

# **Collections Management Policy**

Fenimore Art Museum

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The Farmers' Museum

Approved by:

The Farmers' Museum Board of Directors, August 2021

Fenimore Art Museum Board of Trustees, August 2021

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## 1 PURPOSE

Fenimore Art Museum (FAM)<sup>1</sup> and The Farmers' Museum (TFM) are non-profit educational institutions located in Cooperstown, New York. FAM operates a Research Library which supports all institutions mentioned in this document. The institutions also share other overhead expenses related to collections management and care, and the salaried staff responsible for those duties.<sup>2</sup>

In furtherance of their separate charters and missions, the institutions acquire, manage, preserve, and use artifact collections. This document establishes the professional policies under which the institutions manage the collections under their care; its spirit and principles apply to collections owned or cared for by Fenimore Art Museum, its Research Library and The Farmers' Museum, Inc. Although the institutions have operated in tandem since the early 1940s, differences in missions, operations and governance set each apart from the other:

*Governance:* Fenimore Art Museum is governed by a Board of Trustees, The Farmers' Museum by a Board of Directors. For this document "Board" will be used when those bodies are spoken of communally as the governing organizations. Other differences in procedure and policy are noted throughout where applicable.

*Names:* For the purposes of this document, the organizations are known collectively as "the institutions."

Although this document describes the policies of two organizations, each governing body is responsible only for the contents of the collection owned and cared for by the institution it governs. Activities for each collection are reported only to the governing body concerned with and responsible for that collection.

## 2 FOUNDING DOCUMENTS

### 2.1 Charters

#### Fenimore Art Museum Charter

Fenimore Art Museum received an absolute Charter from the New York State Board of Regents April 24, 1899.<sup>3</sup> The Charter purposes of the Museum are:

- To promote and encourage the study of art, culture, and history and the conduct of original research on such topics;
- To disseminate a greater knowledge of art, culture, and history including, but not limited to, the art, culture, and history of the State of New York, by means of exhibitions, lectures, meetings, educational programming, live theatrical and other performances and reenactments, and the publication and distribution of material and literature on artistic, cultural, or historical subjects;
- To collect, procure, preserve, research, display, and make accessible paintings, sculpture, manuscripts, books, papers, objects, and other works of art or materials of other artistic, cultural, or historical interest;
- To promote the work of artistic, cultural, and historical societies and other organizations interested in art, culture, and history;
- To provide cultural enrichment for residents of and visitors to Cooperstown and Central New York.

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<sup>1</sup> On March 13, 2017, the New York State Board of Regents granted an amendment to the New York State Historical Association's charter to change the name of the organization to Fenimore Art Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum of Understanding between The Farmers' Museum, Inc and The New York State Historical Association, January 1, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> The Charter was amended in April 1913, May 1926, and May 1946 (all amendments pertain to headquarters location), and March 2017 (name change).

### The Farmers' Museum Charter

The Farmers' Museum received an absolute Charter from the New York State Board of Regents April 16, 1943. The Charter purposes of the Museum are:

- to promote the welfare of the inhabitants of, and the improvement of conditions in, one or more rural communities and towns in the State of New York;
- to study farm and rural community life; to stimulate an interest in and to promote better farm methods, and better farming and rural conditions; to study and promote better methods in agriculture and in the care and breeding of livestock;
- to collect and acquire implements, utensils, tools, equipment, books, furniture, furnishings, and other articles or devices, of American farms and rural communities, and to preserve and exhibit the same in such a manner as to be accessible to all interested therein; to acquire, establish, equip, maintain and operate a museum or museums, a repository or repositories for the care, preservation and display thereof;
- to create and dedicate a memorial or memorials to a person or persons selected by the corporation;
- to create and set up exhibits of the crafts and the activities of American farm and community life;
- to stimulate an interest in, and study of, American farm and community life; and,
- to publish and distribute articles, manuscripts, reports, booklets and photographs pertaining to farm and rural life.

## 2.2 Missions

### Fenimore Art Museum<sup>4</sup>

Preserving Engaging Educating

Welcoming and connecting people to our shared cultural heritage through exhibitions and programs that engage, delight, and inspire.

### The Farmers' Museum<sup>5</sup>

Cultivating an understanding of the rural heritage that has shaped our land, our communities and American culture.

## 3 SCOPE, USE AND MANAGEMENT OF COLLECTIONS

The institutions collect items relating to each of their founding documents and missions. When appropriate, the institutions may collect items in support of the Collection as a whole.

