



Wetzel  County
Museum

Collections Policy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wetzel County Museum holds a collection of assorted objects with some connection to Wetzel County. The purpose of this document is to provide a framework for guiding and shaping the collection so that it aligns with the mission, vision, and strategic plan goals of the museum. Recognizing that collections stewardship is fundamental to its mission, the Wetzel County Museum assigns the highest priority to the care and conservation of its collection. The main areas of focus in this document are:

- Intellectual Framework and Gap Analysis
- Affirmation of adherence to established museum standards
- Acquisition and disposal of objects
- Collection use and access
- Collections Care
- Record Keeping and Inventories

The Collections Policy lays out guidelines and procedures that will enable the museum to fulfill its mission through appropriate stewardship decision-making in the focal areas.

Specifically, this document:

- Identifies major areas of interest:
- Provides consistency in operations by specifying forms and procedures for major areas of processing,
- Assigns responsibility for decision-making in specific areas,
- Provides guidance regarding the opportunity cost (time/space) of maintaining unsuitable objects at the expense of more desirable items,
- Guides aligning and shaping of the collection to meet the goals of the mission, vision, and strategic plan of the museum, and
- Addresses proper storage and conservation issues that are essential to the integrity of the collection's health, longevity, and usefulness.

INTRODUCTION

The Wetzel County Museum began when James Fitzsimmons, a local history buff, took it upon himself to establish and maintain a collection of assorted items. When Fitzsimmons died in 2009, no one took his place, and the "museum" sat idle until the Wetzel County Convention and Visitors Bureau took legal title to the building and its contents in late 2010. Since then I have been working to turn the Fitzsimmons collection into a real museum.

I am in the process of accessioning the items (about seventy percent complete) using appropriate recordkeeping and proper storage procedures associated with museum best practice guidelines.¹ The guiding principle behind the existing collection seems to be that of being a repository for items that outlived their usefulness but still held sentimental value for the owners, who could not bear to discard them even though they did not value them enough to maintain and store them. The "museum" became a convenient resting place for misfit items.

My goal is to turn the collection into a real museum: one that the community will be proud of and participate in for the education and enjoyment of both residents and visitors. I am working to do this in accordance with industry standards and best practices for the small museum community.² In doing so, I assessed the collection relative to the Museum's mission and vision statements. I identified gaps in the collection, general areas in which we fall short of being able to tell the story of Wetzel County, and areas in which we are devoid of meaningful artifacts.

We have begun to establish guidelines for what the museum wants and does not want to collect, and how it will go about doing so. This paper lays out the collections policy and procedures that will guide the museum in shaping its collection plan so that it can fulfill its

¹ Reibel, *Registration Methods for the Small Museum*. Reibel applies and adapts standard museum registration methods in ways that are especially useful for small history museums.

² The museum is enrolled in the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) StEPs Program, a self-study guide to museum best practices.

mission as envisioned and thus prevent the museum from becoming a storage facility for discards from the local townspeople.

The plan for this museum collection policy is based on Malaro's ten steps for drafting a Collection Management Policy, which are:

- Statement of Purpose and Description of Collections
- Acquisition of Objects
- Deaccessioning
- Loans
- Objects Placed in the Custody of the Museum
- Care of the Collections
- Records
- Insurance
- Inventories
- Access to Collections³

Statement of Ethics

The Wetzel County Museum, cognizant of its role as a good steward of public resources, strives to adhere to the codes of ethics for museums and like institutions as set forth by the American Association of Museums and the American Association for State and Local History.⁴ The museum resolves to avoid any improprieties that might endanger its role as a public trustee.

³ Malaro, *A Legal Primer*, 45.

⁴ Buck and Gilmore, *MRM: Museum Registration Methods*, 5th ed., 394-8, and AASLH, *StEPs Workbook*, 26, 141.

COLLECTIONS POLICY

INTELLECTUAL FRAMEWORK: Statement Of Purpose

Mission Statement**

Our mission is to preserve the history and culture of Wetzel County by fostering understanding and appreciation of its contribution to local, state, and national history for a broad public audience.

