



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY

approved June 8, 2009

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA
COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY

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PREAMBLE

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania is committed to the responsible stewardship of its collections. In 1984 the Society began drafting its first collection policy statement, which was completed and approved by the Board in 1987. That document covered areas of collections management, including acquisition, preservation, and access. Concurrent with the development of these policies, a Registration Department was established to coordinate the management of acquisitions, rights and reproductions, and exhibition loans for the three collection divisions, Library, Manuscripts, and Museum.

In 1991 HSP staff and the Collections Committee of the Board began revising the policy statement. In 1993 the Society's Board of Councilors adopted a Collections Management Policy that outlined official policy in the areas of collections development, care, and access. Although the basic outline of the 1993 policy has been retained, revisions and reviews have been made, particularly adjustments to the collections' scope when the museum collections were removed to the custody of the Atwater Kent Museum and HSP's merger with the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies in 2002.

The Collections Procedures Manual is based on the Policy and details the steps and responsibilities for carrying out policy. The manual is intended to serve as a reference guide primarily for staff, but councilors and volunteers may also find it informative and useful.

The initial drafting of the Manual began in 1992. Because this Manual is intended as a guide to current procedures, it has been updated several times since to reflect these changes. This Manual was substantively updated by the Staff Collections Committee in 2002 through 2004 and again in 2008-2009. The manual has been supplemented by several others, including the Printed Materials Cataloging manual, the Archives Department Processing Manual (CATMAN), which details the policy and procedure for archival collection management at HSP, and the Restricted Desk and Reference Desk manuals.

The Collections Committee of the Board is now called the Library Committee of the Board. The art and artifact collections at the Atwater Kent Museum are overseen by the Art and Artifact Committee of the Board.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Approved by the Board of Councilors January 25, 1993
Last revised by the Library Committee of the Board & approved by the Board of Councilors,
June 8, 2009

INTRODUCTION

The Collections Management Policy is a statement of the mission of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP) and an explanation of how the mission is pursued through collections activity. The policy guides the Board of Councilors, Staff, and Volunteers in carrying out their responsibilities for collections development, care, and access and is reviewed regularly. It includes ethical obligations that transcend legal requirements.

This policy is effective on the date of its adoption by the Board of Councilors and does not affect actions taken under previous policies and procedures.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania collects and shares stories of the peoples of Pennsylvania and their contributions to American history. Conserving and disseminating knowledge spanning the 17th century to the 21st, HSP opens minds.

I. RESPONSIBILITIES

HSP's first Charter was approved on June 2, 1826. The current Charter, approved May 8, 1957, and Bylaws guide the development of this document.

HSP's governing body is the Board of Councilors. The Board, elected by the members, consists of the officers and a number of Councilors not fewer than twelve.

The Board of Councilors has both fiduciary and policy-setting responsibilities to carry out the purposes for which the Society was formed. The Board may exercise all such powers of HSP and do all such lawful acts and things as are not by statute or by the Articles of Incorporation or by the Bylaws directed or required to be exercised or done by the members.

The President is the chief executive officer of HSP. The President implements the Board's policies, directs and manages HSP's activities, and reports to the Board Chair.

The Library Committee of the Board is a Standing Committee that is appointed by the Board Chair, subject to confirmation of the Board. One member of the committee is appointed by the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania. The Committee provides oversight for collections development, care, and access according to policies and procedures of the Collections Management Policy.

The Library Committee of the Board approves certain acquisitions, all deaccessions, loans from the collections, and deposits. The Committee Chair reports to the next meeting of the Board on actions taken. On determination of the Committee Chair, Board approval is sought whenever there is an issue of sensitivity or a commitment of resources that are not the subject of a previously approved budgetary allocation. Board approval is required whenever an item to be accessioned, deaccessioned, lent, or deposited is considered to be of notable historical significance or its reasonable estimated value exceeds \$25,000.

The Library Committee of the Board is responsible for periodic review of the Collections Management Policy and making recommendations for revisions for approval by the Board of Councilors.

