

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Mission Statement**

The mission of the Dickinson Museum Center is to collect, preserve, and interpret the history of Southwestern North Dakota.

### **1.2 Museum Origin**

On December 18, 1981, the nonprofit organization, the Southwestern North Dakota Museum Foundation, Inc., was formed under Chapter 10-24 of the North Dakota Century Code for the purpose of operating and maintaining a general museum facility in the city of Dickinson to perpetuate the memory and spirit of Daniel Milton Joachim. Since 1981, the board has cooperated with the City of Dickinson to maintain the buildings, grounds, and collections on city property. In 2006 the city of Dickinson hired a museum director to work with both organizations, and to help facilitate museum management and development. In 2008 a second position was created, museum assistant, to further these efforts.

### **1.3 Purpose of this Policy**

This Collections Policy will serve as a guide for managing the collections of the Dickinson Museum Center. These guidelines are in compliance with accepted professional standards governing ownership of cultural property.

### **1.4 Scope of Collections**

The scope of the Dickinson Museum Center's collection is ultimately dictated by the mission statement of the Dickinson Museum Center. Specifically, the Dickinson Museum Center collects art and historical objects originating in or pertaining to the history of the city of Dickinson, Stark County, and Southwest North Dakota from prehistory until the present.

### **1.5 Collections Committee**

A Collections Committee will be made up of the museum director, museum assistant, and three Southwest North Dakota Museum Foundation board members. Committee appointments will be reviewed by the board annually.

## **2. Acquisition and Accession**

## **2.1 Types of Acquisitions**

The Dickinson Museum Center accepts objects into the collection by means of gifts/donations, bequests, and purchase.

## **2.2 Acquisition Criteria**

- 2.2.1 All new acquisitions must fall within the Dickinson Museum Center's scope of collections and must support the mission statement and collections goals of the Dickinson Museum Center.
- 2.2.2 The Dickinson Museum Center must have the capability to properly care for object(s). Storage and display space is limited. Objects that are very large may be declined due to the lack of available space and other resources needed to properly care for the object. Accepting large objects could hinder collection, storage, and display options in the future. Objects that are in very poor condition and/or are in need of professional conservation may also be declined due to lack of resources to properly care for these objects.
- 2.2.3 The object(s) should not create any unnecessary duplication of objects already in the collection. Because of the limited storage and display space, accepting several objects exactly the same, and in similar condition, reduces available space that could be used to store or display objects not currently in the collection. An exception to this could be objects that have an identified history or local connection that make them unique.
- 2.2.4 The Dickinson Museum Center will only acquire objects from which a clear title and ownership can be obtained. The Dickinson Museum Center will not accept objects with questionable, undetermined, or unethical history of ownership, or those objects for which free and clear title cannot be obtained.
- 2.2.5 Objects given or bequeathed to the Dickinson Museum Center must be done so without any restrictions of use, display, storage, conservation, and/or disposition. The Dickinson Museum Center reserves the right to use all gifts in the manner which best serves the museum and the museum's mission statement.

- 2.2.6 All objects entering the Dickinson Museum Center must be in a condition that will not cause injury or damage to other objects in the collection, storage or display facilities, or individuals working at or visiting the museum.
- 2.2.7 The Dickinson Museum Center will comply with the 1970 UNESCO Convention of the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property as ratified by the United States in the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act of 1983. The Dickinson Museum Center will not knowingly acquire by any means any objects illegally stolen or exported from their country of origin.
- 2.2.8 The Dickinson Museum Center will comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990. The Dickinson Museum Center will not acquire Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects or objects of cultural patrimony.

### **2.3 Acquisition Approval and Authority**

The Collections Committee is responsible for deciding if a potential acquisition meets the acquisition criteria and if potential acquisitions will be accepted into the permanent collection.

### **2.4 Accession Records**

- 2.4.1 Every new acquisition into the Dickinson Museum Center permanent collection will have one of the following documents transferring title of ownership to the Dickinson Museum Center and establishing the donation as the outright and unconditional property of the museum: *gift agreement, purchase of sale, deed of bequest/will*. Gift agreements will be signed by either the museum director or museum assistant.
- 2.4.2 A permanent accession file will be kept for every acquisition in the collection as well as recorded on the collections computer database.

### **3. Temporary Custody**

#### **3.1 Potential Accessions**

Objects left at the Dickinson Museum Center as potential acquisitions are not considered part of the permanent collection until they are evaluated against the acquisition criteria set forth in this policy and, if accepted, accessioned into the collection.

#### **3.2 Declined Objects**

Donors of objects not accepted by the Dickinson Museum Center will be notified, if possible. Donors will then have the option of removing the item within 30 days of that notification. Failure of the owner to reclaim their property within that time provides the Dickinson Museum Center the right to dispose of those objects in any manner it sees fit, in accordance with deaccession policies.

#### **3.3 Abandoned Property**

The Museum Center will not be responsible for abandoned property for which the owner cannot be determined, and may dispose of such property in any manner it sees fit, in accordance with acquisition and deaccession policies.

