



10825 East Boulevard
Cleveland, Ohio 44106
(216) 721-5722
www.wrhs.org

COLLECTIONS POLICY

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MISSION STATEMENT:

The Western Reserve Historical Society ("WRHS") is a private, nonprofit organization with a mission "to inspire people to discover the American experience by exploring the tangible history of Northeast Ohio."

WRHS elevates people, place and purpose. For our people - the WRHS community and the communities we serve - WRHS strives for a culture of excellence, diversity, equity, access and inclusion. We apply best practices to the stewardship of our places, collections, and digital resources. It is our purpose to empower the entrepreneurial spirit to create, promote, and sustain a relevant, experience driven organization. We approach our work through an equity lens to ensure that collections, experiences, staff and Board reflect the rich diversity of northeast Ohio.

Collections focus on the Western Reserve. WRHS's collections are a major educational resource for library and museum users, including school children, the general public, and scholars. WRHS seeks to make its collections accessible to all.



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A. PURPOSE:

The Articles of Incorporation, dated 7 March 1892, of the Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS) state:

The purpose for which said corporation is formed is not profit, but is to discover, collect and preserve whatever relates to the history, biography, genealogy and antiquities of Ohio and the West; and of the people dwelling therein, including the physical history and condition of that State; to maintain a museum and library, and to extend knowledge upon the subjects mentioned by literary meetings, by publication and by other means.

The phrase "Ohio and the West" has been more closely defined by practice since the mid-twentieth century to mean northeastern Ohio and its Western Reserve region, without excluding material that falls outside this geographical area that may be broadly related to its interpretation and understanding. Within the geographic area of northeastern Ohio, WRHS focuses its collecting efforts around the core and strategic themes of community and family history, place and entrepreneurship, and business and industry.

WRHS owns and operates, as of the date of this resolution, a library, history museum, the Frederick C. and Kathleen S. Crawford Auto-Aviation Museum, all located at the Cleveland History Center, WRHS's headquarters; a Restoration & Storage Facility; and historical properties: Hale Farm & Village, Shandy Hall, Loghurst, and the Holsey Gates House. This collections policy includes all of these entities by reference under the categories: archives-library, museums and historical properties.

B. DECISION-MAKING:

During the various phases of the acquisition, management, preservation, use, loan and deaccession of historical materials, all pertinent issues will be identified and discussed in a



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manner that involves all responsible staff, encourages the sharing of information, and seeks maximum input into the decision-making process.

A Collections Management Team ("CMT") consisting of staff from units of the organization with responsibility for collections, education, museum administration, and exhibitions will make recommendations regarding WRHS's collection management activities. The WRHS President & CEO appoints the members of the CMT on an annual basis. The team will keep a written record of its proceedings and will open deliberations to all responsible and knowledgeable staff members as necessary for decision making.

The CMT will meet regularly to make recommendations regarding:

- Recommendations for new acquisitions of objects and collections;
- Placement in the permanent or education "for use" collections;
- Identify and prioritize conservation, preservation, and restoration of collections and approval of conservation, preservation, and restoration treatments in consultation with third-party experts as needed;
- Loans to and from WRHS;
- Deaccessions from the permanent collection and disposal methods;
- Actions to ensure the proper care and documentation of collections.

The actions of the CMT, including recommendations regarding acquisitions, loans, deaccessions, and disposal will be discussed with the President & CEO who is a member of CMT. The President & CEO will recommend actions to the Board Collections and Library Committee as outlined in other sections of this policy.



C. COLLECTING OBJECTIVES BY MEDIA:

1. Archives-Library Collections: to collect, preserve and maintain manuscripts, published material, prints, photographs, audio and visual recordings, and born digital, archival and ephemeral collections relevant to WRHS's mission.
2. Museum Collections: to collect, preserve and maintain examples of material culture including objects of the fine and decorative arts, historical and cultural artifacts, costume and textiles, automobiles and aircraft and other expressive or utilitarian artifacts relevant to WRHS's mission.
3. Properties: to accept, restore and maintain historically significant properties relevant to WRHS's mission.