PRESERVE local heritage

EDUCATE broad general public

PROMOTE appreciation and understanding

Vision Statement*

We strive to preserve the heritage of Wetzel County by collecting, interpreting, and maintaining artifacts relevant to our mission, thereby promoting heritage tourism and good stewardship of our resources for the benefit of all.

Strategies*

- Preserve and interpret artifacts and local histories in ways that further the understanding of and create interest in the history of Wetzel County
- Maintain and display artifacts in a manner consistent with generally recognized standards of museum practices
- Exhibit artifacts with historical accuracy
- Design interactive exhibits to engage and educate a broad public
- Engage local schools by providing resources and student-centered learning environments

**Adopted by Wetzel County Convention and Visitors Bureau on 21 Mar 2011.

- Rotate exhibits to maintain local interest
- Encourage residents to share artifacts and family histories for benefit of community
- Seek adequate funding to assure acquisition of necessary materials for maintenance and exhibition of collection

INTELLECTUAL FRAMEWORK: Description Of Collections

While the collections management policy generally explains what and how museums collect, the intellectual framework explains why museums do what they do. In other words, the intellectual framework is the fundamental principle upon which the museum builds its operations.⁵ It serves as a guiding light for museum procedures; and as such, it makes sense to build the framework before defining any policies and procedures.

I assessed the collection at the Wetzel County Museum relative to the stated mission and vision statements and the previously identified four main areas for interpretive exhibits: Early History, River Trade, Communities, and Resources.⁶ The story of Wetzel County must include the history of the area before the arrival of the white man, conflicts between Native Americans and settlers, the forging of the county and the state. Of the four main themes, the museum is weakest in the area of Early History. We have an adz or a celt and an arrowhead that seem to be from the Adena period, but they have not been authenticated. Aside from those items, we have no Native American artifacts and nothing from the early pioneers of this area, such as John or Lewis Wetzel, the Zane brothers, or Edwin Dulin, the first white settler in this area. We do have correspondence from Presley Martin, the founder of New Martinsville, and copies of original deeds and land grants for this area. The items we have pertain to the area around New Martinsville (the county seat), with virtually nothing from other parts of the county. I found nothing pertaining to the formation of Wetzel County, an event that took place half a block away from the museum.

With regard to the River Trade area of focus, the museum has replicas of riverboats that operated from New Martinsville, photographs and postcards of nineteenth-century riverboats,

⁵ Simmons, *Things Great and Small*, 3-6.

⁶ Tackett, "Cultural Resource Management Internship Report" 18-20.

and a ship's wheel from a riverboat. We have many receipts with lading information from various local riverboat companies, but nothing supporting the claim that the river was essential to county development. We have no records or accounts of goods that were transferred between the port and the county interior. The Ohio River played a large role in the Civil War, and there are many stories of underground railroad houses in New Martinsville but none have been substantiated, and the museum has nothing relating to this. Likewise, it has nothing to recognize the importance of the river in bringing the railroad to the area. On the other hand, we have a caboose.

With respect to the focus on Communities, we have little information and few artifacts regarding what made them unique or brought them into being. We have a few items that are attributed to residents of some of the outlying communities: a toy from a Knob Fork family, a medicine box from a Pine Grove pharmacy. We have many and varied farm implements and can mount a reasonable display of rural life in Wetzel County. We lack clothing and personal articles, as well as family histories. We have abundant scrapbooks filled with assorted and seemingly unrelated newspaper clippings (newspaper name and publication dates have been cut off). We have abundant memorabilia from New Martinsville High School and from the now defunct Yacht Club Annual Regatta in New Martinsville. We also have an assortment of pharmaceutical items from the early twentieth century, mostly from a defunct pharmacy in New Martinsville.