### **4. Deaccession**

#### **4.1 Responsibilities of Public Trust Institutions**

As a public trust institution, it is the responsibility of the Dickinson Museum Center to re-examine the relevance of its collections to its mission on a regular basis. The general policy of the Dickinson Museum Center toward deaccessioning is one of utmost caution and careful determination. The Dickinson Museum Center reserves the right to deaccession any materials in its permanent collections for which it holds clear title.

## **4.2 Deaccession Criteria**

4.2.1 An object may be considered for deaccession if it:

- Does not fit within the scope of the collection or the mission of the Dickinson Museum Center.
- Cannot be properly cared for by the museum because the cost of maintaining the object far outweighs its usefulness, its size presents problems related to preservation, or it cannot be displayed properly thereby posing a hazard to the visiting public.
- Has been damaged or deteriorated beyond repair or usefulness, or if the cost to repair would exceed the value of the object.
- Is hazardous or presents an imminent danger to the museum building, visitors, or staff and cannot be made safe.
- Is redundant to the collections, and the cost of its preservation jeopardizes the museum's ability to care for better examples in the collection.

4.2.2 The Dickinson Museum Center will not deaccession lost or missing objects and will not reassign accession numbers, files or other documentary references of lost objects. Deaccessioning results in disposal and if an object is lost or missing, there is nothing for the museum to dispose.

4.2.3 The Dickinson Museum Center will establish that it has clear and unrestricted title to an object before it is deaccessioned.

4.2.4 In cases where no gift agreement or other documentation of acquisition exists or can be found, the material is considered unclaimed, undocumented, abandoned property and deaccessioning may proceed after public notification.

## **4.3 Deaccession Approval and Authority**

The Collections Committee is responsible for deciding if an object in the collection meets the deaccession criteria and should be deaccessioned. The Committee will also decide what method of disposal is appropriate for each case.

## **4.4 Deaccession Records**

The Dickinson Museum Center will keep a permanent record of all deaccessioned objects and maintain documentation about them in perpetuity.

#### **4.5 Deaccession Methods and Procedures**

- 4.5.1 Deaccessioned items will be disposed of in a manner most beneficial to the public.
- 4.5.2 Deaccessioned objects may be disposed of by one of the following methods: donation or trade to another nonprofit educational institution, public sale, or destruction. It is preferable for a deaccessioned object to be placed in a public institution wherein the object may serve the same purpose for which it was initially acquired by the Dickinson Museum Center.
- 4.5.3 No deaccessioned object will be given or sold to any Dickinson Museum Center staff member, Southwest North Dakota Museum Foundation board member or officer, or to any other individual closely associated with the Dickinson Museum Center.
- 4.5.4 When public sale is used as the method of disposal, the Dickinson Museum Center will act in accordance with American Association of Museums' standards that all funds generated through the sale of objects from the collection will be used for the acquisition of objects for the permanent collections or for the preservation and conservation of items currently owned by the museum. The money will not be used to support the museum's day-to-day conservation activities or as general operating support.

## **5. Loans**

### **5.1 Loan Approval and Authority**

The Collections Committee is responsible for deciding what objects to accept as incoming loans and approving outgoing loans.

### **5.2 Incoming Loans**

- 5.2.1 The Dickinson Museum Center may accept incoming loans for exhibition. The museum does not store artifacts for any individual or institution for purposes unrelated to its own institutional activities or mission. No loan will be accepted except for a specific purpose.

- 5.2.2 The Dickinson Museum Center will not accept objects as long term loans from individuals. Objects from individuals will be accepted for short term loans for exhibition purposes for the time period listed on the loan agreement, not to exceed two years.
- 5.2.3 Objects loaned to the Dickinson Museum Center will not be insured by either the museum board or the city of Dickinson.
- 5.2.4 The Dickinson Museum Center will not borrow material known to have been collected illegally or represents a hazard to collections, staff members, volunteers, visitors or the museum building.
- 5.2.5 All incoming loans must be accompanied by a loan agreement that specifies the length of the loan, describes the object(s) taken on loan, and provides an assessment of the condition of the object(s) to be loaned. This agreement will be signed in duplicate by a Dickinson Museum Center staff member and the lender.
- 5.2.6 All objects loaned to the Dickinson Museum Center will be handled with the same professional care given to objects in its own permanent collections. The Dickinson Museum Center will not attempt to clean, repair, restore, or otherwise alter any materials which it accepts on loan, unless the lender authorizes such efforts in writing.
- 5.2.7 The Dickinson Museum Center will only release loaned materials to the custody of the lender, or the lender's agent, verified in writing by the lender. If legal title to the material changes during the period of the loan, the Dickinson Museum Center will prepare a new loan agreement to reflect the new lender. It is the lender's responsibility to keep the Dickinson Museum Center informed of any changes in their address or ownership during the period of the loan.
- 5.2.8 The Dickinson Museum Center will return loaned objects to the lender carefully packed in the same manner as they were received.