### 3.1 Scopes of Collections

#### Fenimore Art Museum

FAM cares for, develops, and continually refines collections of the highest aesthetic, cultural and historical significance, limited to the following areas:

- American Academic Art, American Folk Art, and Historic and Contemporary American Photography illustrative of a diverse American experience.
- Art of the North American Indians.
- Compelling objects and primary source material with New York State provenance that illustrate stories essential to understanding Central New York life, especially in Otsego, Chenango, Delaware, Greene, Herkimer, Madison and Montgomery counties.

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<sup>4</sup> Adopted by the Board of Trustees, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Adopted by the Board of Directors, July 12, 2007.

### The Farmers' Museum

The Farmers' Museum seeks to maintain and continually develop culturally and historically significant collections. In particular, the museum focuses its collecting activities on the following:

- Farm tools and implements, especially those representing the agricultural history of Central New York, from the colonial period to date.
- Craft and industrial tools and equipment representative of rural and village industry in Central New York.
- Historic structures typical of Central New York farmsteads and rural villages.
- Decorative arts and material culture representative of Central New York village and rural life.
- Historic and Contemporary photography reflecting rural and agricultural life in New York State.

### 3.2 Uses of the Collection

The institutions collect for both *documentary* and *secondary* purposes.

3.2.1 The *Documentary Collections* consist of original, rare, and often irreplaceable historical, art and manuscript objects that should be preserved for future generations. Many of these objects have a known provenance that increases their documentary value. Objects in the *Documentary Collection* may be used for research and exhibition. The institutions will not use *Documentary Collection* objects in any way that is detrimental to their preservation.

3.2.2 The *Secondary Collections* consist of adaptations, modern reproductions, restored objects, and some period items. Period artifact collections may be placed in this category provided that a duplicate or closely similar object is represented in the institutions' *Documentary Collections* or in the collection of a comparable institution. *Secondary Collections* material is chosen for its usefulness in interpretive and education programs, and support of curatorial staff; they are intentionally released for handling, use, research and education with the understanding that this will limit the life of the materials. Library books that fall outside of the *Documentary Collection* are managed in accordance with the Library Collection Development Procedure Manual maintained by appropriate staff.

## 4 MANAGEMENT OF THE COLLECTIONS

- 4.1 Objects in the *Documentary Collection* are considered for acquisition by the Collections Advisory Committee and are accessioned, cataloged and tracked by appropriate curatorial staff. They may be removed from the collection only through the deaccession process delineated in this policy.
- 4.2 Objects in the *Secondary Collections* are approved by the Collections Advisory Committee, registered, cataloged and tracked by appropriate curatorial staff; are not accessioned and are removed from the collection when no longer useful; removal from the *Secondary Collection* is recorded by appropriate curatorial staff.
- 4.3 *Documentary Collection* objects may be transferred to the *Secondary Collections* only through the deaccession process.
- 4.4 *Secondary Collection* objects may be transferred to the *Documentary Collections* only through the accession process.

## 5 AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

- 5.1 The Boards have the fiduciary responsibility for the protection of assets of their separate institutions including the collections. The Boards are also required to ensure that the collections are carefully preserved and properly and effectively used for public educational purposes. This document, as adopted by the Boards, establishes general policies governing the acquisition, ownership, and use of collections.

- 5.2 The Boards delegate authority for the implementation of this policy to the President and CEO. The President and CEO shall delegate various authorities and responsibilities to senior leadership and staff in collecting areas.
- 5.3 Appropriate curatorial staff maintains procedural manuals for the management of collections in accordance with this policy.
- 5.4 The Vice President for Operations maintains the institutions' Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan and consults regularly with curatorial staff to keep the provisions relating to the collections up to date.
- 5.5 The institutions, their staff and boards shall adhere to the Codes of Ethics of The American Alliance of Museums and The American Library Association. Other Codes of Ethics endorsed by related professional organizations are consulted as needed.
- 5.6 The Boards have adopted Codes of Ethics for the institutions that mandate high standards for board and staff members in all areas of operation, including collections.

## 6 ACQUISITION AND ACCESSIONING

### 6.1 Methods

Collection items may be acquired by purchase, commission, bequest, gift, specified purpose or loan or deposit, exchange, field collection, excavation, levy by creditors, abandonment, reversionary clause, and adverse possession. Collection items may be acquired only in accordance with this policy and only when consistent with applicable law and professional ethics. All applicable federal, state, local and international laws, treaties, regulations, and conventions will be observed in the acquisition process and compliance will be documented as required. All associated rights, title, and interest shall be obtained by the acquiring institution whenever possible. If possible, all acquisitions shall either be made without attached restrictions or limiting conditions or shall have the potential of being converted to free and clear title under appropriate law.