The last main focal area is Resources, and it is in this area that we have a good base of artifacts from which to draw. The area was and is rich in oil and gas, which led to the development of glassmaking, chemical plants, energy development, railroads, and so on. We have local salt core samples, glassmaking tools and molds, and some outdated medical

equipment. We have shoe making and stitching machines along with a series of lasts, however, we lack handmade shoes. We lack a comprehensive collection of glassware from the area, although we have an abundance of glass ashtrays, cigarette lighters, and commemorative paperweights.

Outside of the four focal areas, the museum has an oversupply of memorabilia and miscellany from mid-twentieth century New Martinsville. The rest of the county and other time periods are under-represented. Based on the above assessment, it becomes clear that the museum is deficient in significant areas of interest; thus, we should focus our collection efforts of filling those gaps.

ACQUISITION OF OBJECTS

For the purposes of this document, the acquisition of objects will be synonymous with the accession of objects. Items accepted into custody, but not accessioned or returned, will be treated in a separate section entitled, "Objects Placed in the Custody of the Museum." Based on the above collection analysis, the resulting intellectual framework will guide the museum's acquisitions policy along with other considerations outlined here. Items within the purview of the framework will be considered further with regard to general criteria discussed below. Once the subject matter of the object has been deemed appropriate for the collection, the items listed here must be considered before a decision is made to acquire the object. In general, the museum does not accept gifts or bequests that come with restrictions. Additionally, in accordance with museum standards, the museum does not accept objects for acquisition from members of the Museum Board, its personnel, or their families or close friends.⁷ All acquisitions are made in consultation with the Museum Director and the Accessions Committee and in accordance with generally accepted museum best practices.

- Care and maintenance: Can the museum provide the proper care required by the object?
Does the museum have the adequate space, climate-controlled storage, and staff to handle and store the object?
- Provenance: Does the donor or seller have good and clear title to the object? Has the museum sufficiently investigated the object with regard to applicable legal restrictions

⁷ Buck and Gilmore, *MRM5*, 397.

on local, state, national, and international levels?⁸ Are there copyright issues associated with the object? Do we have the full history of the object?

- Restrictions: Does the object come with restrictions on how or when it can be displayed? Is the museum free to dispose of the object at its discretion?
- Expenses: If the object is offered for sale, does the museum have sufficient funds to purchase it? Is the object in need of major conservation work before it can be displayed? Does the museum have adequate funds to ensure this conservation? Are there adequate funds to house, display, and maintain the object in accordance with museum best practice guidelines?

Procedures

Once the decision to accession an object for the collection is made, the following procedures outline the method for doing so. The Curator is responsible for accessioning the item. All procedures are done in accordance with generally accepted museum standards and practices.⁹

- Obtain completed Deed of Gift Form (see Appendix) or copy of applicable section of will for bequests,
- Director sends Thank You Letter to donor (see Appendix),
- Assign Accession Number and cross-reference it on the Temporary Custody Receipt,
- Update Temporary Custody Log (see Appendix),
- Set up a file for each number and use it for filing all related documents,
- Complete Accession Card (see Appendix),
- Mark object with its assigned number,

⁸ Malaro, *A Legal Primer*, 58-59; Reibel, *Registration Methods*, 26-27; and Simmons, *Things Great and Small*, 45-49. The authors discuss and provide examples of policies designed to comply with NAGPRA, Nazi-era artwork guidelines, CITES, UNESCO, et al.

⁹ Reibel, *Registration Methods*, 53-73. Reibel discusses several different methods of complying with best practices standards based on museums realities regarding size, type of collections, etc.

- Photograph the object according to official procedure,
- Prepare object for conservation, storage, or display as directed by Curator, and
- Enter the item into the computerized database that serves as the Accessions Register.

DEACCESSIONING

Accessioned objects require ongoing resources for storage, maintenance, inventorying, and handling; thus, the best use of museum resources is directed at the collection and maintenance of objects relevant to its mission.¹⁰ The intellectual framework serves as a guide for determining the appropriateness of objects that have been previously accessioned and are now part of the collection. Experts agree that a good accessions policy keeps deaccessioning to a minimum, however, this applies only to items that have not yet been accessioned, not to those that are presently part of the collection; thus the need for deaccessioning guidelines. All deaccession decisions will be made in consultation with the Museum Director and require board approval.