### **5.3 Outgoing Loans**

- 5.3.1 Objects in the Dickinson Museum Center collection will not be loaned to private individuals, homes or institutions not open to the public on a regular basis. Potential exhibits, including handling methods, security, and environmental

factors, must be approved of by the collections committee prior to approval of any outgoing loan.

- 5.3.2 All outgoing loans must be covered by a written loan agreement that specifies the length of the loan, describes the items taken on loan, and provides an assessment of the condition of the item(s) to be loaned between the Dickinson Museum Center and the borrowing institution. This agreement will be signed in duplicate by a Dickinson Museum Center staff member and the borrower.
- 5.3.3 The loan shall not conflict with projected use of the object(s) by the Dickinson Museum Center.
- 5.3.4 Objects will be returned to the Dickinson Museum Center at the borrowing institutions expense, carefully packed in the same manner as they were received.
- 5.3.5 Appropriate credit will be given to the Dickinson Museum Center for any loaned objects exhibited.

## **6. Records**

### **6.1 Records Retention**

The Dickinson Museum Center creates and stores two types of records for all objects in its collection: legal and curatorial. The legal records consist of accession records, deaccession records, and loan agreements. The curatorial records consist of all forms completed during the cataloging process and other associated curatorial functions. Included in the curatorial records are cataloging worksheets and condition reports. The Dickinson Museum Center will keep paper copies of all legal and curatorial records, as well as a computerized database.

### **6.2 Storage**

Copies of all records will be kept on file at the Dickinson Museum Center. Each accession will have their own file which will contain all the legal and curatorial records associated with that accession.

### **6.3 Access**

Public access to collections records will comply with the North Dakota Open Record laws.

## **7. Inventory**

### **7.1 Intellectual and Physical Control**

The Dickinson Museum Center has the responsibility to care for the objects in its collection and that includes being accountable for what is in the collection. In order to do that, museum staff needs to know what is in the collection and where it is located. This will be accomplished by periodically conducting a comprehensive inventory of the collection. A paper record of each inventory will be kept as well as being recorded into the computerized database.

### **7.2 Missing or Lost Items**

Accessioned objects not found during the inventory will be marked as missing in the collections database. Missing objects will not be deaccessioned.

## **8. Appraisals**

### **8.1 Monetary Appraisals**

In accordance with the AAM and ICOM Codes of Ethics and the Tax Reform Act of 1984, the Dickinson Museum Center will not provide appraisals for the monetary value of materials brought in for identification, offered as gifts, or submitted for any other purpose.

### **8.2 Object Identification**

The Dickinson Museum Center will, on occasion, assist individuals with the identification of an object, and its related history, independent of monetary value. This research, depending on the object and what is already known about it, can take a great deal of time away from the regular responsibilities of the museum

staff. Any research undertaken on the behalf of individuals is subject to current research fees , as determined, set, and approved by the city of Dickinson.

## **9. Access and Security**

### **9.1 Access to Collections**

The Dickinson Museum Center will make its collections available when such access is consistent with staff and space availability as well as the security and preservation of the artifacts.

### **9.2 Access to Storage**

In order to maintain a secure environment and protect the collection, the general public is not allowed free access to the collection storage area unless accompanied by a Dickinson Museum Center staff member. Arrangements must be made with reasonable advanced notice to ensure staff availability.

### **9.3 Security**

All staff working in areas where collections are either exhibited or stored are charged with security responsibilities relating to collections access.

## **10. Review and Revisions of Policy**

### **10.1 Review**

The Southwest North Dakota Museum Foundation Board of Directors will review this policy as needed or at least once every five years to insure that it continues to meet the needs of the Dickinson Museum Center.

### **10.2 Approval**

All changes and revisions to this policy require the approval of the Southwest North Dakota Museum Foundation Board of Directors.

## 11. Glossary

- Accession*** The process of creating an immediate, brief and permanent record of all objects from the same source at the same time for which the museum has acquired and assigning a unique control number to them. To accession an artifact implies permanence; a museum only accessions those items it intends to keep.
- Acquisition*** The discovery, preliminary evaluation, negotiation for, taking custody of, documenting title to, and acknowledging receipt of artifacts.
- Appraisal*** Assigning a monetary value to an object, usually done for tax purposes.
- Cataloging*** The curatorial process of classifying and documenting objects in complete descriptive detail.
- Collection*** All objects that have been accessioned.
- Deaccession*** The process of permanently removing accessioned artifacts from the collections.
- Inventory*** The creation of an itemized list of objects that identifies each object's physical location.
- Loan*** The delivery of personal property by one person or organization to another in trust for a specific purpose, with a contract, that the trust shall be faithfully executed and the property returned or duly accounted for when the specific purpose is accomplished or kept until the lender claims it. A loan involves the transfer of responsibility for an object from the lender to the borrower, but not the transfer of ownership.
- Museum*** An organized and permanent nonprofit institution, essentially educational or aesthetic in purpose, with professional staff, which owns or utilizes tangible objects, cares for them, and exhibits them to the public on some regular schedule.