

KLAMATH COUNTY MUSEUMS, September 2014 COLLECTIONS POLICY

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the acquisition, deaccession, and use of materials in the Klamath County Museums. This policy underlines the ethical and legal responsibilities of museum staff in the management of these collections. This policy statement supersedes all previous documents on collection policies. Any amendments to this policy must be approved by the Museum Manager, Curator, and Advisory Board.

a. ADMINISTRATIVE OVERVIEW

The Klamath County Museums function as a department of Klamath County. The county is administered by the Klamath County Board of Commissioners, which consists of three elected individuals. Each full-time non-partisan term is for four years. The term of the chairman is one year and rotates among the commissioners.

The Klamath County Board of Commissioners appoints liaison assignments to each board member. These assignments allocate various county departments to individual commissioners. These assignments are limited in scope and responsibility for the authority of the board is collective on both policy and administrative matters. The liaison role involves communication and advice; however, final decisions can be made only by the governing board as a whole.

In addition to the Klamath County Board of Commissioners, the museums also have an Advisory Board. The Advisory Board provides recommendations and makes decisions on a variety of museum topics including major projects, finances, and many other issues. The Advisory Board meets once per month.

Decisions on the acquisition and deaccession of materials at the Klamath County Museum are made by the Museum Manager, Curator, and an Accessions

Committee. Decisions on loans and the use of materials are made by the Museum Manager and Curator.

b. MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

The mission of the Klamath County Museums is to collect, preserve, document, and interpret the history, culture, and natural resources of Klamath County.

The vision of the Klamath County Museums is the preservation of Klamath County history with fully protected collections that are used to educate and to share a passion for history.

c. OVERVIEW OF MUSEUMS

The Klamath County Museums include three historic sites, all of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These include the 1935 Art Deco Armory, the 1906 Baldwin Hotel, and the 1863 Fort Klamath.

The 1935 Art Deco Armory, located in Klamath Falls, houses the main museum with history and natural history exhibitions. The exhibitions are made up of a collection of artifacts that range from pre-historic to contemporary topics. Though these collections represent a wide range of material objects, they focus on local history.

The 1906 Baldwin Hotel, located in Klamath Falls, has been restored and contains period rooms and artifacts from the early 20th century. The building served many different functions throughout its history, and the exhibits offered represent some of these different functions.

The 1863 Fort Klamath, located 30 miles north of Klamath Falls, has important local military significance. The museum sits on an 8 acre parcel. The site contains some original features of the fort as well as the graves of four Modoc Indian leaders who were hanged at the fort in 1873.

d. SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS

The collections of the Klamath County Museums can be categorized into four main areas: Archives, Photographs, Library Materials, and Objects. Each of these categories focuses on the cultural and natural history of the local area.

- i. The archives include documents, newspaper clippings, and other materials. They can be found on the second floor of the museum and in the climate controlled collection storage room.
- ii. The museum has extensive photographic collections in a variety of mediums including photographs, negatives, glass plates, and nitrate film. Many of these collections are found in the museum's photograph collection room and Photo-Doc files.
- iii. The museum's library is located on the second floor and contains many materials including books, biographical files, phone books, newspapers, and much more.
- iv. The museum has many physical objects, located throughout the museum.
- v. Refer to the museum's research guide for information on the location and content of these various research materials.

e. CODE OF ETHICS

The Klamath County Museums recognize that the ownership, care, and use of museum collections entails the highest public trust and carries the responsibilities of rightful ownership, permanence, care, documentation, accessibility, and responsible disposal.

II. ACQUISITION OF MATERIALS

- a. Materials will only be accepted or acquired for the museum's collections based on the following criteria:
 - i. The materials are consistent with the mission, vision, and collection goals of the museum.
 - ii. The materials represent an exceptional opportunity for the museum and deserve preferential consideration.
 - iii. The museum can adequately provide for the storage, protection, and preservation of the materials.

- iv. The museum can acquire valid and legal title of the materials.
- v. The materials are not encumbered with conditions set by the donor (under rare circumstances materials may be accepted with restrictions or limitations, however, these stipulations must be approved by the Museum Manager, Curator, and Accessions Committee).
- vi. The materials have sufficient documentation and/or provenance.
- vii. The materials do not conflict with the ethical and legal responsibilities of the museum. This includes, but is not limited to, materials that are protected under legislation like the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA), and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

b. Accession Process

- i. Once materials are accepted by the museum, all documentation, including the Deed of Gift and related items must be compiled under a unique accession number assigned to the materials. The museum will use a trinomial numbering format with the year of accession, accession number, and catalog number (ex. 2014.001.0001). Numbers that are assigned to materials will be recorded in the museum's Accession Number Log and the PastPerfect database.
- ii. Materials will be fully inspected and photographed, and a condition report for each individual item will be completed. Condition reports will be kept with the permanent accession file.
- iii. The materials will be entered into the PastPerfect database, labeled, and placed in the appropriate storage area with the proper materials and mounts.