D. ACQUISITION POLICY:

1. Definition: Acquisition is defined as the discovery, preliminary evaluation (for WRHS purposes only), negotiation for, taking custody of, documenting title to, and acknowledging receipt of materials, objects and historic properties.
2. Acquisition Criteria: Library materials, museum objects and historical properties must meet all of the following conditions:
 - a. The present owner must have a clear title, and must warrant that the item is free of all liens, mortgages, encumbrances or adverse claims.
 - b. If for sale, WRHS must secure a funding commitment in writing before purchase.
 - c. If for sale, a fair market value must be determined between parties through a formal appraisal by a qualified independent appraiser.
 - d. WRHS will accept materials if it believes it can provide proper professional care (secure storage, cataloging, and preservation) for those materials at the time they are being considered for acquisition or within a reasonable period thereafter. If the gift is real estate and in accordance with the Gift Acceptance Policy and if WRHS's Board of Directors chooses to consider the real estate



for accession under this Collection Policy, the donor must provide funds for an endowment sufficient to assure its proper care, preservation, maintenance and programmatic operation.

- e. Materials considered for acquisition must have the potential to substantially advance knowledge about the history and people of northeastern Ohio and/or their place in broader (i.e. national and international) contexts. Potential acquisitions will be unique, relevant, and add research and scholarship value to the permanent collection.
- f. Considerations and judgments of potential acquisitions for the collections are not to be influenced by any connections their owners might have to WRHS or to other agencies or to families or political bodies.
- g. The provenance of the materials or objects must, whenever possible, be documented.
- h. All moral, legal, and ethical implications of the acquisition must have been considered.
- i. Acquisitions will not be so encumbered by literary rights, property rights, copyrights, patents or trademarks that will prevent WRHS from preserving, exhibiting or making the materials and objects available for scholarly research.
- j. Acquisitions must be free from donor-imposed restrictions, except in rare and specific instances, as recommended by the CMT and approved in writing by the President & CEO, who will then make a report to the Collections & Library Committee of the Board of Directors if under \$5,000.
- k. Items may be offered for accessioning, for use, and/or utilitarian purposes. This must be determined in advance and clearly specified in the deed of gift. Refer also to the Gift Acceptance Policy for gifts of tangible personal property and real estate.



3. Means of Acquisition: Materials and objects may be acquired by purchase, bequest, gift, bargain sale, exchange or other legal means. Please refer to the Gift Acceptance Policy on bargain sales. Exchanges must be at arm's length and substantiated by formal appraisals by independent qualified appraisers. All potential exchanges must be approved in advance by the President & CEO. Each party must bear the cost of its own independent appraisal. No exchange should be consummated without the final written approval of the President & CEO, who will make a report to the Collections & Library Committee of the Board of Directors. No materials or objects shall be knowingly or willfully accepted or acquired which are known to have been illegally imported into, or illegally collected in the United States. All acquisition activity shall conform to current applicable international, federal, state and local laws. In pursuit of materials and objects, WRHS shall not knowingly aid, abet, or encourage the destruction of historic sites, buildings, structures and objects. All rights, title and interest shall be obtained by WRHS for all potential acquisitions, without restrictions or limiting conditions, or shall have the potential of being converted to free and clear title under appropriate law.
4. Acquisition Process: Authority to acquire materials (under paragraph 3 above) rests with the President & CEO, who may choose to delegate this authority to the CMT as outlined in Section B, Decision-Making. The CMT will meet as needed to discuss acquisitions and deaccessions. WRHS's Museum and Library Curators will work with appropriate staff to ensure that all state and federal laws and regulations are followed during the acquisition process. The CMT will be responsible for:
 - a. Reviewing collections under consideration for acquisition and making a formal recommendation to the President & CEO that they be accepted or refused. Such decisions are to be based on the curatorial and historical expertise of CMT members, collection and archives staff, and the criteria set forth in Section C of this policy. When an acquisition involves a purchase, bargain sale, or exchange, CMT shall make a formal recommendation to the



President & CEO, who will then decide whether the purchase fits within WRHS's budget or might be covered by another source of funds. If the value of the transaction exceeds \$5,000, the President & CEO will make a recommendation to the Collections & Library Committee of the Board of Directors for consideration and action. If the value of the transaction exceeds \$25,000, the Collections & Library Committee will submit its recommendation to the Board of Directors for consideration and action.

- b. Preparing a unified quarterly acquisitions report for distribution to the President & CEO, who as liaison to the Collections & Library Committee of the Board of Directors, will inform the committee of all new acquisitions on a quarterly basis.
- c. Ensuring that collections development in the various divisions (museum and archives-library) is coordinated, aligned with WRHS's strategic and operational agenda, and aligned with the WRHS Collection Development Plan.
- d. Suggesting new collection initiatives in alignment with the WRHS Collection Development Plan. Initiatives may address areas of regional history underrepresented in WRHS's collections, or may be constructed to enhance existing holdings. Suggestions for new initiatives will be implemented only when approved in writing by the President & CEO of WRHS.
- e. Reviewing and evaluating new collecting initiatives (as outlined in item d. above) regularly and preparing a report on those initiatives for the President & CEO.
- f. Participating in all deaccessions procedures by reviewing proposed deaccessions and making a formal recommendation to the President & CEO if the proposed deaccession is within the interests of WRHS. The final decision on proposed deaccessions is the sole responsibility of the President & CEO, in accordance with Section E. Deaccession Policy.



