committee, with the approval of the Board of Trustees.

The Board and staff of the Museum shall not be bound by the recommendations of the Collections Committee.

5. Acquisitions

Collection-building activity is fundamental to the long-term success of the Mobile Medical Museum. Objects are considered for acquisition based on several factors, including: significance to medical history; physical condition; rarity; social and/or aesthetic value; attribution and provenance; size, volume, or quantity of the objects; 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 collections by means of gift, bequest, purchase, transfer, or any other transaction by which title to an object passes to the Mobile Medical Museum. All objects accepted into the collection become the Museum's exclusive property and may be displayed, loaned, retained, or disposed of in the best interest of the Museum and the public it serves. The Museum has the responsibility to accept artifacts without limiting conditions.

Approval to acquire artifacts for the Mobile Medical Museum collection ultimately lies with the Museum's Board of Trustees.

Whenever possible, the Executive Director will review potential donations and purchases of artifacts with the Collections Committee. Approval to acquire artifacts for the Mobile Medical Museum collection ultimately lies with the Museum's Board of Trustees. Many artifacts that are offered to the Museum are not accepted for various reasons, including duplication of similar artifacts already in the collection, unsuitability to the mission of the Museum, or poor condition.

The Mobile Medical Museum seeks to secure exclusive or non-exclusive copyright license on all acquisitions. Identifying copyright ownership often requires extensive research that the Museum undertakes as an activity of the acquisitions process.

In general, the fair use doctrine of the 1976 Federal Copyright Act permits the Museum to carry out its exhibition programs, even when the Museum does not hold copyright or a non-exclusive license. Unless the Museum can document that it owns copyright, the Museum cannot grant rights to reproduce objects in the collection for any purpose. The acquisition of copyright is handled by the Executive Director's office when transfer documents are signed for new acquisitions.

The Mobile Medical Museum shall ensure that a valid deed of gift is created to document

transfer of ownership for objects donated and that a valid bill of sale is secured for objects purchased. 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 Museum, and be signed by the donor/vendor and the Executive Director. The Museum shall keep all documentation related to objects as part of the permanent accession. Objects promised to the Museum as future gifts or bequests will not be presented to the Board of Trustees unless the intent of the donor is expressed in a written instrument that is irrevocable and binding.

6. Deaccessions

Deaccessioning is the formal process of permanently removing an acquisition from the collections of the Mobile Medical Museum. The purpose of deaccessioning an acquisition is to allow for improvement of the overall quality of the collection. The deaccessioning process for artifacts is lengthy and prevents random or rash decisions.

The Executive Director will seek the input and assistance of the Collections Committee throughout the process of deaccessioning. All deaccessions shall be considered and voted on by the Board of Trustees. Removal of the deaccessioned items shall be the responsibility of the Executive Director.

An object shall be considered for deaccessioning when one or more of the following criteria are met:

- a) The artifact is no longer relevant and useful to the mission of the Mobile Medical Museum;
- b) The Museum cannot preserve the artifact;
- c) The artifact has deteriorated beyond usefulness.
- d) There is a need or opportunity to upgrade the collection;
- e) The object poses a hazard or risk to other objects in the collection or to staff.

Disposal

- a) Once an object has been deaccessioned, the means of its disposal shall be determined by the Executive Director. In choosing a means of disposal, the Museum must preserve and promote scrupulous adherence to ethical standards as observed by the profession.
- b) The greatest benefit to the Museum should govern the means of disposal, as long as there is no compromise or appearance of compromise in ethical conduct.
- c) Preferred methods of disposal are: transfer or exchange with another public institution or sale through a publicly advertised auction. Every effort should be taken to identify and evaluate the various advantages and benefits available

through different means of disposal.

- 1) If an artifact cannot be disposed of through preferred methods, other options may be explored and then proposed to the Board of Trustees.
- 2) In the case of disposal by public auction, the Museum's ownership shall be acknowledged in the sale catalog unless deemed inappropriate by the Executive Director.
- 3) Any proceeds realized from the sale of deaccessioned objects shall be deposited and used only for further acquisitions.
- 4) As a last resort, materials in a condition that is too poor for resale, exchange, or transfer may be disposed of in a sensitive manner.

7. Loans

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

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

It is the policy of the Mobile Medical Museum not to loan objects to individuals for any reason. Loans are only made to nonprofit cultural and educational institutions with the ability to properly care for artifacts.

Incoming Loans

For exhibitions, research, or other purposes, the Mobile Medical Museum will arrange with institutions or individuals for the loan of materials to the Museum. In rare cases, the Museum may consider the long-term or permanent loan of an artifact that significantly enhances the cultural and educational value of its exhibits and programs. Long-term loans will be for a period of five years, with the option of renewal.

Outgoing Loans

For exhibitions, research, or other stated purposes, the Mobile Medical Museum will agree to arrangements with other like institutions for the loan of items from the Museum's permanent collection. All 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 file a request for a loan with the Museum no less than 90 days in advance and submit the

following documents:

- 1) facility report
- 2) certificate of insurance
- 3) outgoing loan agreement, originating from the Museum and signed by both parties, in which the borrowing institution:
 - a. agrees to bear all costs of packing and transporting objects in a manner approved by the Museum.
 - b. Agrees to protect the loaned object(s) in ways consistent with sound museum practice, and to abide by any other handling procedures requested by the Museum.

For short-term loans of one week or less to institutions that have an established working relationship with the Museum, the Executive Director may decide to waive some or all of these loan requirements.

8. 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 Executive Director. Access to storage and conservation areas is limited to those who are accompanied by a staff member or authorized by the Executive Director. The size of the group may be limited at the discretion of the Executive Director.

Visitors wishing to use the collection must request an appointment in advance of the time of visit, to be approved by the Executive Director.

Access to the collection will be decided using the following criteria:

- a) The individual must have a legitimate reason for examining the collections (e.g., scholarly research, family relation, and so on).
- b) The individual should have knowledge of appropriate techniques for handling objects or be given this instruction by staff before handling objects.
- c) The individual must comply with the general security precautions for the collection.
- d) The individual must provide necessary equipment to complete his/her project and expect to work during the Museum's regular operating hours.
- e) If the individual wants to take images of artifacts, authorization is required even for private and personal use. Images to be used for patron publications must follow all Mobile Medical Museum credit guidelines, and Mobile Medical Museum copyrights must be respected.

9. Appraisals

There is an inherent conflict of interest if the Mobile Medical Museum, 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 by the public or offered to the Mobile Medical Museum. 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.

Mobile Medical Museum 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 complying with the legitimate requests of professional or governmental bodies or their agents.

10. Inventory

A full collection inventory (including off-site storage facilities) 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 on an annual basis.