III. DEACCESSIONING

- a. Accessioned materials will remain in the museum's collection in perpetuity, as long as these materials are relevant and useful to museum activities and continue to align with the museum's mission and vision statements. Deaccessioning

materials may be considered if they no longer meet these conditions.

Deaccessioning may also be considered in the following situations:

- i. There is danger that the materials cannot be properly preserved.
 - ii. The materials have deteriorated beyond usefulness.
 - iii. There is a need to dispose of redundant items in the museum's collection.
 - iv. The museum has a legal responsibility to return materials based on, but not limited to, the legislation cited in Section II.vii.
- b. Accessioned materials may only be deaccessioned with the approval of the Museum Manager, Curator, and Accessions Committee. These decisions will be made in accordance with policies established by the proper governing board.
- c. At all times, the museum shall insure that the deaccessioning process, from consideration to disposal, is in the best interest of the museum, the communities the museum serves, and the public trust. The museum will adhere to the following guidelines in the deaccessioning process:
- i. The museum will attempt to contact the original donor to inform them of the decision to deaccession their donation. Documentation of this will be kept. Materials will be returned to the donor if requested. In the case of a deceased donor, the materials may be sold pursuant to the policies herein or offered to the personal representative, if any, of the Donor's estate. If no personal representative has been appointed, the materials may be offered to an heir of the donor, who has family approval to accept the materials. The materials will not be returned in the event the Museum becomes aware of a dispute regarding ownership of the item(s). If the Museum elects to return the materials, they will be returned only when the Museum can verify the dispute has been resolved, or as directed by a court of competent jurisdiction.
 - ii. Materials may be considered as an exchange with or gift to another institution as long as the materials are consistent with the mission and vision of that institution and the institution is able to provide for the adequate storage and preservation of the materials.
 - iii. Materials will not be used as gifts to individuals.

- iv. Materials will not be exchanged with an individual.
 - v. There will be no private sales of materials.
 - vi. Proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned materials will only be used for acquisition of new materials or the conservation and preservation of the museum's collection.
- d. The museum will ensure that it has the right to deaccession materials before it does so. If restrictions exist, the museum shall proceed in the following ways:
- i. Mandatory restrictions will be strictly observed, unless an exception can be made with the authority of a court with appropriate jurisdiction.
 - ii. The museum shall seek the advice of legal counsel when questions arise about the intent of restrictions.
- e. Deaccessioned materials will be fully documented, including information on the consideration and disposal of materials, with these records preserved as part of the museum's permanent accession record.
- f. Deaccession Process
- i. Materials will be recommended for deaccession by the Museum Manager or Curator. "Deaccession Recommendation" forms will accompany these objects, detailing the justifications for deaccession.
 - ii. Recommendations will be provided to the Accessions Committee during their monthly meeting.
 - iii. The Accessions Committee will make the determination for deaccessioning by majority rule.
 - iv. The donor of the deaccessioned items will be contacted and the museum will offer to return the materials to the donor.
 - v. If the donor does not want the materials returned to them, the items may be exchanged with or gifted to another public service institution or otherwise sold pursuant to the policies herein.
 - vi. Damaged or dangerous materials will be disposed of in a suitable manner.
 - vii. In all circumstances, proper documentation shall be kept for the actions taken.

IV. LOANS

a. Incoming Loans

- i. Except in certain circumstances, the Klamath County Museum will not accept incoming loans. Materials may be accepted as a loan with good cause shown, however, this action must be approved by the Museum Manager and Curator.
- ii. In the event that a loan is accepted for the Klamath County Museum, the materials will be put through the accessioning process described above. An “L” at the beginning of the accession number will signify the materials’ status as a loan (ex. L2014.001.0001).
- iii. Incoming loans must be set for a finite period.
- iv. Incoming loans must provide an unparalleled opportunity for the museum and must not be kept beyond the original intended use.
- v. The museum will not house materials that are not required for exhibition or ongoing research.
- vi. The ethical and legal responsibilities outlined in Section II regarding the acquisition of materials will also apply to any incoming loans.
- vii. Loans to the Museum and the termination thereof are subject to the provisions of Oregon Law, including ORS 358.415 to ORS 358.440. In the case of a deceased lender, the materials shall be returned to the personal representative of the decedent’s estate, upon timely request. If no personal representative has been appointed, the materials will be returned to an heir of the decedent authorized by the family of the decedent to accept the materials, upon timely request. In the event the Museum becomes aware of a dispute regarding ownership of the loaned materials, the Museum will return the materials as directed by the personal representative of the estate, a court of competent jurisdiction, or upon verification that the dispute has been resolved.