- g. Initiating a full review of the Collections Policy at three-year intervals to ensure that the policy reflects the organizational structure of WRHS at that time; that all references to legal decisions/laws relating to museum and archival collections are current; and that the policy incorporates any decisions relevant to new or modified collecting initiatives (as noted in items d. and e. above). The policy, if amended during such reviews, shall be referred to the President & CEO. If the President & CEO approves the policy amendment, she/he will make a recommendation to the Collections & Library Committee for consideration and action. The Collections & Library Committee will, in turn, make a recommendation to the Board of Directors for final consideration and action.
- h. Historical Properties: Authority to acquire historical properties by purchase, gift, exchange, or bargain sale (buildings and real estate used for historical purposes), regardless of value, shall be vested in the Board of Directors, upon formal recommendation of the President & CEO and governed by this Collections Policy and the Gift Acceptance Policy regarding gifts of real estate.
5. General: No staff member shall offer appraisals of the monetary value of materials or objects to donors, or reveal WRHS's insurance value, if any, for the purpose of establishing fair market value of gifts offered to WRHS. If a donor requests assistance in obtaining an independent appraisal, staff members may refer the donor to appropriate institutions or other sources of information¹. A list of qualified individual appraisers may be kept by WRHS. All objects or materials that may be deposited with WRHS for these purposes shall have identification and be covered by insurance, paid for by the depositor, with WRHS as co-insured, as property on loan to WRHS. In cases where such materials (or materials loaned for other purposes)

¹ Information pertaining to employees' personal collecting, dealing, appraisals and authentication is included in the WRHS Employee Policy and Procedure Manual.



are not reclaimed by the owner, WRHS shall apply Ohio Revised Code Sections 3385.01-10, commonly referred to as the Ohio Museum Property Law. The Registrar or Collection Manager shall maintain permanent acquisition and loan files within the registrar's office, which shall contain all legal instruments and conveyances pertaining to each acquisition or loan or source relating to their respective departments. All materials, objects and properties, except ephemera and library duplicates, acquired for addition to the permanent collections shall be processed under procedures and guidelines adopted by WRHS. The Registrar or Collection Manager shall, with the assistance of the archives and library staff, maintain a permanent record of all accessions.

E. DEACCESSION POLICY:

1. Definition: Deaccession is the process of removing permanently from the collections accessioned library materials, accessioned museum objects or accessioned properties. The deaccession process shall be cautious, deliberate, and scrupulous. Deaccessioning is to be considered and used as a collateral aspect of WRHS's collection development protocol as outlined in Sections A through C of this document.
2. Deaccession Criteria: Library materials, museum objects or properties to be considered for deaccession must meet at least one of the following conditions:
 - a. The item's scope is outside the purpose of WRHS and its acquisition policy.
 - b. The item is irrelevant to the mission of WRHS.
 - c. The item lacks physical integrity or is deteriorated beyond usefulness or restoration.
 - d. The item has failed to retain its identity or authenticity, or, in the case of library material and museum objects, it has been lost or stolen and remains lost for longer than two years.
 - e. The item is a duplicate.



- f. WRHS is unable to preserve the material, object or property properly.
 - g. The item has doubtful potential utilization in the foreseeable future.
3. Application of Criteria: The Board of Directors, upon recommendation of the President & CEO and the Collections & Library Committee, is authorized to apply, jointly or singly, the above deaccession criteria.
4. Restrictions: Before any material or object is recommended for deaccessioning, or is deaccessioned, reasonable effort shall be made to ascertain that WRHS is legally free to do so. Where restrictions to the disposition of the material or object are found, the following procedure shall be followed:
 - a. Mandatory conditions of acquisition will be strictly observed unless deviation from their terms is authorized by a court of competent jurisdiction.
 - b. In the event of a question concerning intent or force of restrictions, the staff shall seek the advice of legal counsel. All materials or objects subject to restrictions shall not be deaccessioned until the staff has assured the President & CEO, the Collections & Library Committee, and the Board of Directors to its satisfaction that it has made an effort:
 - (1) To comply with the restrictions.
 - (2) To make reasonable attempts to notify the donor, if alive, or his/her heirs or assigns, if the material or object were accessioned within the preceding ten (10) years.
5. Procedure: CMT may recommend deaccession(s) to the President & CEO if, in their best judgment, one or more criteria for deaccession have been met.
 - a. Such recommendations will specify the source and/or provenance of the material, object or property, the reasons for deaccessioning, the estimated market value, and the recommended means of disposal which may include exchange, sale (public auction, sealed bid, open bid, or private treaty), destruction, or transfer to another cultural institution. Due diligence shall be