### 6.2 Criteria

Items considered for the collections must meet all of the following criteria before being acquired by either institution:

- 6.2.1 The present owner must have clear title.
- 6.2.2 If for sale, funding must be arranged before purchase either within annual budgets or restricted funds approved by the Boards or from other sources.
- 6.2.3 If for sale, a fair market value must be determined and accepted by both parties.
- 6.2.4 The institutions must be in a position to care properly for the proposed acquisition. The acceptance of the acquisition should not result in an expense for conservation disproportionate to the use of the acquisition.
- 6.2.5 The significance and provenance of the material or items must be established to the extent possible.
- 6.2.6 All known moral, legal, and ethical implications of the acquisition must have been addressed.
- 6.2.7 If possible, no acquisitions will be encumbered by less than full literary rights, property rights, copyrights, patents or trademarks, or by physically hazardous attributes.
- 6.2.8 Acquisition must, in general, be free from donor-imposed restrictions. Such restrictions are rare exceptions and are at the discretion of each board to accept. **Donor restrictions must be clearly articulated in writing.**
- 6.2.9 Both parties agree that no goods or services were provided in exchange for the gift.
- 6.2.10 The acquisition must be consistent with the institutions' mission statements, scope of collections, and all applicable codes of ethics.

### 6.3 Acquisition of culturally sensitive material

- 6.3.1 The institutions subscribe to the provisions of the UNESCO Convention of 1970. The institutions shall not acquire materials where there is cause to believe that the circumstances of their collection involve the destruction of historic sites, buildings, structures, habitats, districts, or materials.
- 6.3.1.1 It is the policy of each institution to collect, care for, and interpret materials in an ethical manner that respects the diversity of cultures and religions. The institutions recognize that they have fiduciary responsibility for the care and interpretation of its collections and comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

6.4 Procedures

6.4.1 The President and CEO, and appropriate curatorial staff as designated by that office, are authorized to accept objects for the *Documentary Collection* or the *Secondary Collection* in conformation with each institution’s separate Charter and Mission and with the separate scope of collection approved by each board.

6.4.2 All proposed acquisitions will be considered by a Collections Advisory Committee. The committee will consist of the President and CEO and staff as designated by that office. These staff shall include but not be limited to the Curator of the Thaw Collection, the Librarian, and the Registrar. The Collections Advisory Committee will convene on a regular schedule and compile formal agendas and minutes of the committee’s deliberations. The committee will advise the President and CEO as needed. The President and CEO will have final authority as described above in 6.4.1.

6.4.3 The purchase of objects or collections having a value of \$25,000.00 or more requires additional approvals:

Value	FAM	TFM
Up to \$25,000	President and CEO	President and CEO
\$25,001- \$50,000	Museum Committee of the Board of Trustees	Executive Committee of the Board of Directors
More than \$50,000	Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees	Executive Committee of the Board of Directors

6.4.4 No staff or board member may obligate either institution to accept any material or object inconsistent with this policy.

6.4.5 The President and CEO will report all additions to the *Documentary Collections* to the Board of Trustees at its next meeting.

6.4.6 Transfer of title for new acquisitions shall pass to the institution upon the documented completion of the following: donor intent, institutional acceptance, and physical possession.

6.5 Appraisals

No staff or board member shall offer appraisals or estimate the monetary value of objects offered to the institutions by potential donors or reveal the insurance value of comparable objects in the institutions’ collections, for the purpose of establishing a fair market value of gifts offered to either institution. Donors who wish to claim an income tax deduction for a gift to an institution must obtain an independent appraisal. Staff or board members may assist a donor in locating a qualified appraiser from a list of appraisers maintained by the institutions. No staff or board member shall place a monetary value on objects not owned by one of the institutions governed by this policy.

7 DEACCESSIONING AND DISPOSAL

7.1 Purpose

In order to maintain the collection in accordance with each institution’s separate missions, charter purposes and collection scopes, it may be necessary or desirable to remove certain objects from each collection. The

deaccession process shall be cautious, deliberate, and scrupulous. The deaccession and disposal process will be thoroughly and uniformly documented and undertaken in accordance with current professional standards and ethics. Records of the object and the process will be retained.

