



UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

Policy Manual

Policy #:	ACD-8101	Policy Title:	Museum Collections Management Policy
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Date Approved:	07/17/2024	Approval:	Executive Vice President & Provost
Replaces Policy Dated:	09/01/2013	Responsible University Official:	Executive Director, University Museums

PURPOSE:

The University of Richmond Collections Management Policy is intended to provide a framework to ensure that the items held by the University of Richmond Museums are used in a manner that complements and supports the academic mission of the University of Richmond, as well as to articulate the institution's commitment to the stewardship of the objects that comprise its collections.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all objects, including gemstones, specimens, decorative arts, fine arts and similar items, owned by, held by, or in the care of the University of Richmond Museums.

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POLICY STATEMENT:

ACD-8101.1 – Definitions

Accessioning – The formal process used to accept legally and to record a specimen or object as part of a collection; the act of accepting objects into the category of materials that a museum holds in the public trust; the creation of an immediate, brief, and permanent record utilizing a control number for an object or group of objects added to the collection from the same source at the same time, for which the museum has custody, right or title.

Acquisition (n) – Something acquired by a museum (but not necessarily involving accessioning into the collection); (v) The process of obtaining custody (physical transfer) of an object or collection.

Appraisal – A judgment of what something is worth; an expert or official valuation, as for taxation; the process of determining the monetary value of something.

Cataloguing – The process of organizing the information about an accession by creating records of specific information; the creation of a full record, in complete descriptive detail, of all information about an object, assembly, or lot, cross-referenced to other records and files, and often containing a photograph, sketch, film, sound, or other electronic data.

Collections Management Policy – A written document, approved by the institution's governing authority, that specifies how collections will be acquired, accessioned, documented, stored, used, cared for, and disposed of.

Conservation – Maximizing the endurance and minimizing the deterioration of an object or specimen through time, with as little change to it as possible.

Deaccessioning – The formal process of removing an accessioned object or group of objects from an institution's collection.

Deed of Gift – A contract that transfers ownership of an object from a donor to an institution and describes the conditions of the gift.

Disposal – The process of physically removing a deaccessioned object from the museum's custody.

Incoming loan – Objects, lots, specimens, or archival materials to which the museum does not have legal title but for which it is legally responsible while they are in its possession and used in museum-sponsored activities.

Inventory (n)- An itemized listing of objects, often including current location, for which the museum has responsibility; (v) the process of physically locating objects through an inventory.

Loan Agreement – An agreement between a lender and a borrower of an object, specifying the object and outlining the conditions of the loan and the respective responsibilities of each party.

Outgoing Loan – An object loaned by a museum to another institution. It is an outgoing loan from the perspective of the lending institution; such a loan would be an incoming loan to the borrowing institution.

Provenance – For works of art and historical objects, the background and history of ownership. The more common term for anthropological collections is “provenience,” which defines an object in terms of the specific geographical location of origin. In scientific collections, the term “locality,” meaning specific geographic point of origin is more acceptable.

Repatriation – To return or restore the control of an object to the country of origin or rightful owner.

Restricted Gift – The voluntary transfer of ownership of property with conditions and/or limitations placed upon that ownership.

ACD-8101.2 – Mission Statement

The University of Richmond Museums comprise the Joel and Lila Harnett Museum of Art, the Joel and Lila Harnett Print Study Center, and the Lora Robins Gallery of Design from Nature. The University Museums serve the University’s students and community, the greater Richmond area, and statewide, national, and international audiences. The Museums provide the opportunity for the appreciation, knowledge, and scholarship of art, cultural history, and science through the collections, exhibitions (on-campus and traveling), and scholarly publications. Academic and public programs include special courses, lectures, gallery talks, artists’ residencies, workshops, concerts, symposia, and other events. The collections of the three museums include approximately 100,000 objects, ranging from gemstones and shells, to decorative arts and artifacts from many cultures, to prints from the Renaissance to the present, to contemporary paintings and sculpture. Internships, fellowships, and work-study positions and research opportunities for students are integral to the museums’ offerings.