The Library Division staff implements the Collections Management Policy. The Director of the Library and Collections directs and manages Library Division activities and reports to the President.

II. COLLECTIONS' SCOPE

The collections of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania include those of the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies and the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania and document, from the perspective of the Philadelphia region, the diverse members, migrations, and experiences of the American family, the roots of the United States, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's history. The Society focuses its collecting as follows:

Printed Holdings. These treat primarily:

- Pennsylvania and adjacent areas from the period of initial European encounters to the present
- The migrations of people to Pennsylvania and from Pennsylvania to points east of the Mississippi
- The selective study of ethnic communities across the United States, including their national organizational life and periodical production
- The nation's founding

Manuscripts. These treat primarily:

- The formation of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States
- The area centered on Eastern Pennsylvania (metropolitan Philadelphia in particular), southern New Jersey, and northern Delaware
- National ethnic organizations, especially those headquartered in the Mid-Atlantic region
- Other organizations and activities that reach across significant parts of the Mid-Atlantic region
- Pennsylvanians beyond the Commonwealth, among them merchants, soldiers, and tourists, as well as diplomats, artists, and explorers

Graphics. These illustrate primarily:

- The Philadelphia area, its architecture, landscapes, events, and people

The Society respects the collection scopes of other institutions while recognizing that there are instances when its collecting interests overlap with those of other repositories. The Society has a cooperative agreement with the Library Company of Philadelphia (LCP), adopted in 1965, by which LCP administers the Society's pre-1820 imprints while the Society administers LCP's manuscript collections. Both institutions retain ownership of their respective collections.

The Society does not collect government-owned documents or other property. It does not add to its art and artifact collection, in the limited custody and control of the Atwater Kent Museum since January 2002.

III. COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT

HSP develops collections through a process of ongoing acquisition and deaccession.

A. Acquisition

HSP acquires items for the collections by means of donation, purchase, exchange or any other transaction by which title to the items passes to HSP.

1. *Conditions*

HSP selects items for acquisition only under the following conditions.

- a. The item is useful to HSP's institutional mission and falls within the collections scope definition and collections development plan.
- b. The item is accepted for the permanent collections.
- c. The transferor's title to the item is free and clear and the item acquired is as represented.
- d. Transfer of the item to HSP is absolute.
- e. The transfer to HSP of any rights that the transferor may have in or to the item, the retention of any such rights by the transferor, and any conditions that the transferor wishes to place on the transfer are agreed upon in advance and stated clearly in writing.
- f. Financial resources for purchases exist.

HSP selects items for the collections with consideration given to the following conditions.

- g. The item is in good condition or resources exist to provide necessary conservation work.
- h. HSP can provide sufficient physical care for the item according to professionally accepted standards.
- i. HSP can provide sufficient intellectual access to the item.

2. *Procedure for donations*

- a. Level 1: Requires the approval of Director of the Library and the Director of the Archives.

The Director of the Library approves donations of printed materials. The Director of Archives approves additions to records of organizations for

which HSP serves as the designated archival repository. These donations are reported to the President, Library Committee of the Board, and the Board of Councilors.

- b. Level 2: Requires the approval of the Library Committee of the Board

The Director of the Library presents all other donations for acquisition to the President. The President recommends the donations to the Library Committee of the Board for approval.

- c. Level 3: Requires the approval of the Board of Councilors

On determination of the Committee Chair, Board approval is sought whenever there is an issue of sensitivity or a commitment of resources that are not the subject of a previously approved budgetary allocation. Board approval is required whenever an item to be donated is considered to be of notable historical significance or its reasonable estimated value exceeds \$25,000.

- d. Prior to approval for archival material, the transferor signs a legal instrument of conveyance, also known as a deed of gift, which sets forth an adequate description of the items involved and the precise terms of transfer, and which notes that the deed is effective only after approval by the Library Committee of the Board.
- e. Donors arrange for independent monetary appraisals. HSP does not appraise acquisitions for monetary value.

3. *Procedure for purchases*

- a. Level 1: Requires the approval of senior management

Consistent with existing management and staff procurement procedures, the authority for routine purchases of printed materials for the library of up to \$500 for any individual title or volume set may be made the Director of Library, at the continuing and sole discretion of the President.

