

COLLECTIONS POLICY

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**WESTERN
RESERVE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

MISSION STATEMENT, 2010:

The Western Reserve Historical Society (“WRHS”) is a not-for-profit educational institution that preserves and uses its collections, historic sites, and museums to inspire people to explore the history and culture of northeastern Ohio and place that regional experience within the larger context of state, national, and global history.

Collections and exhibitions focus on the Western Reserve. Both permanent, and especially, changing, exhibitions place the region in its larger historical context. The Crawford Auto-Aviation Museum collections illustrate the history of the automotive industry in the Western Reserve as well as nationally and internationally.

WRHS’s collections and exhibits serve as a major educational resource for library and museum users, including school children, the general public, and scholars. In order to communicate effectively with these audiences, exhibits, whenever appropriate, employ modern interactive technologies and techniques. WRHS seeks to make its research material, exhibits, and programs accessible to all.

A. PURPOSE:

The Articles of Incorporation, dated 7 March 1892, of the Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS) state:

The purpose for which said corporation is formed is not profit, but is to discover, collect and preserve whatever relates to the history, biography, genealogy and antiquities of Ohio and the West; and of the people dwelling therein, including the physical history and condition of that State; to maintain a museum and library, and to extend knowledge upon the subjects mentioned by literary meetings, by publication and by other means.

The phrase “Ohio and the West” has been more closely defined by practice since the mid-twentieth century to mean northeastern Ohio and its Western Reserve region, without excluding material that falls outside this geographical area that may be broadly related to its interpretation and understanding. Within the geographic area of northeastern Ohio, WRHS focuses its collecting efforts around the core and strategic themes of community and family history, place and entrepreneurship, and business and industry.

WRHS owns and operates, as of the date of this resolution, an archives-library, history museum, the Frederick C. and Kathleen S. Crawford Auto-Aviation Museum, together with the historical properties: Hale Farm and Village, Shandy Hall, Loghurst, and the Handyside Residence. This collections policy includes all of these entities by reference under the categories: archives-library, museums and historical properties.

B. DECISION-MAKING:

During the various phases of the acquisition, management, preservation, use, loan and deaccession of historical materials, all pertinent issues will be identified and discussed in a manner that involves all interested staff, encourages the sharing of information, and seeks maximum input into the decision-making process.

A Collections Management Team (“CMT”) consisting of staff from units of the organization with responsibility for collections, education, museum administration, communications and institutional advancement will make recommendations regarding the WRHS’s collection management activities. The WRHS President & CEO appoints the members of the CMT on an annual basis based on recommendations from the Vice President of WRHS. The team will keep a written record of its proceedings and will open its deliberations to all interested staff members.

The CMT will meet regularly to make recommendations regarding:

- New acquisitions of objects and collections;
- Placement in the permanent or education “for use” collections;
- Prioritization of the conservation of objects and approval of conservation treatments;
- Loans to and from WRHS;
- Deaccessions from the permanent collection and disposal methods;
- Actions to ensure the proper care and documentation of collections.

The actions of the CMT, including recommendations regarding the acquisition, loans, deaccession, and disposal will be forwarded to the Vice President, President and CEO, Collections and Library Committee, and Board of Directors as outlined in other sections of this

policy.

C. COLLECTING OBJECTIVES BY MEDIA:

1. Archives-Library Collections: to collect, preserve and maintain manuscripts, published material, prints, photographs, audio and visual recordings, digitally encoded data, and ephemeral collections pertinent to the purpose of WRHS.
2. Museum Collections: to collect, preserve and maintain examples of material culture including objects of the fine and decorative arts, historical and cultural artifacts, costume and textiles, automobiles and aircraft and other expressive or utilitarian artifacts relevant to WRHS's mission.
3. Properties: to accept, restore and maintain historically significant properties relevant to WRHS's mission.

D. ACQUISITION POLICY:

1. Definition: Acquisition is defined as the discovery, preliminary evaluation (for WRHS purposes only), negotiation for, taking custody of, documenting title to, and acknowledging receipt of materials, objects and historic properties.
2. Acquisition Criteria: Library materials, museum objects and historical properties must meet all of the following conditions:
 - a. The present owner must have a clear title, and must warrant that the item is free of all liens, mortgages, encumbrances or adverse claims.
 - b. If for sale, WRHS must secure a funding commitment in writing before purchase.
 - c. If for sale, a fair market value must be determined between parties through a formal appraisal by a qualified independent appraiser.