The University Museums complement and support the academic mission of the University of Richmond by providing educational and cultural resources in the fields of the visual arts and natural sciences that welcome, inspire, and challenge the students, faculty, and staff of the University and engage the members of the surrounding communities.

ACD-8101.3 – Ethics

The University of Richmond Museums (hereafter referred to as “Museums”) conform to the ethical principles established by and articulated in the University of Richmond Code of Organizational Ethics and Integrity (<http://www.richmond.edu/compliance/code-of-ethics.pdf>). The Museums likewise adhere to the ethical codes as established by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), the College Art Association (CAA), and the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

ACD-8101.4 - Scope of Collections and Collecting Goals

The Museums were formed as a department of the University of Richmond (hereafter referred to as “University”) in 1999 to integrate and expand the offerings of the Joel and Lila Harnett Museum of Art, the Joel and Lila Harnett Print Study Center, and the Lora Robins Gallery of Design from Nature. The permanent collection contains:

- Fine art, including contemporary and historic paintings, prints, photographs, drawings, and sculptures housed in the Harnett Museum of Art and the Harnett Print Study Center;
- Decorative arts, including contemporary and historic vessels, icons, coins, tools, and various other cultural artifacts and ethnographic objects housed in the Lora Robins Gallery of Design from Nature;
- Natural science specimens, including rocks, minerals, gemstones, fossils, shells, and corals also housed in the Lora Robins Gallery of Design from Nature.

The Museums seek objects that are representative of its primary collecting areas, with the intent of filling gaps and strengthening weak areas in the permanent collection. The encyclopedic nature of the Museums’ collections within the fields of fine art, decorative arts, ethnography, and natural sciences is intended to support, enrich, and extend the academic mission of the University of Richmond, especially within the liberal arts but applicable to and serving the five schools of the University. The Museums will not collect and accession any objects that do not conform to the established collecting areas as stated.

The Museums also maintain a library and archives in support of the permanent collection and maintain a separate education collection. The education collection contains those objects deemed not suitable for the permanent collection but that may nonetheless have utility for educational programs or related activities. Educational collection objects may include:

- Unique objects that are unsuitable for the permanent collection but may provide visitors with a hands-on experience;
- Common objects that are numerous and easy to replace;
- Objects in poor condition that still have use;
- Props and reproductions.

The Museums will not collect and accession objects that do not meet the Museums’ acquisitions criteria as set forth in Section *ACD-8101.11*, Acquisition. See Section *ACD-8101.11* for further discussion of the acquisition process.

ACD-8101.5 - Collection Objects on Campus

The Museums exhibit collection objects in various spaces on campus in addition to its exhibition spaces. Works from the permanent collection may be exhibited outside of the Museums only if the area meets the security and environmental standards of the Museums. The Executive Director has the authority to approve such placement and display, and Museum staff will ensure that the area continues to meet these standards.

Since care of all objects on campus is of primary importance, the Museums retain the right to determine proper placement of any object to ensure that it is free of hazards. It is the responsibility of the Curator of Museum Collections to monitor the condition of all campus objects on a regular basis.

ACD-8101.6 - Standard of Care

The standards of care we provide objects in the permanent collection follow industry determined best practices. The Museums adhere to the best practices as established by the AAM, the AAMD, the CAA, and the ICOM. The Museums are committed to the prudent management of its permanent collections, including the appropriate storage, security, and conservation of the collections, to ensure the preservation of collection objects for future generations.

Any object, whether an acquisition or loan object, must be inspected as to condition before entering secured storage and being commingled with the collections. The Curator of Museum Collections oversees or conducts condition reporting, and is responsible for determining whether an object requires conservation.