Criteria:

Any *Documentary Collection* object considered for deaccession must meet at least one of the following criteria set forth by the New York State Board of Regents Rule 3.27<sup>6</sup>:

- 7.1.1 The object is inconsistent with the mission of the responsible institution as set forth in that institution’s mission statement and scope of collections.
- 7.1.2 The object has failed to retain its identity.
- 7.1.3 The object is redundant.
- 7.1.4 The item’s conservation or preservation needs are beyond the responsible institution’s capacity to provide.
- 7.1.5 The object is deaccessioned to accomplish refinement of collections.
- 7.1.6 It has been established that the item is inauthentic.
- 7.1.7 The responsible institution is repatriating the object or returning it to its original owner.
- 7.1.8 The responsible institution is returning the object to its donor or the donor’s heirs or assigns to fulfill donor restrictions relating to the item which the institution is no longer able to meet.
- 7.1.9 The object presents a hazard to other people or collection objects.
- 7.1.10 The item has been lost or stolen and has not been recovered.

## 7.2 Approvals

Deaccession requires the levels of approval indicated below:

Value	FAM	TFM
Less than \$1,000	President and CEO	President and CEO
\$1,000 - \$50,000	Museum Committee of the Board of Trustees	Executive Committee of the Board of Directors
More than \$50,000	Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees	Executive Committee of the Board of Directors

## 7.3 Proposals and Decisions

Appropriate curatorial staff may propose the deaccession of objects that meet one or more of the deaccession criteria listed above.

- 7.3.1 Appropriate curatorial staff submit a deaccession proposal for each item to the President and CEO. The proposal contains the following information: date of proposal; accession number; name and brief description of object; name and address of source; date of acquisition; reason for deaccession; limiting conditions agreed to at the time of acquisition; reasons for accepting limiting conditions; book value, insurance value, and estimated market value; proposed method of disposal and agent.
- 7.3.2 All proposed deaccessions will be considered by a Collections Advisory Committee. The committee will advise the President and CEO as needed. The President and CEO will have final authority for approval. The President and CEO will reply in writing, approving or disapproving and designating the means of disposal.
- 7.3.3 The President and CEO will submit each proposed deaccession to the appropriate committee for each board: Executive Committee of The Farmers’ Museum Board, and Museum Committee for the Fenimore Art Museum Board. Objects that pose a hazard to the safety of visitors, staff or the collections may be approved for deaccession after receiving verbal approval from the chair of the appropriate committee for responsible institution. All deaccessions will be reported in writing at the next meeting of the Board.

<sup>6</sup> New York State Regents Rule §3.27 was amended on June 8, 2011 to specify criteria for deaccession.

## 7.4 Disposal of Deaccessioned Objects

- 7.4.1 Deaccessioned objects shall not be given, sold, or otherwise transferred, publicly or privately, to employees, officers, or board members of either institution or to their immediate families or representatives.
- 7.4.2 Disposal of deaccessioned objects is solely for the advancement of the institution's mission. Proceeds from the sale of collections are to be used only for acquisition of collections objects. All proceeds resulting from the deaccession of objects from the collections shall be deposited to the acquisitions fund of the appropriate institution.
- 7.4.3 The President and CEO will approve an appropriate method of disposal for each deaccessioned object. Deaccessioned objects may be:
  - 7.4.3.1 sold at auction, by open or sealed bid;
  - 7.4.3.2 sold through private negotiation;
  - 7.4.3.3 exchanged for objects that meet the institution's acquisition criteria and have been approved for acquisition by the proper authority;
  - 7.4.3.4 given or sold to another museum or library;
  - 7.4.3.5 transferred to the *Secondary Collection*<sup>7</sup> or to Facilities;
  - 7.4.3.6 destroyed if its condition so warrants;
  - 7.4.3.7 repatriated under the provisions of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

## 7.5 Deaccession and Disposal Records

- 7.5.1 The Registrar will maintain a deaccession log and a permanent file on each deaccessioned object.
- 7.5.2 Deaccession files include copies of all acquisition and cataloging records on each deaccessioned item, as well as a copy of the deaccession proposal, and records of the approval of the deaccession by the President and CEO and the Board, the disposal of the item and any funds received from the disposal of the item.
- 7.5.3 For The Farmers' Museum, when a donated item is deaccessioned, the institution will attempt to notify the original donor of the deaccession prior to disposal.

## 7.6 Use of Proceeds from the Sale of Deaccessions

- 7.6.1 In line with the requirement from the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), proceeds from items that are sold may only be used for "the acquisition of new collection items, the direct care of existing collections, or both."
- 7.6.2 Direct care shall include any steps that restore or protect the appearance or cultural value of an object in FAM or TFM's documentary collections, such as conservation, restoration, and preservation; it also may include one-off expenses to benefit objects for storage or display, such as framing, mounting, evaluation, transportation, and photography.