After an objective evaluation of the object with regard to the museum's mission and goals, the museum can justify the deaccessioning of an object to which it has clear title for any of the following reasons AND if there are no extenuating circumstances or other restrictions that prevent the object's deaccession AND there are no objections to deaccessioning the object from the Director, Curator, or any board member.¹¹

- The object no longer fits the intellectual framework of the museum, or
- The object is in a state of deterioration that makes it unusable, or it is beyond repair or conservation, or
- The museum is no longer able to care for the object properly, or
- The object has been found to be a misrepresentation, or
- The museum has duplicate items.

¹⁰ Simmons, *Things Great and Small*, 52.

¹¹ Reibel, *Registration Methods*, 69-70.

The museum can dispose of deaccessioned objects in several ways, unless there are restrictions on its disposal. The museum has no obligation to notify donors when items are deaccessioned, and these items are not to be returned to the original donors or heirs. The particular method of disposal is at the discretion of the Museum Director in consultation with the Board. In accordance with museum standards and best practices, museum personnel, its board members, and the families and close associates of them, are not permitted to purchase items being deaccessioned. Acceptable methods of disposal are:

- Donation to a scientific, educational, or cultural institution,
- Auction to general public via public auction house,
- Trade with another institution (scientific, educational, or cultural), or
- Destruction.

Any income derived from the disposition of deaccessioned objects is treated separately and is to be used solely for the acquisition of new objects for the same collection or the direct conservation of items in the collection.

Procedures

When the decision to deaccession an object has been made, the following procedures outline the deaccessioning process. Deaccessioning is done under the direction of the Director or Curator.

- Complete the Deaccession Form (see Appendix).
- Pull the original Accession Card and corresponding file; attach the completed Deaccession Form to it. Retain both items in file.
- Note record of deaccession and subsequent disposal on corresponding computer files.
- Remove the Accession Number from the object.

LOANS

Although the museum generally does not accept or provide objects for loan, there are circumstances in which it may wish to do so. In general, the museum will not lend objects except to educational, scientific, or cultural institutions. When the museum borrows objects, it prefers to do so from peer institutions but recognizes that private collections may provide a valuable resource for loaned items. The museum neither accepts nor offers loans without specific time limits, preferably ninety days or less. The decision to make or accept a loan is at the discretion of the Museum Director with regard to appropriateness for collection exhibits, space availability, and proper care concerns. In those cases, the following considerations will guide the process. At times, the Director, at his/her discretion, may bring the matter before the Board for discussion and further action. All loans are recorded in the Loan Register (see Appendix).

Incoming Loans¹²

- Is the loan relevant to the museum's intellectual framework? What is the purpose of the loan? Can we determine provenance?
- Are there restrictions on the loan? Can the museum fulfill these restrictions?
- What are the terms of the loan? Are there any fees or special conditions required for display and transport of the loaned object(s)? Can the museum comply with these?
- Who will monitor the loan as it progresses, and how?
- When the term of the loan is up, how is the item disposed of, and who is responsible for its disposition?

¹² Malaro, *A Legal Primer*, 58-59; Reibel, *Registration Methods*, 26-27; and Simmons, *Things Great and Small*, 45-49. I adapted the guidelines based on suggestions in these references.

- Who pays for shipping and insurance? What documentation is necessary? Who is responsible for damage or loss?
- Can the object be recalled early and under what circumstances? Can we return the object early? Can we request an extension of the loan, and what is the procedure for doing so?

Procedures

Once the museum has agreed to accept an object as an incoming loan, proceed as follows:

- Obtain necessary paperwork from lending institution.
- Make necessary arrangements as outlined in paperwork.
- Verify arrangements for insurance and shipping charges.
- When item is received at the Wetzel County Museum, complete the Incoming Loan Form and tag the object with the IC number assigned. Verify, photograph, and document object(s) received against shipping list and note condition of each item.
- If there are any discrepancies, notify the Director and the lending institution immediately. Proceed no further until issue is resolved.
- Document loan in Loan Register and proceed as planned.
- Mark calendar to follow up on return of loan when due.
- Make packing, shipping, and insurance arrangements for return of object as stated in the paperwork. Note disposition of object on Incoming Loan Form and Loan Register.