ACD-8101.7 – Access

In order to safeguard the collections as described above, the Museums generally maintain the collections storage areas as restricted-access areas. While full-time Museums staff will have access to these areas, part-time staff, University staff and faculty from other departments, students, and volunteers will have only supervised access. Access to the collections and records for outside researchers will be permitted subject to staff availability.

ACD-8101.8 – Documentation

The maintenance of clear, accurate, and accessible records on the identification, location, and condition of collection objects is the primary responsibility of the Museums. The Museums maintain the collection records and documents for all acquisitions, accessions, deaccessions, location records, inventories, and loans. All records are duplicated when necessary, and all digital records are routinely backed-up.

The Museums maintain an inventory of its collections and routinely check its collections to verify of records and to examine the objects for damage and loss. A full inventory is conducted every five years on a rotating basis for each museum's collection. Any damage or loss is reported to the Executive Director, who will report the damage or loss to the appropriate University authorities.

ACD-8101.9 – Copyright

The Museums strive to attain copyrights for all objects in the collection when title is transferred.

In any instance in which the Museums believe that the right to reproduce an object may be held by another person or organization, the potential user will be notified in writing that the Museums undertake no responsibility for determining the nature of such right or for obtaining whatever permission may be necessary to reproduce the object.

All reproductions are to be fully credited.

ACD-8101.10 - Insurance and Risk Management

The University's current insurer insures all of the Museums' collections at fair market value while on campus, in transit, and while in the custody of borrowers. Objects on incoming loan are insured by the University unless the lender wishes to carry insurance. The lender must provide proof of policy for the Museums' records. Also see Section ACD-8101.15, Incoming Loans.

ACD-8101.11 – Acquisition

The Museums endeavor to collect objects of high quality through gift, bequest, purchase, and by exchange or transfer that further its educational mission. New acquisitions should enhance the cultural and educational value of the Museums' collection. The Museums are under no obligation to accept bequests or gifts offered to it. The Museums may also practice selective acquisition, which means that the Museum may choose to accept only certain objects that are part of a larger gift and reject others that do not conform to the Museum's collecting standards.

In the case of a gift, objects not accepted for the permanent collection (i.e., non-accessioned works) may be considered for the education collection with the donor's approval.

It is understood that the use of these items may result in their deterioration or loss over time.

The Museums will not knowingly or willfully acquire any object that does not adhere to the laws of cultural property. These laws include the U.S. Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act (Public Law 97-446, Title III) and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (Public Law 101-601). The Museums will not acquire undocumented rocks, fossils, flora, or fauna, including human remains.

All additions to the Museums collections are carefully considered and evaluated. Acquisitions support the mission of the University and the role of the Museums in serving the faculty, staff, and students of the University community and outreach to the greater community. The Museums' professional staff is responsible for determining what objects are appropriate to the mission and collecting goals of the Museums. The executive director and curatorial staff are responsible for identifying, researching, and proposing possible acquisitions. Also, the executive director and curatorial staff consult with members of the faculty or other individuals when additional expertise is needed or desired. Acquisitions are proposed by the Museums' professional staff with a written proposal of the object's authenticity, provenance, attribution, condition, and significance for the collections to the Museums Collections Committee (comprising the Executive Director, the Deputy Director and Curator of Exhibitions, the Curator of Museum Collections, the Curator of Museum Programs, the Museum Operations Manager, and the Executive Vice President & Provost, or her/his designee).

All acquisitions must be approved by the Museums Collections Committee. When a gift valued under \$5,000 is approved by the committee, the Museums will produce a written Deed of Gift that is binding when signed by the donor(s) and the Museums Executive Director. All gifts valued at more than \$5,000 must first be approved by the Museums Collections Committee and then be presented to the University's Gift Acceptance Committee for final approval. When a gift is approved by the Gift Acceptance Committee, the Museums will produce a written Deed of Gift that is binding when signed by the donor(s) and the Museums Executive Director.