## 8 LOANS

### 8.1 Incoming Loans

Each institution may borrow objects for exhibitions, education programs or study that fulfill its Mission and Charter purposes.

- 8.1.1 The institutions will examine the relationship of potential lenders to determine if there are potential conflicts of interest, or the appearance of such conflicts. The institution will take steps to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest associated with borrowed objects.

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<sup>7</sup> Note that collections are not transferred between institutions. It is understood that the collection resource of each is available to the other under the provisions of this policy and the *Memorandum of Understanding* between The Farmers' Museum, Inc and The New York State Historical Association, January 1, 2007.

- 8.1.2 The institutions will not accept any commission or fee from the sale of objects borrowed for exhibition, unless such exhibition was explicitly organized for the sale of those objects.
- 8.1.3 The institutions retain full decision-making authority over the content and presentation of exhibitions but may consult with lenders on the significance of borrowed objects in the exhibition.
- 8.1.4 The institutions shall afford borrowed objects the same care and security given its own collections. Care for borrowed objects is the responsibility of the curatorial department.
- 8.1.5 All loans shall be for a specified period of time and shall not to exceed one year without review and renewal. The institutions will not retain borrowed objects in long-term storage.

#### 8.1.6 Procedures:

- 8.1.6.1 Appropriate curatorial staff may submit incoming loan proposals to the President and CEO. Such proposals should be made as far in advance as possible.
- 8.1.6.2 The Registrar will ensure that all necessary forms are executed, arrange insurance coverage, and register all incoming and outgoing objects, supervise packing and transport of all artifacts and maintain complete transaction records.
- 8.1.6.3 Contracts for borrowed objects will be executed on the appropriate institution's incoming loan agreement form, unless the lending institution requires use of its loan form.
- 8.1.6.4 The President and CEO shall make the final decision to grant, deny, or extend a loan.

#### 8.2 Outgoing Loans

The institutions collect objects to fulfill their Missions and Charter purposes and may make their collections available on loan for legitimate educational purposes. Collections will be loaned only to qualified museums, libraries, educational or other institutions, to qualified conservators for contracted evaluation or treatment, or to individuals or corporations engaged by the appropriate institution to produce replicas or adaptations of collections objects. Loans will be approved only if arrangements have been made for the safe custody, exhibition and handling of the collection item(s).

- 8.2.1 Objects shall be considered for loan only if all of the following conditions are met:
  - 8.2.1.1 The object will not be needed for exhibition or educational purposes during the proposed loan period. Objects of particular rarity or importance to the institutions' collections may be considered for loan on a case by case basis.
  - 8.2.1.2 The object is in stable condition and will not be damaged by shipment, exhibition or any other educational use proposed by the borrower.
  - 8.2.1.3 The object is not used for purposes other than static exhibition or study unless approval for other uses is recommended by a curatorial staff person and approved by the President and CEO.
  - 8.2.1.4 The borrowing institution provides proof of insurance coverage and its ability to safeguard the object while in transit and during exhibition or other approved use, in accord with acceptable professional standards. Loan requests should be accompanied by a completed facilities report.
  - 8.2.1.5 The object has been properly recorded and documented by collections staff and bears an identification number.
  - 8.2.1.6 A condition report is prepared prior to the loan and a copy accompanies the object to the borrower.
  - 8.2.1.7 The borrowing institution agrees to promptly report any changes in stability, condition or use to the lending institution's staff for assessment and treatment.
  - 8.2.1.8 All loans shall be for a specified period of time, not to exceed one year without review and renewal.
  - 8.2.1.9 Borrower must be able to state willingness to cover all costs incurred which may include but not be limited to crating, shipping, courier, permits/customs brokerage, rights and reproduction, loan fee and conservation.
  - 8.2.1.10 Objects with donor-imposed restrictions on outgoing loans may require additional consideration prior to approval.

#### 8.3 Fees

The institutions may charge borrowers a fee for each item loaned, on a fee schedule to be approved by the President and CEO and the appropriate board.

## 8.4 Procedures

- 8.4.1 A loan request must be made in writing on institutional letterhead to the President and CEO. It should include name, address, telephone and fax numbers, contact person of the borrowing institution, purpose and time period of the loan.
- 8.4.2 The appropriate institution's loan agreement form will be the contract document for all outgoing loans of artifacts from the collections. Loan requests are reviewed by the Collections Advisory Committee, documented by the Registrar and appropriate curatorial staff, and must be approved by the President and CEO.
- 8.4.3 A semi-annual report to the Board will be made on all loan activity.