Outgoing Loans¹³

- Does the museum have clear and unrestricted title to the object being loaned?

¹³ Malaro, *A Legal Primer*, 58-59; Reibel, *Registration Methods*, 26-27; and Simmons, *Things Great and Small*, 45-49. My guidelines are based on those found in these references.

- What is the purpose of the loan? Is the borrower an acceptable educational, scientific, or cultural institution?
- Can the object withstand the rigors of packing, transportation, and handling? Who is responsible for damage or loss?
- Who will monitor the loan as it progresses, and how?
- Are there any restrictions on the loan? Does the object require special handling? Can the receiving institution provide the special handling and/or abide by the restrictions?
- Who pays for shipping and insurance? What documentation is necessary? Who is responsible for damage or loss?
- What is the term of the loan? Are there any fees involved? Can the object be recalled early and under what conditions? Will we accept early return of the object?
- Loans can be extended at the discretion of the Board. What is the length of extension? Is the extension request in writing? Is the insurance documentation current?

Procedures

Once the museum has agreed to loan an object another institution, proceed as follows:

- Make necessary arrangements for packing, shipping, insurance, and special handling required while the object is on loan.
- Verify borrower's insurance coverage.
- Obtain the borrower's agreement and signature on the Outgoing Loan Form before shipping the object.
- Complete the Outgoing Loan Form, tag the object with the assigned OG number, and enter it in the Loan Register. Cross-reference the Outgoing Loan with the Accession Card in the object file.

- Verify, photograph, and document object(s) prior to shipping it. Note the condition of each item.
- Mark calendar to follow up prior to due date for the return of the object.
- When item is returned to the Wetzel County Museum, pull the Outgoing Loan Form and check each object in as received. Note any discrepancies and notify the Director and the borrower immediately. Proceed no further until issue is resolved.
- Document the loan return in the Loan Register and proceed as planned.
- Remove the temporary loan number, mark the Accession Card in the object file that the item has been returned.
- Return object to inventory and note its location on Accession Card.
- Maintain paperwork in the object file.

OBJECTS PLACED IN CUSTODY OF THE MUSEUM

Objects placed in the custody of the museum are generally those items which are under consideration for acquisition and for which a temporary receipt has been issued. Objects can be placed in the custody of the museum because they are on temporary loan to it. These items are covered in the Incoming Loan section. The museum bears the same responsibility for good stewardship of these objects as it does for its own collection.¹⁴

Objects placed in the custody of the museum for any other purposes, i.e. at the request of the depositor, are accepted on a case-by-case basis with the approval of the Director. These items are custodial objects and are left at the owner's request. The owner assumes the risk for these objects, and the museum does not insure objects left in custody.¹⁵

The Museum Director will authorize specific personnel to accept objects for acquisitions consideration and to issue temporary receipts for those objects. Aside from the Director, Curator, and authorized personnel, no other persons are permitted to accept objects for acquisition consideration or otherwise place objects in the custody of the museum.

Procedures

All items taken into custody of the museum, including those under consideration for acquisition, other than those on loan are to be processed as follows:

- Complete a Temporary Custody Receipt for object.
- Tag the object with the Temporary Custody Number.
- Accurately record the condition of the object.
- Photograph the object with its temporary number and place with the Custody record.

¹⁴ Reibel, *Registration Methods*, 104.

¹⁵ Buck and Gilmore, *MRM5*, 86.

- Record the receipt in the Temporary Custody Log, which is reviewed monthly by the Director.
- Give the original receipt to the depositor. It must be presented at the time of recollection.
- A copy of the receipt accompanies the object to the Curator who records it in the Curator's Log.