All acquisitions will be considered after careful evaluation based on, but not limited to, the following criteria:

- Ability to physically and financially care for the objects;
- Relevance to the Museums' mission statement and collecting goals;
- Aesthetic quality;
- Evidence of authenticity;
- Satisfactory provenance;
- Pedagogical value;
- Historical significance of the object, in terms of an artist's career, a historical movement, or relationship to the University of Richmond, the City of Richmond, or the Commonwealth of Virginia;
- Relationship to the collection's existing strengths and weaknesses;

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- Potential of the work for exhibition or study and research for faculty, staff, and students;
- Physical nature, size, and condition as they relate to the resources required for storage, maintenance, restoration, or conservation; examples include potentially hazardous organic matter, controlled substances such as formaldehyde, objects that off-gas flammable fumes, or objects that can become highly reactive;
- Degree, if any, to which accessioning the object might appear to give rise to commercial exploitation or bring discredit upon the Museums or the University itself;
- Restrictions or conditions attached to the acquisition. The Museums will not acquire objects with restriction as to perpetual exhibition or retention.

For offers of large collections, the Museums will further consider its ability to fulfill the greater responsibilities associated with the care, preservation and utilization of the number of objects in the proposed acquisition. The Museums retain the right under the terms of gift, purchase, bequest, or exchange to accession the collection either in whole or in part. Additional considerations for purchases for the permanent collection may also include:

- Fairness of the purchase price.
- Possibility that a comparable object might be obtained by gift or bequest.
- Terms of any restrictions that might apply to the purchase funds intended to be used.
- Purchase price relative to the importance of the object to the collection.
- The Museums will never purchase objects owned by staff that work directly for the Museums or by employees of the University.

For all gifts, promised and fractional gifts, the Museums will comply with the gift acceptance policies and guidelines as established by the Office of Advancement, effective July 1, 2009, as part of the University of Richmond Comprehensive Gift Acceptance Policy. A Gift Proposal Summary for gifts covered in this policy will be prepared by the Museums Executive Director and submitted for approval by the Gift Acceptance Committee.

ACD-8101.12 - Temporary Custody

Museums staff have authority to accept objects into the Museum's custody on a temporary basis, not to exceed ninety days, for the purposes of informal identification, examination, possible gift or loan. In such cases, the Museums will issue a Receipt of Delivery signed by a designated museum staff member acknowledging receipt of the object(s). The Museums will care for the objects using the same standard of care as objects in its permanent collections.

ACD-8101.13 – Accession

Following the best practices established for the museum industry, all objects acquired for the permanent collection will be accessioned. Each object is given a distinct accession number to uniquely identify the object within the collection.

ACD-8101.14 – Deaccession

It is the intent of the Museums to acquire objects with care so that it is seldom necessary to engage in deaccession. Nonetheless, the Museums are aware that periodic evaluation of the collections and careful use of deaccessioning may strengthen the quality of the Museums' collection over time. As part of the Museums' periodic inventory process, items will be considered for deaccession (see Section *ACD-8101.8*, Documentation).

Deaccessions will be considered only with great caution, and the benefits of a proposed deaccession should clearly outweigh possible disadvantages. Once deaccessioned, an object may be disposed of through transfer, sale, or placement into the educational collection. To be deaccessioned, an object must be in the Museums' possession for at least two years.

The Museums may, as a courtesy, notify donors, descendants, or relatives of the donors of the Museums' intent to deaccession an object, although it is not obligated to do so unless so stated as a condition of the original gift.