## 9 TEMPORARY CUSTODY OF OBJECTS

- 9.1 Objects may be placed in the temporary custody of either institution for a period not to exceed 90 days, for the purposes of research, identification, consideration for acquisition, or evaluation for loan. Placement of an object in the temporary custody of the institutions does not constitute a transfer of legal title.
- 9.2 All temporary deposits are subject to the conditions set forth on the reverse of the Temporary Custody Receipt, which must be signed by the owner or owner's representative before the object is delivered to the institutions. Objects on temporary deposit will be stored properly and monitored. The institutions will not provide storage boxes, frames or other housing for objects placed in its temporary custody. The institutions will not insure objects placed in its temporary custody, nor will it catalog, or make them available to researchers.
- 9.3 Curatorial staff will ensure that a temporary deposit number is assigned to items in temporary custody; maintain a log of temporary deposits and indicate in the log when objects on deposit are either returned to their owners or added to an institutional collection and will monitor the location of objects in the temporary custody.

## 10 STAFF AND MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

- 10.1 *Documentary Collection* objects may only be handled or moved with the supervision of appropriate curatorial staff, and cannot be used for research, display or educational purposes which will be injurious to the integrity or condition of the object. Approval for use of *Documentary Collection* or *Secondary Collection* objects for research, display or educational purposes must be submitted in writing to the Collections Department with sufficient advanced notice, and the full intended use of the objects must be explicitly stated at that time. Approval is at the discretion of the Collections Department and the President and CEO.
- 10.2 *Secondary Collection* objects may be signed out to staff by the appropriate curatorial staff member for the purposes of off-site programming following the procedures in 10.1.
- 10.3 Staff shall not take any object governed by this policy off the museum campus without appropriate permission granted by the appropriate curatorial staff member. *Documentary Collection* and *Secondary Collection* objects are tracked by curatorial staff and should be maintained in their assigned, recorded locations on campus; if they must be moved, curatorial staff must be notified as soon as possible.
- 10.4 Staff shall not bring historic or artistic personal property to the institutions except in cases where the appropriate curatorial staff member has granted permission, and temporary custody or loan procedures are followed. Requests for acquisition of new objects, predominantly through purchase, for the *Secondary Collection* for educational use by staff must be submitted in writing to the Collections Department by the Departmental Director, with the full intended use of the objects explicitly stated. All collections objects will be acquired in accordance with Section 6 of this policy. *Documentary collection* objects may not be used by staff for personal use or as office decoration; Curatorial staff members may permit use of *Secondary collection* objects for use as office decoration in special cases.

- 10.5 Objects from the *Documentary Collection* may be deaccessioned for use in the *Secondary Collection*, as stated in Section 7.5.3.5, but only in the event that they meet one or more of the criteria listed in Section 7.2. They must follow the entire deaccessioning process, as detailed in Section 7.4.

## 11 PRESERVATION OF COLLECTIONS

All objects in the institutions' *Documentary Collections* are subject to the current standards of professional care.

To ensure consistency, collections staff, with significant input from other staff members, will issue general guidelines for the care of the collections. It is the responsibility of all curatorial staff to inform interns, volunteers, researchers, consultants, and vendors with whom they work about these policies, procedures, and guidelines, and ensure that they are followed.

Conservation action may only be taken by trained, professional conservators or other qualified individuals if required. Any treatment must respect the integrity of the object. Conservation treatment of the fabric of an object must include earlier repairs and modifications which, after examination and research, are found to be historically significant. Any new material added to the object must be minimal and must be compatible with the future welfare of the object. No action may be taken without a thorough technical examination of the object and a written proposal of treatment listing all possible treatment options. Each treatment proposal must be approved by appropriate curatorial staff and the President and CEO. Once treatment is undertaken, the conservator must provide a written report of all conservation actions that will be filed and made available to researchers and scholars upon request. Objects on loan to or from either institution will not be repaired, cleaned or otherwise treated without written permission from the owner of the objects.