Appraisals

Under no circumstances will the museum provide an appraisal or authentication of objects, nor will it accept an object for appraisal or authentication. A list of local appraisers is available from the Director or the Curator and may be used for customer reference. Under no circumstances will the museum recommend a particular appraiser over another for the same type of object.

Objects Accepted for Acquisition

Refer to "Acquisition of Objects" section on page 9.

Objects Returned to Owner

When the Board declines to accept an item offered for acquisition for which a Temporary Custody Receipt has been issued, do the following:

- Pull Temporary Custody Receipt for object and contact owner to pick it up.
- Obtain original receipt from owner. Owner inspects object and signs receipt.
- Remove Temporary Custody number tag.
- Museum retains original receipt in file. Owner gets copy. Update Temporary Custody Log.
- Director sends Thanks/Decline letter to owner. (see Appendix).
- Maintain paperwork in Closed Temporary Custody Files.

Unclaimed Objects

Unclaimed objects are those that have been left at the museum beyond the previously agreed upon collection date for return of the object. Recognizing that the museum cannot dispose of any object unless it has clear and unrestricted title to it, and that the museum bears the expense and burden of caring for objects in its custody, every reasonable effort will be made to return unclaimed objects to their rightful owner in accordance with West Virginia statutes. If the museum is unsuccessful in locating the owner, follow the steps listed below and document the actions taken in the object's file. Note that the statute of limitations must be satisfied before any conversion of title takes place.

Procedures¹⁶

- Send a certified letter with a return receipt requested to owner with notification of overdue pickup. If the receipt or the unopened letter is returned, file it with the object documentation and note that the statute of limitations begins on the date the receipt was received by the museum. If the unopened letter is returned, the museum will use reasonable efforts to find a new address. These efforts should be documented and dated, then placed in the object's file. These efforts should include checking the telephone directory, probate records, newspaper obituaries, tax records, death records in Bureau of Vital Statistics, etc. (see Appendix, Sample Letter #1)
- If the object has not been reclaimed within thirty days after receiving a return receipt or unopened letter, send another letter in the same manner, stating the intent of the museum to convert title of the object to the museum. Repeat the process in forty-five days. Maintain documentation as above. (see Appendix, Sample Letter #2)

¹⁶ Malario, *A Legal Primer*, 304-12. These procedures are based on the procedures outlined in this section.

- Run a legal notice in the local newspaper(s) that includes the object information, including who left it and when, along with the museum's intent to claim title if the object is unclaimed by a certain date. Run the notice for three consecutive weeks. Maintain documentation of notices in the file. (see Appendix, Legal Notice)
- When the statute of limitations has been satisfied, the museum assumes title to the object and is free to dispose of it in an appropriate manner.¹⁶

¹⁶ Buck and Gilmore, *MRM5*, 85-89, and Malaro, *A Legal Primer*, 284-313. Although the law can be murky with regard to title for unclaimed objects, these authors discuss a variety of circumstances, common law, and generally accepted procedures for dealing with the problem.

CARE OF THE COLLECTIONS

In accordance with its Statement of Ethics (see page 2), the Wetzel County Museum is cognizant of its role as a good steward of public resources. As such, it strives to adhere to the codes of ethics for museums and like institutions as set forth by the American Association of Museums and the American Association for State and Local History.¹⁷ The museum takes its fiduciary responsibility to preserve and protect the collection it holds in trust for the public very seriously and expects its employees and volunteers to do so as well. The Director oversees the care of all collections.

The care of collections includes preserving the objects according to the best practices laid out by the museum community. The collection must also be adequately protected against fire, flood, theft, vandalism, exposure to hostile environments, abrupt changes in environmental conditions, and the like. To this end, the museum has the following systems in place:

- Fire: A fire prevention policy, smoke detectors, and automatic fire department notification is in place.
- Flood: A plan for moving objects to safety in the case of impending floodwaters is in place. Storage is on the second floor of the building, and all exhibits are above floor level. The collection is monitored on a regular basis for water damage from a leaking pipe, roof, and/or sink overflows.
- Theft and Vandalism: The museum is locked when it is not open to the public. The workroom and storage areas are keyed differently to prevent access by unauthorized personnel. The Director assigns a level of access to each employee or volunteer. Keys are held under locked control by the Director and must be signed for when used.