The criteria applied to deaccessioning and disposal are as stringent as those applied to the Museums' acquisition process, and reflect professional standards and ethics as established by the AAM and the AAMD. Deaccessions from the collection should be made only after evaluation based on, but not limited to, the following criteria:

- The object does not conform to the Museums' mission statement or is outside the collection development goals of the Museums;
- The object is determined to have insufficient historical, artistic or scientific significance;
- The object is determined not to be authentic;
- The correction of a false or erroneous provenance of the object renders it inappropriate for the collection;
- A better example has been acquired;
- The Museums cannot continue to provide for the maintenance or treatment of an object at professionally accepted standards;
- The object poses a threat to other objects in the collection or to staff members;
- The object is beyond repair or conservation would be so prohibitively expensive that the integrity of the object would be compromised;
- The object is over-represented in the collection;
- The Museums does not hold clear title to the object or the object had been exported or imported in violation of state or federal law;
- The object is unintentionally destroyed.

Objects in the collection are deaccessioned by formal written recommendation of the Museums staff and must be approved by the Executive Director. The approved written recommendation is filed with the permanent files of the object. All documents and data on deaccessioned objects are retained.

ACD-8101.15 – Disposal

The following are approved methods of disposal for deaccessioned objects, in preferred order:

- Transfer to the legal owner in cases where the deaccession has been due to the fact the Museums does not hold legal title;
- Transfer to or exchange with an appropriate tax exempt educational institution, including another department at the University;
- Exchange for another object with educational, nonprofit organizations, or reputable dealers. If an object is exchanged, the requirements for acquisitions must be followed for the new object;
- Public sale with an established auction house or a private sale;
- Destruction, if necessary, due to biohazard or deterioration beyond retrieval. The method of destruction must comply with local, state, and federal codes; must be witnessed by a Museums staff member, and attested to in writing that is deposited in the object's permanent file.

Following the policies and guidelines established by the AAM, the AAMD, and the CAA, any proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned objects will be kept in a restricted fund, and used solely for the purchase of other objects for the permanent collection, not for other costs such as operating expenses or building funds, either for the Museums or the University. Under no circumstances will objects be given or sold privately to University employees, volunteers, or their representatives.

ACD-8101.16 - Incoming Loans

Incoming loans may be accepted from an individual or organization for the purpose of exhibition, research, or educational programming. The Executive Director has the sole authority to approve loans. The Museums reserve the right to determine when, if, and, for how long objects borrowed will be exhibited.

Loan periods are typically restricted to a maximum two-year duration, possibly longer if extended to the needed length of time for traveling exhibition tours organized by the Museums. After careful review, and with special justification, the Executive Director may approve a loan renewal. Special circumstances for renewal would include if the object were integral to an exhibition, an active educational program, or for research.

Permanent loans will not be accepted. Long-term loans will not be accepted from individuals but may be allowable from other museums or collecting organizations.

Insurance in the amount determined by the lender, and agreed upon by the Museums, must be placed on all loans and carried from the time the objects arrive at the Museums until the objects are returned to the lender. The lender may elect to insure the loan under the lender's own policy. If the items on loan are to be insured by the University, the Museums will coordinate with the Office of Risk Management to ensure appropriate coverage.

The Museums will provide the same standard of care and for borrowed objects that it gives to its own collections. No alterations shall be conducted without written consent from the owner. Museums staff is responsible for checking the condition of all borrowed objects upon arrival and before the borrowed objects leave the custody of the Museums.

It is the lender's responsibility to notify the Museums if there is any change of ownership of any objects or if there is a change in the identity or address of the lender. The Museums assume no responsibility to search for the lender who cannot be reached at the address of record. If the Museums efforts to return objects within a reasonable period following the termination of the loan are unsuccessful, then the objects will be maintained at the lender's risk and expense for a maximum of one year. If after one year the objects have not been claimed, then the lender/owner shall be deemed to have made the objects an unrestricted gift to the Museums as defined by state law (Code of Virginia §55-210).

Upon termination of a loan, the lender is on notice that a return or renewal must be affected, or else a gift of the objects will be inferred. Objects will be returned only to the lender of record unless otherwise directed by the lender in writing not to do so. In the case of uncertainty, the Museums reserve the right to require the lender/claimant to establish title by proof satisfactory to the Museums.