## 12 ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS AND COLLECTIONS INFORMATION

- 12.1 The institutions support research using collections and collections documentation, subject to any existing legal limitations and limits on the availability of staff and resources.
- 12.2 In keeping with established security and collections practices, and in the interest of protecting the institutions and their staff from liability for damage or injury, the institutions' collections storage areas are closed to the general public. The President and CEO and curatorial staff will establish procedures for access to the Collections storage areas, which will be monitored and documented by appropriate staff.
- 12.3 Curatorial staff and the President and CEO will work with researchers who wish to access the institutions' collections and collections documentation and may also conduct in-house research for the purposes of curating exhibitions, producing exhibition and collections catalogs, and documenting collections. In providing physical access to collections, priority will be given to the needs of the institutions' library, curatorial department and to the faculty and students of the Cooperstown Graduate Program.
- 12.4 During normal operating hours, the collections and collections documentation shall be accessible for legitimate research and study by responsible individuals, subject to procedures necessary to safeguard the objects and to restrictions imposed by limitations of space and facilities, exhibition requirements, and availability of appropriate staff.
- 12.5 Curatorial staff and the President and CEO are responsible for handling requests for access to collections and collections documentation under their direct supervision.
- 12.6 The institutions expect that all researchers who make use of collections will adhere to any legal or ethical restrictions on research imposed by the institutions, and that they will operate in accordance with the generally accepted ethical standards of the field in which they are working.
- 12.7 The institutions respect the traditions of Native American Tribes and Canadian First Nations and recognize the needs of their representatives for access to the American Indian Art collections.
- 12.8 The institutions may make collections data and images available for research and publication in print and electronic media, in accordance with procedures established by the staff and approved by the President and CEO.

### 13 RISK MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY

- 13.1 The institutions meet their preservation mission through a program of risk management which includes, but is not limited to, reducing risks to the collection and its associated documentation, providing on-site security, and retaining separate insurance policies against loss or damage to the collections for each institution.
- 13.2 Each institution retains separate fine arts insurance for *Documentary Collections* to provide for replacement or restoration of significant collections in the event of damage or loss. The President and CEO has the authority to contract for insurance and to authorize the degree of coverage for the permanent collections, as well as objects on loan to the institutions. *Secondary Collections* are not insured.
- 13.3 Insurance values will be based on the fair market value of the object as determined by the appropriate curatorial staff and the President and CEO.
- 13.4 If the appropriate curatorial staff and the President and CEO cannot provide an accurate insurance value or if the period of an outgoing loan is greater than one year, a professional outside appraisal may be required. For outgoing loans, the borrower may be charged for an outside appraisal.
- 13.5 Appropriate curatorial staff will maintain records of the book value of each object when accessioned, the current replacement value, and the insurance value of each object. These records will indicate the date of each change in value and the staff member responsible for the change.
- 13.6 The curatorial and security staffs are responsible for monitoring the institutions' exhibition and storage areas on a routine basis to ensure the safest possible environment for collections and loaned objects.
- 13.7 The curatorial and security departments ensure that the institutions' Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan provide for the safety of the collections.
- 13.8 Staff must report damage to or loss of any object, as soon as discovered, to the President and CEO and the Vice President for Operations who will notify the relevant staff. The President and CEO will provide appropriate information to Police, other appropriate agencies, and the appropriate board.
- 13.9 The security office will maintain all records relating to the investigation of missing or stolen items. Duplicates of these records will be kept in the President's office.
- 13.10 Curatorial staff shall conduct systematic inventories of its collections on a one/two/five/ten-year cycle (depending on location) with annual spot checks, following an established inventory plan and schedule.
- 13.11 Access to confidential information related to collections and loans must be restricted to appropriate curatorial staff and the President and CEO.

### 14 RECORDS MANAGEMENT

- 14.1 Appropriate curatorial staff will create, maintain, and ensure intellectual control over hard copy and digital documentation for the institutions' collections and about transactions and projects involving works in the collection or in temporary custody. These records establish legal title or custody to objects, identify objects and their provenance as fully as possible, maintain histories of object values, and track the location of objects.
- 14.2 Appropriate curatorial staff are responsible for creating and maintaining records of objects in the temporary custody of the institution (for acquisition consideration and research, and incoming loans), accessions, deaccessions, and registered *Secondary Collection* objects. Accessions and deaccessions will be recorded in a permanent register.
- 14.3 The primary purpose of records is to control and document objects in the custody of the institution so that they are properly cared for and available for education, exhibition and research. Therefore, these records should provide the following minimum level of information:

- 14.3.1 Object Name.
- 14.3.2 Title, if applicable.
- 14.3.3 Identifying description of object (including dimensions and photographs).
- 14.3.4 Assigned number.
- 14.3.5 Other identifying marks.
- 14.3.6 Legal status of object.
- 14.3.7 Condition of object.
- 14.3.8 Location of object.