¹⁷ Buck and Gilmore, *MRM5*, 394-8, and AASLH, *StEPs Workbook*, 26, 141.

Museum storage is not open to the public. The Curator can assign access to the workroom. Exhibits are designed to prevent theft and vandalism by enclosing objects in cases or using barriers to prevent the public from getting too close.

- Hostile Environments: The museum is maintained on a regular schedule of housekeeping chores to prevent buildups of dust, mold, and pest infestations. Food and drink is not permitted in the exhibit and storage areas. Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the building.
- Environmental Conditions: The storage area is maintained at 68°F with relative humidity at 50-55%. The exhibit halls are maintained at 68-70° with 55-65% relative humidity. Electronic monitors measure the temperature and humidity around the clock. The collection is not exposed to daylight. UV filters are used to shield fluorescent light fixtures.
- Other: Objects on loan to or from the museum are handled according to museum standards and best practice guidelines as laid out by the museum community.¹⁹ Appropriate and adequate packing materials are used when moving objects within and outside the museum. The Curator oversees the moving and shipping of objects. Acceptable methods for shipping are used and appropriate records are kept and filed. Movement of objects is always documented in the object's file.
- In case of emergency or disaster, refer to the museum's Emergency and Disaster Plan located in the office of the Director.

¹⁹ Simmons, *Things Great and Small*, 69-84, and Reibel, *Registration Methods*, 103-115, and Malaro, *A Legal Primer*, 240-314, and Buck and Gilmore, *MRM5*, 120-132. These authors have good discussions of acceptable loan policies and procedures.

RECORDS

Two sets of museum records are kept. A working set is kept at the museum. A duplicate set is stored in a Safe Deposit Box at WesBanco Bank on Washington and Main Streets in New Martinsville, WV. The Museum Director controls access to the records in the safe deposit box. The paper records in the Museum are stored in a locked, fireproof file cabinet. The Director and Curator have keys to the cabinet. Computer files are stored on the computer in the workroom with backup copies in the safe deposit box. These files are stored offsite on a monthly basis.

The Museum has two filing systems: one for its permanent collection, and one for temporary objects. Temporary objects include items on loan from other institutions or collections for which an Incoming Loan Agreement has been issued, and objects that are in the temporary custody of the Museum at the owner's request and for which a Temporary Custody Receipt has been issued. Access to these files is controlled by the Director and/or Curator.

Permanent files include all registration and curatorial records relating to the permanent collection. These include the accession card, object files with provenance, history, and deed of gift, and related computer files that generate the descriptive catalog. These records describe the object, note its location in the museum, and track its movements within the museum. Records of condition reports, conservation status, object research, etc. are kept with the object file in the Curator's office. The Curator maintains a separate log of all objects received and/or worked on.

The Loan Register tracks incoming and outgoing loans by number. Temporary custody objects are tracked in the Temporary Custody Log. These logs are controlled at the direction of the Director and/or Curator.

INSURANCE

The museum strives to be a good steward of its collection and maintains the collection in accordance with generally accepted standards and best practices. The practice of good stewardship serves to mitigate much of the risk to the collection. At the present time, the collection is not insured. The decision to insure whole or part of the collection is made by the Board on an annual basis and is based on consideration of the following analysis.

- Do we insure all or part of the collection? How do we determine insurable value? Do we insure for full, partial, or replacement value?
- Do we insure items for incoming and outgoing loans? How do we determine the insurable value?
- Who is responsible for documenting insurance coverage?
- Have we adequately identified the risks factors? Have we determined what we consider to be acceptable risk?

The insurance policy and related paperwork is filed in a locked, fireproof file cabinet under the control of the Director.