All purchases of individual printed items over \$500 and up to and including \$1,000 must be approved by the President of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, or in the President's absence, the President's designee and the Director of the Library.

In cases where an auction or private offering transaction is involved, and a very narrow time window of opportunity exists, the senior management, as defined above, may authorize purchases (for either individual items or multiple items offered in a single auction or transaction event) of up to and including \$2,500. In cases where this additional authority is exercised, staff will report to the Library Committee in writing as soon as practical

following the purchase for all transaction events where \$1,000 or more has been spent.

Staff may not spend more than \$2,500 in any month without expressed approval of the Library Committee.

Staff reports to the Library Committee no less than bi-monthly (summertime excepted) with written summary data on all recent purchase activity.

- b. Level 2: Requires the approval of the Library Committee of the Board

All purchases of individual items in excess of \$1,000, but less than \$25,000, must be approved by the Library Committee of the Board, except as noted above.

- c. Level 3: Requires the approval of The Board of Councilors

On determination of the Committee Chair, Board approval is sought whenever there is an issue of sensitivity or a commitment of resources that are not the subject of a previously approved budgetary allocation. Board approval is required whenever an item to be purchased is considered to be of notable historical significance or its value exceeds \$25,000.

In considering all purchase opportunities, prior to purchase staff will be responsible for judging the merits of the proposed titles with respect to the appropriateness and incremental value to the Society's collections. Prior to purchase, staff will also be responsible for making reasonable inquiry as to the proposed transaction's integrity, to include such inquiry as may be reasonably necessary of the seller(s), and any persons acting in a representative capacity for the seller(s), as well as any and all representations made in relation to the proposed transaction and or item(s) under consideration regarding the authenticity, provenance, and or title to any item(s) to be considered.

B. Deaccession

Items are removed from the collections by means of sale, exchange, transfer, donation, or witnessed destruction. Preference is given to a disposal method that benefits another collecting institution, represents the intent of the acquisition, and provides that a removed item remains in the accessible to the public.

1. Conditions

HSP selects items for deaccessioning only under the following conditions.

- a. There are no known legal restrictions relating to disposition on the item.

- b. The method of disposal is in the best interests of HSP and the public it serves.

HSP deaccessions items with consideration given to the following conditions.

- c. The item is no longer useful to HSP's institutional mission and does not fall within the collections scope definition and collections development plan.
- d. The item duplicates a better example, edition, or image in the collection.
- e. The item no longer retains its physical integrity, its identity, or its authenticity.
- f. HSP cannot provide sufficient physical care for the item according to professionally accepted standards.
- g. The item is in danger of damaging other parts of the collections.
- h. HSP cannot provide sufficient intellectual access to the item.
- i. HSP can record and retain information that is unique to the item but the item itself is otherwise of no value to HSP.
- j. The item is provenentially and thematically related to a significant body of material at another repository and reuniting it with that body of material would significantly enhance its contextual value for researchers.
- k. HSP's possession of the item is not legitimate, because the item was stolen, improperly removed from another repository, or illegally exported or imported.
- l. The authenticity or attribution of the item is determined to be false or fraudulent and the item lacks sufficient research value to warrant retention. (Deaccession of an item determined to be a forgery shall be done in such a way as to minimize the risk that others will be misled as to its authenticity.)

2. *Procedure*

- a. Based on the conditions described above, the Director of the Library, on the recommendation of staff (and approval by the Staff Collections Committee), proposes items for deaccession to the President. The President recommends deaccessions to the Library Committee of the Board for its approval. On determination of the Committee Chair, Board approval is sought whenever there is an issue of sensitivity or a commitment of resources that are not the subject of a previously approved budgetary allocation. Board approval is required whenever an item to be

deaccessioned is considered to be of notable historical significance or its reasonable estimated value exceeds \$25,000.