These guidelines are conveyed to lenders via the Museums' Loan Agreement Form, issued upon agreement between the Museums and the lender, preferably prior to the Museums' possession of the borrowed objects.

ACD-8101.17 - Outgoing Loans

Outgoing loans for educational and scholarly purposes may be made to non-profit institutions with a similar mission and who adhere to generally recognized professional museum standards. Loans to private individuals

will not be considered.

Institutions seeking a loan must provide the Museums details as to the purpose, period, insurance, security, and transportation of the loan. A standard facilities report issued by the AA M must be obtained by the Museums prior to acceptance of the loan. The Executive Director has the sole authority to approve loans.

The following will be considered when determining whether a loan request will be granted:

- Intended use;
- Condition of the object and suitability of the object to travel;
- Duration;
- Borrower's physical plant, including security, lighting, and environmental controls;
- Transportation needs;
- Insurance coverage;
- The impact of the loan upon the Museums' exhibitions, education programs, and teaching and research needs;
- Willingness of the borrower to agree to and apparent ability to fulfill appropriate terms regarding packing and travel arrangements and costs, insurance coverage, special conditions of display, and any special handling requirements.

In order for the loan request to be approved, the Museums must have on file a signed, written agreement between the Museums and the borrowing institution detailing the terms of the loan.

Objects borrowed from the Museums must be insured when off premises, in transit, and while in the custody of borrowing organization. These objects may be insured under the borrower's policy if the Executive Director approves the borrower's insurance. Prior to shipment the borrower must furnish proof of insurance coverage or agree in writing to reimburse the Museums for insurance coverage. The Museums will provide the most recent appraisal value of objects requested for loan. If an appraised value is not available, the Museums will provide a documented fair market value.

Loans are subject to recall upon reasonable written request and will be subject to immediate recall in the event that any of the Museums' conditions of the loan are not fulfilled.

Loan periods are restricted to a maximum of two years. Depending on the conditions listed above, shorter loan periods may be preferable. After careful review, the Executive Director may approve a loan renewal. Circumstances for renewal would include if the object were integral to an exhibition, an active educational program, or research. Permanent outgoing loans will not be issued.

ACD-8101.18 - Personal Collections

Personal collecting activities of Museums staff should not pose any conflict of interest with the Museums, and particularly in terms of shared fields of interest.

ACD-8101.19 - Appraisals and Identification

Under no circumstances will a member of the Museums staff give an appraisal. Staff members may assist third parties only by identifying organizations and publications from which information on appraisers may be obtained. The Museums cannot provide appraisals to individuals but will make object(s) available for an appraiser's inspection. When accepting gifts, the Museums will stipulate the responsibility for securing (and paying for) appraisals and furnishing this information to the appropriate government authorities rests with the donor.

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Where a statement is required by the IRS to confirm a donor's gift, the Museums will comply with the IRS requirements and provide such information. The acceptance of an object at its appraised value does not imply an endorsement of the appraisal by the Museums.

Museums staff may, as a public service, provide an informal identification of an object to owners for their personal information, provided that:

- The owner agrees to use such a service for educational purposes only;
- The service will not be used in connection with any past or contemplated commercial transaction;
- The owner understands that the service represents only an informal opinion by staff;
- And the rendition of such an opinion in no way implies or expresses authentication or value.

ACD-8101.20 - Revision and Compliance

The Museums Executive Director and other Museums staff will review this policy periodically, with no interval between reviews exceeding five years. The Executive Director and the Executive Vice President & Provost or his/her designee shall approve any additions, deletions, or revisions to this policy.

RELATED POLICIES:

Gift Acceptance Policy

GOV-1000, Conflict of Interest Policy

FIN-4403, Procurement Policy

FIN-4409, Delegation of Contract Approval and Signature Authority

POLICY BACKGROUND:

Non-substantive changes in 2024.

POLICY CONTACTS:

Executive Director, University Museums