INVENTORIES

An inventory is a security measure because its purpose is to verify that a museum is in possession of all the objects it says it has, and that its records accurately reflect the location and condition of each object.²⁰ A full inventory of objects in the Museum is completed every five years under the direction of the Director. Partial inventories are conducted annually in specific areas as designated by the Director. Spot inventory checks will be conducted regularly at the discretion of the Director and serve to discourage theft or misappropriation.²¹ Spot checks also help to identify potential problems, such as the misplacement of an object or an error in noting its location.

The Inventory Log includes the accession number, “tombstone” information (descriptor), current location, inventory taker, and date.²² The record will include additional condition information if the present condition varies with the existing record. Additionally, items may be photographed as directed.

Procedures

- Director determines the type of inventory to be conducted and the method of doing so, i.e., from record to object or from object to record.
- Inventoried items are documented on Inventory Log sheets (see Appendix).
- The Accession Card for each item inventoried is marked in red ink with the inventory date and any changes are noted on it.
- Inventory Log sheets are maintained in the Inventory Log Book under the control of the Director.

²⁰ Buck and Gilmore, *MRM5*, 300-6, and Malaro, *A Legal Primer*, 409.

²¹ Malaro, *A Legal Primer*, 409.

²² Buck and Gilmore, *MRM5*, 302.

- The Inventory Log is reconciled and missing and undocumented objects are documented as noted below. The Log is signed by the Director when reconciled.

These procedures are for a manual system and will be used until the museum files are fully computerized, at which time the procedures will change and the policy will be updated.

Reconciling the Inventory²³

Upon completion of the inventory, attempt to match up the missing items with the undocumented items that were found. Make the necessary adjustments, such as rewriting the accession number on an object so it is legible or noting the correct location on the card. The remaining and/or still missing items will be treated separately as outlined below and any actions taken will be noted appropriately in the inventory log.

Missing Items (lost in inventory)

Missing items are noted on the Inventory Log in red ink and reasonable efforts will be made to locate them. The object records will be flagged and marked with the date the object was identified as missing. Subsequent searches for the object will be noted on the object records with date, area searched, and searcher's name.

Undocumented Items (found in collection)

Found items for which no records can be located will be noted as FIC (found in collection) on the Inventory Log in red ink. An FIC file will be created with a description of the object and any other details available. Because the Museum cannot prove title to FIC items, they will be treated as objects left in the custody of the museum and a Temporary Receipt and number will be issued.

²³ Buck and Gilmore, *MRM5*, 304.

ACCESS TO THE COLLECTION

The Museum provides reasonable access to the collection and does not unduly restrict public access. It does so by exhibiting objects to the public on a regular basis, i.e., it is open at least 120 days annually.²⁰ The Museum Director, in consultation with the Board, determines the open periods, which are posted at the Museum entrance and on the Museum website. Because donor and registration records not public record, the Museum restricts access to them at the discretion of the Director.²¹ The general public has access to the part of the collection on exhibit at any given time and to the collection information posted on the Museum website.

The Director has full access to the Museum collections. The Director designates which staff members have access to which areas. The storage area is accessible to the Director and Curator. Others may be granted access on an as needed basis.

Bona fide researchers may request access to other parts of the collection, which may be granted at the discretion of the Director. Researchers accessing the collection are required to complete a Request for Access form. These forms are maintained in the Museum files. The Museum does not have the staff to do research for other researchers at the present time, and requests for same will be declined. No records are permitted to leave the museum premises.

Procedures

- Researchers must complete the Request for Access Form (see Appendix).
- Director or Curator signature is required before granting access.
- List documents given to researcher with date and obtain his/her initials on form. Retain form.

²⁰ Malaro, *A Legal Primer*, 436.

²¹ Reibel, *Registration Methods*, 179.

- When records are returned, pull form, check items returned against those lent, date and initial receipt of each item on form.
- Maintain form in Access File in locked, fireproof file cabinet.
- The Director will consider photocopy requests on an individual basis. The fee for photocopies is \$0.25 per page.

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