b. Outgoing Loans

The Klamath County Museum will loan materials to qualified institutions for scholarly research or exhibition. Loan agreements will be beneficial to the

Klamath County Museum or serve the museum's mission and vision. In these circumstances, the following guidelines will apply to all agreements:

- i. Materials will not be lent to individuals with no institutional affiliation, except for good cause shown, said loan must be approved by both the Museum Manager and Curator.
- ii. Materials requested by students will require approval and endorsement by a faculty member of the affiliated institution, who will carry full responsibility of the loan.
- iii. Loans must be requested two weeks prior to the loan start date.
- iv. Loans will not be transferred to another location without prior approval by the Museum Manager or Curator.
- v. Loans shall carry a maximum duration of one year. Loans may be renewed thereafter, but must be documented and accounted for with each renewal.
- vi. Longer term loans may be approved in unique circumstances by the Museum Manager and Curator.
- vii. Materials on loan will be given an insurance value prior to their shipment. Institutions receiving loans must have proper insurance coverage on loan items.

V. CARE AND USE OF COLLECTIONS/CONSERVATION

- a. At all times, staff members will be aware of their responsibilities to preserve and protect the collection.
- b. The museum shall do the best that it can to adhere to the highest standard of protection against fire, theft, vandalism, natural disasters, light damage, temperature/humidity fluctuations, and pollutants. Refer to the museum's Disaster Management Plan for more information.
- c. Conservation of museum collections is an ongoing responsibility. The Curator shall contact an appropriate conservator or museum professional for items that are judged to be high-risk items in need of conservation.
- d. The Curator shall insure that materials moving in or out of the museum will have the proper packaging and shipping arrangements.

- e. No item shall ever be moved from exhibition or storage without documentation of such movement in the PastPerfect database.
- f. Materials on display may only be moved with the supervision of the Curator.
- g. The museum's collections will be available for research and study by responsible and qualified investigators under the supervision of the Museum Manager or Curator.
- h. The museum reserves the right to deny access if such access will create a substantial risk of harm, theft, or destruction of the collections in question.
- i. Commercial and/or Educational use of materials may be approved by the Museum Manager or Curator, subject to the legal and ethical responsibilities outlined in this policy.

VI. OBJECT HANDLING

- a. All written or documentary information associated with an object will be saved.
- b. Adhesives (i.e. tape, glue, etc.) will not be removed from an object without proper training; this can damage the surface of objects.
- c. Avoid interruptions while working with collections, such as answering the phone, or other activities, as they are distracting and can cause accidents.
- d. Use good judgment and common sense – what may be appropriate for one object may not be for another when handling objects.
- e. Do not leave an object unattended in public spaces as objects may be stolen or damaged under these circumstances.
- f. Nitrile gloves shall be worn when handling collections. This protects items from oils and pollutants from the human skin. Wearing gloves also protects workers from potential hazards in certain collections, such as the possibility of arsenic in taxidermy specimens. In certain instances, it may not be possible to handle objects with gloves. In these circumstances, make sure that you thoroughly wash your hands both before and after handling an object.

VII. INSURANCE

- a. The museum holds a blanket insurance plan through Klamath County that insures the museum up to \$8 million.

VIII. RECORDS/INVENTORIES

- a. The museum must maintain proof of valid and legal title of museum collections in the form of a Deed of Gift for donations and receipts for museum purchases.
These records are kept in the permanent accession file.
- b. For incoming materials, the museum shall complete a condition report, to be held in the permanent accession file and used for information in the PastPerfect database.
- c. The museum shall perform collection inventories periodically to insure the proper management of the museum's collections.
- d. Records of outgoing/incoming loans will be maintained in the permanent accession files.
- e. Donor information shall be maintained in the museum's permanent accession files.
- f. If temporary custody documentation exists for materials, it shall be maintained in the permanent accession file.