- b. The method of disposal is included in the deaccession recommendations.
- c. Any transaction with the appearance of a conflict of interest is fully considered and documented. Under no circumstances is ownership to be transferred to any of HSP's Councilors, Staff or Volunteers, or their representatives or families.
- d. Proceeds from sales are placed in the Board-designated endowment, to be used for acquiring other collection items, for the direct care of collection items, or for collections management. Direct care and collections management include activities and expenses primarily concerned with collections care and management (e.g. curatorial salaries; storage costs, including rent, security, equipment, and utilities for storage space that is exclusively for collections; packing and storage supplies; conservation treatment or other preservation expenses). Expenditures that are not primarily for collections care or management may not be paid with the proceeds from deaccessioning. Examples include salaries of administrative personnel; costs of public programs; costs of general building operations for mixed-use spaces, such as painting or air conditioning of administrative offices.

3. *Limitations on applicability*

- a. The deaccession policy does not apply to material that is weeded during the processing of manuscript or archival collections in accordance with professionally accepted best practice. Typical weeded items include duplicate items, newspaper clippings that have been preservation photocopied, routine circulars, receipts, cancelled checks, and routine, non-substantive correspondence.
- b. The deaccession policy does not apply to books or other printed material acquired but not cataloged that are found to be duplicated in HSP's holdings or are outside of our collection scope.

IV. COLLECTIONS CARE

HSP maintains physical control of its collections through preservation, conservation, replacement, insurance, and documentation. The Library Division staff monitors the condition of the collections and is responsible for maintaining collections care. The Library staff informs the Library Committee of the Board on priorities and programs for collections care. The Library staff proposes to the President for approval collections care projects that require a commitment of resources that have not been within a previously approved budget.

A. Preservation

HSP strives to prevent deterioration or loss of collections while in storage, on exhibition, in research areas, or in transit, in the following ways.

1. Loss from factors like temperature, humidity, dust, light, mold, and insect infestation is minimized through building maintenance and the mechanical, electronic, and storage systems.
2. Loss from careless handling is minimized through established rules and procedures that authorize the person or persons who can handle collections and how they are handled. The Library staff is authorized to deny users access to the collections when careless handling or other negligence is observed.
3. Loss from theft is minimized through staff supervision, electronic security and surveillance systems, and other security procedures that monitor patrons and staff. Staff is authorized to inspect packages and personal belongings of visitors.
4. Loss from fire, flood, and other emergencies and disasters is prevented through established emergency response plans and procedures.

B. Conservation

HSP conserves an item to halt deterioration or return it as close as possible to its original state, under the following conditions.

1. It is necessary to prevent deterioration or loss of the item, or it is desirable for aesthetic reintegration.
2. The historic, artistic, and aesthetic integrity can be retained or restored.
3. The treatment is reversible except in circumstances where no other reasonable treatment can prevent the loss of an item.

C. Replacement

HSP replaces an item with a duplicate or alternative format copy or substitute that

provides as much as possible the qualities of the original under one or more of the following conditions.

1. The item is beyond repair.
2. The item is in danger of sustaining irreparable damage or damaging surrounding materials.
3. The item is a reference work that is replaced by an updated edition.

D. Insurance

1. HSP does not substitute insurance coverage for responsible collections care.
2. HSP maintains designated nominal coverage with respect to its collections located on the premises and in temporary locations off-site through a standard fine arts insurance policy primarily to underwrite conservation costs.

HSP does not insure items on the premises that are not part of the permanent collections, except by special arrangement.

E. Documentation

HSP creates, holds, and maintains documentation of collections development, care, and access.

1. Collections development documentation includes accession and deaccession records, including receipts, provenance, conditions of acquisition, and methods of disposal.
2. Collections care documentation includes inventory records documenting location within and outside the building, physical condition and storage facilities reports, treatment reports, damage or loss reports, and insurance records.
3. Collections access documentation includes exhibition loan agreements and related records, publication reproduction records, and other permissions for use.

V. COLLECTIONS ACCESS

HSP encourages wide access to its collections through reference aids, examination, exhibition, reproduction and publication. Access may be restricted because of resource limitations, care requirements, confidentiality, or other considerations. Appropriate fees for access are established by the President on the recommendation of the Library staff.