- exercised in the recommendation of the best means of disposal of deaccessioned materials.
- b. Curatorial staff may engage in "conditional deaccession," that is the disposal of damaged collection items (as noted in Section D, 2.c. of this policy) provided the need for such action is reviewed and recommended by CMT and approved in advance by the President & CEO.
 - c. All recommendations for deaccession are to be discussed and approved by CMT, then forwarded to the President & CEO. Materials (single items or related groups of items) with a value of or less than \$5,000 may be deaccessioned with the written approval of the President & CEO. The Collections & Library Committee shall be informed of all such actions.
 - d. Formal recommendations for the deaccessioning of single items or groups of material with an estimated value of more than \$5,000 shall be reviewed by CMT, presented to the President & CEO for approval and then, if approved, to the Collections & Library Committee. If approved by the Collections & Library Committee, the recommendations shall be presented to the Board of Directors for consideration and action.
6. Ethics of Sale: Materials and objects shall not be given, sold, or otherwise transferred to WRHS employees, officers, directors, or their immediate families or representatives.
7. Proceeds: All net proceeds resulting from the sale of deaccessioned items "may be used only for 'acquisition or direct care of collections.' Thus, when an object is sold, funds generated should be used to either:
- a. Replace the object with another that has relevance, importance, or use to the museum's [WRHS's] mission (acquisition); [and/or]
 - b. Invest in existing collections by enhancing their life, usefulness or quality and thereby ensuring they will continue to benefit the public (direct care)." (American Alliance of Museums, 2019).



When proceeds are used for direct care of collections, the President & CEO, after consultation with CMT using criteria outlined on the AAM Direct Care of Collections Matrix, will recommend the use of funds for direct care to the Collections and Library Committee for consideration, with ultimate approval on the use of funds for direct care coming from the Board of Directors. Funds realized from the sale of deaccessioned collections will be placed in a restricted account and released only for acquisition or direct care, as recommended by American Alliance of Museums (2019).

F. LOANS, INCOMING AND OUTGOING:

The Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS) encourages the loan of collections to other educational and cultural organizations. WRHS will consider loan requests from peer organizations that can demonstrate professional standards of care, shipping procedures, security, environmental control, and insurance. WRHS also borrows items from private collectors and institutions for exhibition.

1. Outgoing Loans: The following guidelines apply to outgoing loans from the permanent WRHS collection:
 - a. All requests for loans and loan renewals will be reviewed, vetted and approved by the Collections Management Team (CMT).
 - b. CMT will review and consider the borrowing institution's security and climate control system, as well as other factors that might affect the loaned property.
 - c. Loans will not be authorized for periods exceeding one year. Extension of the loan period must be approved by WRHS at least 30 days prior to the end date of the original loan period.
 - d. After authorization of a loan is granted, an agreement setting forth the conditions of the loan shall be prepared by WRHS. The loan agreement will include details of the loan terms related to shipping, insurance, care, and the treatment of abandoned property.



- e. WRHS may charge for expenses associated with loans, including (but not limited to) conservation, preparation, packing, crating, and shipping.
- f. The Registrar/Collections Manager will provide condition reports and condition photographs of the object(s) prior to shipment and after return to WRHS.
- g. The borrower shall insure all items loaned at the value assessed by WRHS. The policy shall cover damages or losses from theft, mishandling, or other misfortunes from the time the object(s) leave WRHS premises until they are returned. A copy of the certificate of insurance shall be presented by the borrowing organization prior to the beginning of the loan period.
- h. While object(s) are on loan to another institution, WRHS retains ownership of the copyright and use of any images of the object(s) on loan. All request to photograph or reproduce the object(s) must be approved by WRHS. WRHS will receive credit for loaned items in promotional materials.
- i. WRHS must authorize, in advance and in writing, any necessary conservation, cleaning, or pest treatment while the object(s) are on loan.
- j. WRHS reserves the right to recall a loan before the established loan period expires if the borrower violates the terms of the loan contract.