- d. WRHS will accept materials if it believes it can provide proper professional care (secure storage, cataloging, and preservation) for those materials at the time they are being considered for acquisition or within a reasonable period thereafter. If the gift is real estate and in accordance with the Gift Acceptance Policy and if WRHS's Board of Directors chooses to consider the real estate for accession under this Collection Policy, the donor must provide funds for an endowment sufficient to assure its proper care, preservation, maintenance and programmatic operation.
- e. Materials considered for acquisition must have the potential to substantially advance knowledge about the history and people of northeastern Ohio and/or their place in broader (i.e. national and international) contexts.
- f. Considerations and judgments of potential acquisitions for the collections are not to be influenced by any connections their owners might have to WRHS or to other agencies or to families or political bodies.
- g. The provenance of the materials or objects must, whenever possible, be documented.
- h. All moral, legal, and ethical implications of the acquisition must have been considered.
- i. Acquisitions will not be so encumbered by literary rights, property rights, copyrights, patents or trademarks that will prevent WRHS from preserving, exhibiting or making the materials and objects available for scholarly research.
- j. Acquisitions must be free from donor-imposed restrictions, except in rare and specific instances, as recommended by the curatorial staff and approved in writing by the President & CEO, who will then make a report to the Collections &

Library Committee of the Board of Directors if under \$5,000.

- k. Items may be offered for accessioning, for use, and/or utilitarian purposes. This must be determined in advance and clearly specified in the deed of gift. Refer also to the Gift Acceptance Policy for gifts of tangible personal property and real estate.
3. Means of Acquisition: Materials and objects may be acquired by purchase, bequest, gift, bargain sale, exchange or other legal means. Please refer to the Gift Acceptance Policy on bargain sales. Exchanges must be at arm's length and substantiated by formal appraisals by independent qualified appraisers. All potential exchanges must be approved in advance by the President & CEO. Each party must bear the cost of its own independent appraisal. No exchange should be consummated without the final written approval of the President & CEO, who will make a report to the Collections & Library Committee of the Board of Directors. No materials or objects shall be knowingly or willfully accepted or acquired which are known to have been illegally imported into, or illegally collected in the United States. All acquisition activity shall conform to current applicable international, federal, state and local laws. In pursuit of materials and objects, WRHS shall not knowingly aid, abet, or encourage the destruction of historic sites, buildings, structures and objects. All rights, title and interest shall be obtained by WRHS for all potential acquisitions, without restrictions or limiting conditions, or shall have the potential of being converted to free and clear title under appropriate law.
4. Acquisition Process: Authority to acquire materials (under paragraph 3 above) rests with the President & CEO, who may choose to delegate this authority to the CMT as outlined in Section B, Decision-Making. The CMT will meet as needed to discuss acquisitions and deaccessions. WRHS's Curator of (Museum) Collections and Curator of

Manuscripts (Library) will work with appropriate staff to ensure that all state and federal laws and regulations are followed during the acquisition process. The CMT will be responsible for:

- a. Reviewing collections under consideration for acquisition and making a formal recommendation to the President & CEO that they be accepted or refused. Such decisions are to be based on the members' curatorial and historical expertise and the criteria set forth in Section C of this policy. When an acquisition involves a purchase, bargain sale, or exchange, CMT shall make a formal recommendation to the President & CEO, who will then decide whether the purchase fits within WRHS's budget or might be covered by another source of funds. If the value of the transaction exceeds \$5,000, the President & CEO will make a recommendation to the Collections & Library Committee of the Board of Directors for consideration and action. If the value of the transaction exceeds \$25,000, the Collections & Library Committee will submit its recommendation to the Board of Directors for consideration and action.
- b. President & CEO, as liaison to the Collections & Library Committee of the Board of Directors, will inform the committee of all new acquisitions on a quarterly basis.
- c. Ensuring that collections development in the various divisions (museum and archives-library) is coordinated, aligned with WRHS's strategic and operational agenda, and aligned with the WRHS Collection Development Plan.
- d. Preparing a unified quarterly acquisitions report for distribution to the President & CEO, senior staff, the Collections & Library Committee.
- e. Suggesting new collection initiatives in alignment with the WRHS Collection

Development Plan. Initiatives may address previously neglected areas of regional history or may be constructed to enhance existing holdings. Suggestions for new initiatives will be implemented only when approved in writing by the President & CEO of WRHS.

- f. Reviewing and evaluating new collecting initiatives (as outlined in item e. above) on an annual basis and preparing a report on those initiatives for the President & CEO of WRHS.
- g. Participating in all deaccessions procedures by reviewing proposed deaccessions and making a formal recommendation to the President & CEO if the proposed deaccession is within the interests of WRHS. The final decision on proposed deaccessions is the sole responsibility of the President & CEO, who will make a recommendation to the Collections & Library Committee for consideration and action, who will, if necessary, make a recommendation to the Board of Directors for consideration and action if necessary.
- h. Initiating a full review of the Collections Policy at three-year intervals to ensure that the policy reflects the organizational structure of WRHS at that time; that all references to legal decisions/laws relating to museum and archival collections are current; and that the policy incorporates any decisions relevant to new or modified collecting initiatives (as noted in items e. and f. above). The policy, if amended during such reviews, shall be referred to the President & CEO. If the President & CEO approves the policy amendment, she/he will make a recommendation to the Collections & Library Committee for consideration and action. The Collections & Library Committee will, in turn, make a recommendation to the Board of Directors for final consideration and action.