A. Reference Aids

Collections access is assisted through unpublished and published reference aids, including online and card catalogs, finding aids, indexes, inventories, collection files, databases, guides, and other internal and external systems. Some of these reference aids are available via the Society's website.

1. Reference aids are prepared by Library staff according to professional standards and appropriate institutional practice.
2. HSP is not responsible for reference aids prepared by outside individuals or institutions in which HSP's collections appear.
3. Access to confidential collections information, including provenance and value, may be restricted as determined by the Library staff.

B. Research

Collections are available for research at HSP during established public hours or by special arrangement. Copies of items in the collections may be requested for off-site research.

1. Rules for handling are established and enforced by the Library staff.
2. Special research privileges are not granted except in extraordinary circumstances and with the approval of the Director of the Library.
3. Use of an item may be restricted due to its condition or for legal privacy reasons.
4. Use of an item may be restricted under terms that are included in the deed of gift or invoice.
5. Photocopy, microfilm, digital, or other copies of collections are supplied through procedures established by Library staff and are for reference use only. Written permission for other use, including exhibitions and publications, must be secured from HSP.

C. Exhibition

Items are used in HSP's exhibits and are lent for exhibitions at other qualified institutions.

1. Conditions

The Library staff approves items for HSP exhibitions with consideration given to the following conditions.

- a. The item is available and not needed for other HSP exhibitions or programs.
- b. The item is in suitable physical and aesthetic condition.
- c. The item can be provided with suitable conditions for its care and safety.
- d. The item is presented in a manner that preserves its intellectual integrity.
- e. The borrower is a museum, historical society, or other educational, non-profit institution, open to the public and dedicated to a public function.
- f. The borrower assumes all costs of the loan, including documentation, transportation, conservation, and insurance.
- g. The borrower gives appropriate credit to HSP.

2. Procedure

The President recommends loans of items for exhibition to the Library Committee of the Board for approval. On determination of the Committee Chair, Board approval is sought whenever there is an issue of sensitivity or a commitment of resources that are not the subject of a previously approved budgetary allocation. Board approval is required whenever an item to be lent is considered to be of notable historical significance or its reasonable estimated value exceeds \$25,000.

D. Digital Reproduction and Publication

HSP permits digital reproduction and publication of collection materials in books, newspapers, advertisements, exhibitions, microform publications, web sites, and other formats under the following conditions.

1. The user assumes all responsibility for any infringement of the U.S. Copyright Code. HSP does not claim to control copyright on collection originals unless such copyright has been transferred to HSP, but the society does hold copyright to digital images created by HSP staff.

2. Published digital reproductions are permitted only from copies supplied by the HSP, except under circumstances approved by the Library staff.
3. The user gives appropriate credit to HSP as owner of the item.
4. The item is used in a manner that respects its physical and intellectual integrity.
5. Permission is granted by Rights & Reproductions staff for one-time use only, after an official request is submitted.
6. Exclusive rights for use are not granted.
7. HSP does not surrender its rights as owner of the item by granting permission for digital reproduction.

VI. NON-COLLECTION MATERIALS

Items that are placed with HSP but are not part of its collections include items on loan for exhibition, permanent deposits, items acquired for HSP programs, or items held in storage. HSP accepts these items only for the advancement of HSP's mission and not as an endorsement or to enhance their value. HSP is not responsible for items that are received at HSP without the previous knowledge of Library staff or the President.

A. Loans for exhibition

HSP borrows items from private sources and public institutions for its own exhibition programs. HSP exercises the same degree of care for items on loan at HSP as it does for items in its own collections (except that HSP may provide special insurance for items on loan and satisfy other conditions which are imposed by the lending source as requirements for the loan of items to HSP). Loans to HSP are approved by the President on the recommendation of the Director of Education and Interpretation.

B. Deposits

HSP receives solicited items on deposit. HSP cares for deposits as it does its own collections but it does not insure deposited items except by special agreement.

1. *Conditions*

Deposits are approved with consideration for the following conditions.