- 14.4 Vice President of Operations will ensure that accession, object, loan, exhibit, and deaccession records in the database are backed up on a secure, off-site server on a timely basis.
- 14.5 Records access is subject to applicable public law. s Curatorial staff are responsible for controlling and documenting access to records under their direct supervision. The following items of information are considered privileged:
  - 14.5.1 Addresses of donors and lenders.
  - 14.5.2 Location of objects.
  - 14.5.3 Valuation of objects.
  - 14.5.4 Identity of donors and lenders, if anonymity is requested.
  - 14.5.5 Information that is restricted intellectual property.

## 15 MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

- 15.1 Curatorial staff monitor compliance with this policy and report lack of compliance to the President and CEO on a timely basis.
- 15.2 Upon adoption, all staff and board members will receive a copy of this policy.
- 15.3 All new staff and board members will receive a copy of this policy as part of their orientation to the institutions.

## 16 POLICY REVIEW

Curatorial staff and the President and CEO initiate review of the Collections Management Policy by the Boards of the institutions. Review will occur once every five years or more frequently if deemed necessary by the President and CEO, staff or the Museum and Library Committee of the Board of Trustees.

### Record of Collections Management Policy Revisions

This Collections Management Policy was created and amended as follows:

- New York State Historical Association (NYSHA), Acquisition and Deaccession Policy, 1992, adopted
- NYSHA & The Farmers' Museum, Draft Collections Management Policy, 1995, not adopted
- NYSHA, Collections Management Policy, 2002, adopted
- The Farmers' Museum, Collections Management Policy, 2009, adopted
- NYSHA, Collections Management Policy, 2008, amended
- NYSHA, Collections Management Policy, 2012, amended
- Fenimore Art Museum & Research Library and The Farmers' Museum, Collections Management Policy, 2013, amended and consolidated
- Fenimore Art Museum & The Farmers' Museum, Collections Management Policy, 2017, amended
- Fenimore Art Museum & The Farmers' Museum, Collections Management Policy, 2019, amended

## 17 DEFINITIONS

*Accession:* an object or group of objects obtained at one time from a single source.

*Accessioning:* the formal process used to accept and record an artifact as a collections object.

*Acquisition:* the discovery, preliminary evaluation, negotiation for, taking custody of, taking title to, and acknowledging receipt of materials and objects; or negotiating for and recording information about borrowed objects.

*Book value:* the initial monetary value assigned to a collections object at the time of acquisition.

*Collections object:* an item that has been or is in the process of being accessioned into the collections.

*Curatorial:* Encompasses all staff from the departments of Collections, Registration, and Exhibitions, as well as individual curators for specific collections.

*Deaccessioning:* the process used to remove an object from the *Documentary Collections* or to document the reasons for involuntary removal.

*Disposal:* The act of physically removing an object from the museum collection. See also: *deaccessioning*.

*Documentary Collection:* consists of original, rare, and often irreplaceable artifacts to be preserved for future generations.

*Insurance Value:* the current monetary value assigned to a collections object for insurance purposes.

*Inventory:* a) an itemized listing of collections objects that identifies the current physical location of each object; b) the process of physically locating all or a subset of objects for which the museum is responsible.

*Loans:* temporary assignments of collections objects from the museum or temporary assignments of similar objects to the museum for stated museum purposes, such as exhibition and research. These assignments do not involve a change in ownership.

*Objects placed in the custody of the museum:* items that are not owned by the museum but are left temporarily in the museum for other than loan purposes, such as attribution, identification, or examination for possible gift or purchase.

*Provenance:* a history of ownership of an object that can be documented through written records and/or oral tradition.

*Registering:* the assignment of a tracking number to an object in the *Secondary Collection*.

*Registration:* The process of developing and maintaining an immediate, brief, and permanent means of identifying an object for which the institution has permanently or temporarily assumed responsibility.

*Replacement value:* the cost of acquiring an object similar or identical to a given collections object.

*Secondary Collection:* consists of facsimile reproductions, adaptations, modern reproductions, restorations and some period artifacts (if duplicated in the *Documentary Collections* or not of sufficient artistic or historical significance for the *Documentary Collections*). Library materials that are not part of the *Documentary Collection* are governed by the Collection Development Procedures Manual, created and maintained by appropriate staff.

***I hereby acknowledge that the information contained herein was approved by the Fenimore Art Museum Board of Trustees on August 13, 2021 and was approved by the Board of Directors of The Farmers' Museum on August 13, 2021:***

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*(Signature)*

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*(Date)*