

Policy No. COL-100

Collections Management Policy

Applies to: All trustees, employees, volunteers, and contractors of the Eastern Washington State Historical Society (EWSHS).

References that apply to this policy: Listed below are some, but not all, applicable governing requirements. Note: Laws and rules may change over time and such changes may take precedence over this policy.

- RCW 27.34.070
- Chapter 63.26 RCW
- EWSHS Articles of Incorporation
- Ethics Policy, GOV-103
- NAGPRA Policy Statement COL-101
- Digital Preservation Policy COL-102
- Association of Art Museum Directors: Professional Practices in Art Museums

Effective date: May 21, 2025

History: This policy updates COL-100 dated January 6, 2021, which updated and renumbered previous BP #139 dated January 2017. BP #139 was originally approved by the EWSHS Board of Trustees in January 2013.

Approved by: EWSHS Board of Trustees.

Purpose

- Authority:** RCW 27.34.070(1)(a) designates the Eastern Washington State Historical Society (EWSHS) as “a trustee for the state whose powers and duties include but are not limited to the following: To collect, catalog, preserve, and interpret objects, manuscripts, sites, photographs, and other materials illustrative of the cultural, artistic, and natural history of this state.” EWSHS's Articles of Incorporation empower the EWSHS to develop collections that are of significant artistic, cultural and historic merit.
- Mission:** EWSHS mission, vision, and values are detailed here: [About the MAC » Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture](#).
- Purpose of Collections Management Policy:** This policy articulates the framework by which EWSHS and its representatives pursue its mission through the development and stewardship of collections.

- D. **Responsibility for Implementation:** EWSHS's Executive Director shall be responsible for implementing the Collections Management Policy and overseeing the development and maintenance of the Collection Plan.
- E. **Ethics Statement:** Staff, Board of Trustees, and other representatives of EWSHS must act responsibly, ethically, and legally in acquiring and disposing of items for and from the permanent collection, according to this Collections Management Policy and Ethics Policy, GOV-103.
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Definitions

Acquisition: Item(s) accepted by the EWSHS to further its mission.

Accession:

- (1) Acquisition(s) formally accepted into EWSHS's permanent collection.
- (2) The process of formally accepting and recording an item into EWSHS's permanent collection.

Accrediting and Professional Organizations:

Alliance of American Museums (AAM): The accrediting organization of the American Museum Field. In addition to offering accreditation, AAM advocates for the museum field and offers advice and training to museums and those in the museum field.

Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD): The organization used by EWSHS to guide deaccession policy. AAMD is a professional organization that advocates for and offers guidance for art museums.

Society of American Archivists (SAA): The organization used by EWSHS to guide policies and procedures for Archives and Special Collections. SAA is a professional organization that advocates for and offers guidance for archives and archivists.

Collections Management Policy: Defines the framework for acquiring, caring for, deaccessioning, and disposing of collections.

Collection Plan: Provides details of the current collection, identifies priorities for targeted acquisition or deaccession, and details the methodology and procedures for object identification, collection, accessioning, cataloguing, and deaccession.

Deaccession:

- (1) Any formally accessioned acquisition which is removed from the permanent collection.
- (2) The process of removing an accession.

Development: Activities undertaken by EWSHS to raise funds for museum operation or capital expenses and endowment.

Disposal: The final disposition of deaccessioned items. Disposal may include but is not limited to sale at public auction, transfer to another institution or organization, and/or physical destruction.

Direct Care of Collections: Supplies, activities, contract labor, and/or packing and transportation costs for activities that directly enhance the lifetime, usefulness, and/or condition of items in EWSHS collections, including but not limited to housing and storage supplies, conservation assessments and treatments, and emergency and disaster mitigation activities.

Permanent Collection: Acquisitions that have been formally accessioned by EWSHS.

Loans: Temporary transfers of objects and materials to or from EWSHS that do not involve a change of ownership.

Object or Materials Placed in the Custody of EWSHS: Objects or materials left with the EWSHS for other than loan purposes (for example, for attribution, identification, examination for possible gift or purchase, custodial storage).

Traditional Care and Handling: EWSHS' interpretation of a body of knowledge residing in a community that pertains to the proper care and treatment of that particular community's material objects. EWSHS' American Indian Cultural Council (AICC) serves as the advisory body regarding traditional care guidelines for American Indian communities.