- i. Historical Properties: Authority to acquire historical properties by purchase, gift, exchange, or bargain sale (buildings and real estate used for historical purposes), regardless of value, shall be vested in the Board of Directors, upon formal recommendation of the President & CEO and governed by this Collections Policy and the Gift Acceptance Policy regarding gifts of real estate.
5. General: No staff member shall offer appraisals of the monetary value of materials or objects to donors, or reveal WRHS's insurance value, if any, for the purpose of establishing fair market value of gifts offered to WRHS. If a donor requests assistance in obtaining an independent appraisal, staff members may refer the donor to appropriate institutions or other sources of information. A list of qualified individual appraisers may be kept by WRHS. As a public service, staff may attempt to attribute, identify or authenticate items brought to WRHS by the public. All objects or materials that may be deposited with WRHS for these purposes shall have identification and be covered by insurance, paid for by the depositor, with WRHS as co-insured, as property on loan to WRHS. In cases where such materials (or materials loaned for other purposes) are not reclaimed by the owner, WRHS shall apply Ohio Revised Code Sections 3385.01-10, commonly referred to as the Ohio Museum Property Law. The Registrar shall maintain permanent acquisition and loan files within the registrar's office, which shall contain all legal instruments and conveyances pertaining to each acquisition or loan or source relating to their respective departments. All materials, objects and properties, except ephemera and library duplicates, acquired for addition to the permanent collections shall be processed under procedures and guidelines adopted by WRHS. The Registrar shall, with the assistance of the archives and library staff, maintain a permanent record of all accessions.

E. DEACCESSION POLICY:

1. **Definition:** Deaccession is the process of removing permanently from the collections accessioned library materials, accessioned museum objects or accessioned properties.

The deaccession process shall be cautious, deliberate, and scrupulous. Deaccessioning is to be considered and used as a collateral aspect of WRHS's collection development protocol as outlined in Sections A through C of this document.
2. **Deaccession Criteria:** Library materials, museum objects or properties to be considered for deaccession must meet at least one of the following conditions:
 - a. The item's scope is outside the purpose of WRHS and its acquisition policy.
 - b. The item is irrelevant to the purpose of WRHS.
 - c. The item lacks physical integrity.
 - d. The item has failed to retain its identity or authenticity, or, in the case of library material and museum objects, it has been lost or stolen and remains lost for longer than two years.
 - e. The item is a duplicate.
 - f. WRHS is unable to preserve the material, object or property properly.
 - g. The item is deteriorated beyond usefulness or restoration.
 - h. The item has doubtful potential utilization in the foreseeable future.
3. **Application of Criteria:** The Board of Directors, upon recommendation of the President & CEO and the Collections & Library Committee, is authorized to apply, jointly or singly, the above deaccession criteria.
4. **Restrictions:** Before any material or object is recommended for deaccessioning, or is deaccessioned, reasonable effort shall be made to ascertain that WRHS is legally free to

do so. Where restrictions to the disposition of the material or object are found, the following procedure shall be followed:

- a. Mandatory conditions of acquisition will be strictly observed unless deviation from their terms is authorized by a court of competent jurisdiction.
 - b. In the event of a question concerning intent or force of restrictions, the staff shall seek the advice of legal counsel. All materials or objects subject to restrictions shall not be deaccessioned until the staff has assured the President & CEO, the Collections & Library Committee, and the Board of Directors to its satisfaction that it has made an effort:
 - (1) To comply with the restrictions.
 - (2) To make reasonable attempts to notify the donor, if alive, or his/her heirs or assigns, if the material or object were accessioned within the preceding ten (10) years.
5. Procedure: WRHS staff may recommend deaccessioning if, in their best judgment, one or more criteria for deaccession have been met.
- a. Such recommendations will specify the source and/or provenance of the material, object or property, the reasons for deaccessioning, the estimated market value, and the recommended means of disposal which may include exchange, sale (public auction, sealed bid, open bid, or private treaty), destruction, or transfer to another cultural institution. Due diligence shall be exercised in the recommendation of the best means of disposal of deaccessioned materials.
 - b. Curatorial staff may engage in “conditional deaccession,” that is the disposal of damaged collection items (as noted in Section D, 2.g. of this policy) provided the need for such action is approved in advance by the President & CEO.

- c. All recommendations for deaccession are to be forwarded to the President & CEO. Materials (single items or related groups of items) with a value of or less than \$5,000 may be deaccessioned with the written approval of the President & CEO. The Collections & Library Committee shall be informed of all such actions.
 - d. Formal recommendations for the deaccessioning of single items or groups of material with an estimated value of more than \$5,000 shall be presented to the President & CEO for approval and then, if approved, to the Collections & Library Committee. If approved by the Collections & Library Committee, the recommendations shall be presented to the Board of Directors for consideration and action.
6. Ethics of Sale: Materials and objects shall not be given, sold, or otherwise transferred to WRHS employees, officers, directors, or their immediate families or representatives.
7. Proceeds: All net proceeds resulting from the deaccession of objects from the permanent collections shall support WRHS's collection management initiatives. In the case of real estate, net proceeds from the sale will be allocated to unrestricted Board-designated endowment.

F. PUBLIC DISCLOSURE:

This policy is ordered printed by the Board of Directors and a reference to it shall be imprinted on all deeds of gift of WRHS. A copy will be made available to any donor or prospective donor upon request.