- a. The item meets the conditions for acquisition, including its relevance to HSP's mission, HSP's ability to provide care and access, and assurances that free and clear title belongs to the depositor.
- b. There is the potential that the item may be acquired by HSP.
- c. The terms of the deposit, including the duration and the disposition of the item, are agreed upon in writing with the depositor.
- d. If the deposit cannot be returned at the end of the deposit period, the President on the recommendation of the Library staff may seek legal counsel.

2. *Procedure*

The President recommends permanent deposits to the Library Committee of the Board for its approval. On determination of the Committee Chair, Board approval is sought whenever there is an issue of sensitivity or a commitment of resources that are not the subject of a previously approved budgetary allocation.

Board approval is required whenever an item to be deposited is considered to be of notable historical significance or its reasonable estimated value exceeds \$25,000.

C. Program materials

HSP accepts items for use in its programming, as determined by Education and Interpretation staff.

1. An item offered for program purposes may be considered for the collections according to acquisition policies and procedures.
2. An item used for programs is not subject to HSP's collections policies and procedures and therefore may be disposed of or discarded.

D. Storage

Items are stored at HSP by other organizations according to fees and conditions approved by the President, coordinated by the Director of the Library.

VII. GLOSSARY

Accession: (1) item(s) added to the collections; (2) the act of recording/processing an addition to the collections.

Acquisition: an addition to the collections, by purchase, donation, transfer, exchange, or bequest, for which title is given to HSP.

Alternative format copy: a reproduction of the complete substance of an item in a physical medium different from the original.

Appraisal: a valuation of property.

Archival materials: a broad term used to encompass manuscript, graphic, and ephemeral materials; everything not included in the “printed materials” category.

Catalog: (1) online public access catalog (OPAC); (2) an alphabetical card file; (3) a list of things exhibited, usually with descriptive comments and often illustrations; (4) the act of classifying items methodically, usually with descriptive detail.

Collections: tangible objects owned by HSP for the public trust and intended to be held for the foreseeable future, to be cared for and accessible.

Conservation: individualized treatment which prevents or delays future degradation of items. (see also Preservation)

Copyright: the exclusive right, granted by law, of the creator of a work (or his or her assignees or employers) to make or dispose of copies and otherwise control the use of a literary, dramatic, musical, artistic or other work. Ownership of copyright in a work does not necessarily pass with ownership of the work itself.

Current printed materials: this phrase is used to describe those acquisitions that are presented to the Library Committee of the Board for their information only and do not require Board approval. These include books, pamphlets, serials, and broadsides published within the last 25 years.

Deaccession: (1) item(s) removed permanently from the collections; (2) the process of removing an item permanently from the collections.

Deposit: item(s) placed at HSP for research purposes while the title remains with the depositor. (See also Loan.)

Digitization: the process of transforming analog material into binary electronic (digital) form, especially for storage and use in a computer. This has replaced HSP’s former practice of film photographic reproduction.

Fiduciary: designating or of a person who holds something in trust for another; of a trustee or trusteeship.

Graphics: archival materials at HSP that are considered “graphics” include photographs, prints, broadsides, and maps.

Intellectual access: a way or means of understanding and using the informational content of material.

Inventory: (1) an itemized listing of items, usually of items for which HSP has assumed responsibility through either Accession, Deposit, or Loan; (2) the act of physically locating all or a random selection of the items for which HSP is responsible.

Library Division: the division of HSP responsible for the administration of collections; it includes the Library Administration, Archives, Cataloging, Research Services, and Conservation departments.

Loan: item(s) borrowed by HSP or from HSP for exhibition purposes. (See also Deposit.)

Non-Collections material: item(s) that HSP does not intend to accession or for which HSP does not own title.

Preservation: broader measures that prevent or delay future degradation of collections, e.g., the provision of environmentally sound and secure storage, the withdrawal, restriction or copying of fragile items.

Printed materials: traditional library holdings, such as books, pamphlets, serials, and broadsides; everything not included in the “archival materials” category.

Provenance: the place of origin or source, the history of transmission of ownership.

Restriction: limit or restraint on the use of an item.