Collections Policies

A. Acquisition

1. The authority to acquire materials and objects for the permanent collection is delegated to the Executive Director by the Board of Trustees. The Executive Director may further delegate such authority to the appropriate curators or collection managers to acquire items for the permanent collection.
2. Materials and objects may be acquired by purchase, gift, exchange, and abandonment.
3. Conditions of transfer of ownership must be stipulated in a legal instrument of conveyance, which describes the materials and objects to be transferred, and the source of such materials and objects. Such legal instruments include but are not limited to statement of gift, sales receipt, legal estate documentation, or records retained when fulfilling Unclaimed Property Held by Museum or Historical Society, Chapter 63.26 RCW.
4. A copy of the legal instrument of transfer is provided to the source of the materials and objects, and a copy is to be held permanently on file at EWSHS. Both copies must be signed by the authorized representative of EWSHS and the source of the materials and objects.
5. Materials and objects acquired for the permanent collection must only be obtained with free and clear title and with full rights.

6. If materials and objects are accepted with restrictions or limitations the conditions must be stated clearly on the instrument of conveyance and become part of the permanent accession record.
7. Materials and objects acquired for the permanent collection must be accessioned and catalogued as soon as practicable after being received.

B. Deaccession

1. To deaccession materials or objects from the permanent collection, the Executive Director must make a recommendation to the EWSHS Board of Trustees.
2. EWSHS Board of Trustees must review and consider all objects and materials which have been recommended for deaccessioning. The EWSHS Board of Trustees is the approval authority for final deaccession decisions.
3. Materials and objects approved by the EWSHS Board of Trustees for deaccession must be disposed of in a manner deemed appropriate by the Executive Director and in accordance with to the AAMD “Professional Practices in Art Museums” standards.
4. Income from the disposal of deaccessioned materials and objects must be clearly identified in financial reports and only be utilized for purchasing new acquisitions or for Direct Care of Collections. Use of income from the disposal of deaccessioned materials for direct care of collections must be approved by the Executive Director. Use of income from the disposal of deaccessioned materials for purchasing new acquisitions shall follow all standards, policies, and procedures for purchasing new acquisitions and requires no additional approval.

C. Loans

1. Loans Out

- a. EWSHS may loan objects and materials for specified periods of time from its permanent collections to museums, galleries, and institutions for educational exhibits and cultural purposes. Loans should generally not exceed two years. Loans of greater duration may be considered with sufficient additional justification if specifically approved by the Executive Director.
- b. The loan of objects or materials to individuals is prohibited.
- c. All loans out must be approved by the Executive Director.

2. *Loans In*

- a. EWSHS may accept incoming loans from individuals or institutions for a specified period of time for educational and cultural purposes. Loans should generally not exceed two years. Loans of greater duration may be considered with sufficient additional justification if specifically approved by the Executive Director.
- b. EWSHS may enter into custodial agreements with tribal groups, museums, or institutions with missions similar to EWSHS in order to protect and preserve materials and objects that are relevant to the mission of EWSHS.
- c. EWSHS may temporarily accept objects and materials for the purpose of identification and for the purposes of consideration for acquisition or loan.
- d. All loans in must be approved by EWSHS Collections Staff with authority as delegated by the Executive Director.

Acquisition and Deaccession Guidelines

- A. **Scope of Collections:** Objects and materials selected for EWSHS permanent collection represent three major categories: art, regional history, and American Indian and other Indigenous cultures. EWSHS collects from these three categories in both its objects and archival collections. All objects and materials considered for acquisition, or held in the permanent collection must be in conformance with the approved Collection Plan.

Development and Maintenance of Collection Plan: In furtherance of the objectives of the Collections Management Policy, the Board directs the Executive Director to oversee EWSHS staff development and maintenance of a Collection Plan. The Collection Plan shall provide details of the current collection, identifies priorities for targeted acquisition or deaccession, and details the methodology and procedures for object identification, collection, accessioning, cataloguing, and deaccession.

- B. **General Criteria for Acquisition:**

1. Proposed acquisitions should be in the best interest of EWSHS, the public it serves, and the public trust it represents.
2. Only materials that relate to and are consistent with the Scope of Collections shall be considered for accessioning into the permanent collection.
3. Items must be of excellent quality and significance and be in a stable state of preservation. Exceptions for preservation state must be approved by the relevant Curator and Executive Director.
4. Hazardous items are not collected.
5. EWSHS must be able to obtain clear title to any proposed acquisition.