A loan request may be declined if:

- a. the borrowing institution does not possess adequate curatorial staff, security, environmental controls and insurance;
- b. the condition of the object(s) is such that it/they cannot withstand packing and transport;
- c. WRHS does not hold clear title to the material;
- d. the object(s) are in use by WRHS staff for exhibition and/or research;
- e. there are cultural considerations preventing the loan;
- f. the monetary value of the object(s) is too great, or if the object(s) are irreplaceable; or



- g. the absence of the object(s) would create a negative impact on WRHS's visiting public.
- 2. Incoming Loans: The following guidelines apply to incoming loans from external institutions or individuals:
 - a. All proposed loans and loan renewals will be vetted and approved by the Collections Management Team (CMT).
 - b. After authorization for a loan is granted, an agreement setting forth the conditions of the loan shall be prepared by WRHS. The loan agreement will include details of the loan terms related to shipping, insurance, care, lender credit, and treatment of abandoned property.
 - c. Material on loan to WRHS will be given the same quality of handling, environmental control, insurance, and security as the material in the permanent collection. Special care will be provided to materials when requested by the lender and approved in the loan agreement.
 - d. The Collections Manager/Registrar will provide condition reports and condition photographs of the material upon receipt and prior to return.
 - e. The return of loaned items shall be scheduled and executed deliberately and with care. Upon return of the objects, WRHS will issue a receipt of delivery indicating when the property was returned to the lender and the condition in which it was returned.
 - f. All objects accepted for loan must have a value established by the lender.
 - g. WRHS will insure loans wall-to-wall under the terms of its fine arts policy for the amount indicated on the loan agreement.
 - h. WRHS does not accept or store borrowed objects that are not needed for current exhibition, unless written permission to do so is obtained from the CMT.
- 3. Unclaimed Loans: In the case of unclaimed loans, WRHS will apply Ohio Revised Code 3385.01-.10, commonly referred to as the Ohio museum property law, to any



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loan that is unclaimed for at least seven years. In accordance with section 3385.07, any undocumented and unsolicited material received after March 14, 2003, is presumed to be an unrestricted gift with all rights of ownership bestowed to WRHS.

G. USE AND CARE OF COLLECTIONS:

WRHS collections exist for the benefit of present and future generations. Therefore, the public shall be granted reasonable access, by appointment, to exhibited or stored collections on a non-discriminatory basis for the purposes of research or other educational use, per the WRHS Code of Conduct and policies that strictly prohibit discrimination.

1. Access and Use of Collections: WRHS uses its library and museum collections, including historic structures, to create experiences that inspire people to discover the American experience in all of its diversity. Experiences include exhibitions, school and public programs, and publications. Additionally, the public has access to WRHS's online collections catalog, which provides access to textual documentation of WRHS's library and museum collections. The public may access 25,000 items on Digital Cleveland Starts Here, WRHS's online digital repository (www.saas.dgicloud.com). The WRHS Library is open to the public for research by appointment, and appointments may be made for research within the museum collection.

The following guidelines apply to research use of the museum collection:

- a. The public may access any WRHS collection, with the exception of collections with restricted access as stipulated by the donor. In this case, WRHS may work with researchers to receive permission from the donor for research.
- b. Collection documentation records, excluding donor files, are available for public research by appointment.
- c. Two copies of all information created/published using the WRHS collection shall be provided to WRHS upon completion.



- d. The copyrights of all object photographs taken by photographers not employed by WRHS remain in the custody of the organization.
2. Collections Care and Conservation: Care of the collection is a continuing responsibility accepted by WRHS on behalf of the general public. The fulfillment of this commitment requires the organization to ensure proper effort in the following areas:
- a. securing stable storage and exhibit environments;
 - b. protecting objects through disaster preparedness and planning;
 - c. providing training and instruction on proper care and handling of objects within the collection;
 - d. packing and shipping to provide maximum protection for the objects;
 - e. conducting periodic inventories of the permanent collection;
 - f. conservation of collections prioritized by condition and use;
 - g. ensuring safe and stable conditions for incoming loans;
 - h. confirming that use of objects for exhibit, programming, or research does not jeopardize the objects;
 - i. providing specialized care of sacred or culturally sensitive objects; and
 - j. insuring the WRHS collection appropriately.

H. PUBLIC DISCLOSURE:

This policy is ordered printed by the Board of Directors and a reference to it shall be imprinted on all deeds of gift of WRHS. A copy will be made available to any donor or prospective donor upon request. This Collections Policy will be disclosed on the WRHS website.



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Sources

American Alliance of Museums. (2019). *Direct Care of Collections: Ethics, Guidelines and Recommendations. March 2019 Update* [White Paper]. <https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Direct-Care-of-Collections-March-2019.pdf>

Ohio History Connection Collections Policy