6. All collecting must be in accordance with the highest standards or professional practice, consistent with guidelines promulgated by the American Alliance for Museums (AAM), Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), and in compliance with State, Federal, and International law.
- C. **Acceptance for Development Purposes:** EWSHS may accept objects and materials for Development purposes. Such activities must not compete with acquisition for the permanent collection. The Executive Director establishes the procedures for handling and accounting for such gifts.
- D. **General Criteria for Deaccession:**
1. Materials may be considered for deaccession due to the following conditions:
 - a. Items subject to repatriation under State, Federal, or International law or according to EWSHS's missions, values, or other ethical considerations as approved by the Board of Trustees and in accordance with NAGPRA Policy Statement COL-101.
 - b. Items that are misaligned with the current collecting scope as defined in the Collections Plan.
 - c. Items with deterioration of physical condition beyond EWSHS's reasonable efforts and financial capacity to conserve as determined by EWSHS's professional staff and Board of Trustees.
 - d. Items previously accessioned in error by EWSHS as determined by EWSHS's professional staff and Board of Trustees, such as materials produced by EWSHS that are, by law, institutional records.
 - e. Items that were donated, sold, or transferred to EWSHS by a party that was not the rightful owner of the material at the time, as determined by EWSHS's professional staff and Board of Trustees.
 - f. Items that contain information that poses a security or legal risk, including but not limited to social security information, personally identifiable information, materials subject to attorney-client confidentiality, and confidential building details, as determined by EWSHS's professional staff and Board of Trustees.
 - g. Items that pose a hazard to health and human safety beyond EWSHS's reasonable efforts to mitigate as determined by EWSHS's professional staff and Board of Trustees.
 - h. Items that are themselves, or possession of which, is in violation of state, federal, or international laws.
 - i. Items that are duplicates or duplicates of lesser condition or quality as other items in the EWSHS collection, as determined by EWSHS's professional staff and Board of Trustees.
 - j. Items that are forgeries, inauthentic, or otherwise shown not to be what they were purported to be at the time of accession, as determined by EWSHS's professional staff and Board of Trustees.

Collections Care, Conservation, and Records Management

- A. **Collection Care:** EWSHS shall care for objects and materials in its custody through appropriate allocation of resources and adherence to AAM, archival, conservation, and cultural practices. Such care includes but is not limited to, maintaining appropriate temperature and humidity controls, managing secure collections and exhibitions access, practicing safe storage and handling, enforcing integrated pest management, carrying out preventative conservation and consulting conservators for expert advice and treatment. EWSHS is committed to following Traditional Care and Handling principles in consultation with American Indian Tribes and its American Indian Cultural Council, deferring to this guidance whenever possible over commonly accepted Museum and Archival practices when there is conflict.
- B. **Records Management**
1. All records of the permanent collections, including records of conveyance, accession records, loan, registration, and inventory records, including digital records, shall be organized according to professional standards and housed to ensure their preservation, access, and retrieval.
 2. Records of objects and materials taken in by EWSHS as loans, including loan agreements and registration records, are retained permanently and are organized according to professional standards. They are housed to ensure their preservation, access, and retrieval.
 3. Digital Records follow guidance established by the Digital Preservation Policy COL-102.
- C. **Inventory:** EWSHS will physically inventory the entire collection every ten (10) years in order to confirm collection item locations. This inventory may occur over a period of time.

Access

- A. **Access to Collections**
1. EWSHS's collections shall be made available for study, research, inquiry, and examination depending upon staff availability, conservation considerations, condition of collections, cultural restrictions to collections, legal restrictions, or purpose or nature of examination. Access to a collection must be approved by staff with authority over the collection.
 2. Use of permanent collections for the purpose of loan, exhibit, or research requires that the requested materials and objects be organized according to EWSHS collections procedures prior to access.

3. Access to collections storage and workrooms shall be limited by job function. No member of the public at large or contractor may access collections storage or workrooms without an authorized staff escort. Gallery spaces must always be either secured or supervised by dedicated security or collections personnel. Campbell House and Carriage House must always be either secured or supervised by dedicated security, collections personnel, or education staff.
- B. **Access to Records:** EWSHS's collection records shall be made available for study, research, inquiry, and examination depending upon staff availability, condition of records, legal or cultural restrictions to records, or purpose or nature of examination. Access to collection records must be approved by staff with authority over the collection.