

As is the standard in the Museum field, in 2015 MPM initiated a collections policy review process. The goal of the review was to ensure that museum policies and procedures reflect current best practice in the museum field, reflect current ethical standards, are legally compliant, and are up-to-date. A collections policy delineates how the museum acquires objects or specimens for the collection (known as accessioning), cares for and protects them, removes objects from the collection (known as deaccessioning), keeps accurate records and inventories, loans objects to other institutions, treats intellectual property created by MPM staff based on research on museum collections, and hews to ethical practices in the museum field. MPM's collections policy document was last updated in 1995.

As is described in the Lease and Management Agreement between MPM, Inc. and Milwaukee County, has "...full and complete control and discretion in the management and operation of the Site, the building, the Personal Property, and the Artifacts..." including the right and duty "to determine and carry out all policies relating to the acquisition, maintenance, loan, exchange, lease, sale, disposal, accession and deaccession of Artifacts." Section 5.5 of the L&M agreement with Milwaukee County notes that *"The Milwaukee Public Museum shall adopt a formal written policy regarding the accession and deaccession of artifacts in compliance with Federal and State law. Upon its adoption and upon any amendment thereof, a copy of such policy or amended policy, as the case may be, shall be submitted to the County Board of Supervisors for approval, which shall not be unreasonably withheld."*

Collection Policy Review Committee:

- Ellen Censky, chair
- Su Borkin
- Claudia Jacobson
- Carter Lupton
- Sara Podejko
- Chris Tyrrell

Reviewed the following Institution's Policies:

- American Alliance of Museums
- Association of Art Museum Directors
- American Association of State and Local History
- Denver Museum of Nature and Science
- Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History
- Natural History Museum of Utah
- Indianapolis Museum of Art

Changes to the 1995 document:

- Updated the mission statement
- Removed all procedures from the document. These are in other procedural documents.
- Removed redundant information and reorganized several sections to make them clearer.

Continued

- Changed the dollar value for authority to deaccession and/or dispose of an object.
(Section II B: Who Can Authorize Deaccession and Disposition)

OLDWho Can Authorize Deaccession1. Approvals

The article intended for deaccession shall be given an estimated dollar value by the Curator in charge of the collection, and the President/CEO must concur in this valuation.

If the valuation is less than \$1,000.00, deaccession may be authorized by the President/CEO. If the valuation is \$1,000.00 or more, deaccession must also have the approval of the Museum's Board of Directors and the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors.

2. Native American Collections

If the proposed deaccession is of Native American origin, deaccession must also have the approval of the Museum's Board of Directors and the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors regardless of value.

3. Natural History Collections

Curators in the natural sciences may be authorized by the Vice President of Collections and Research to negotiate minor deaccessions of damaged material, those which have lost their provenience, or small quantities of specimens being retained by scholars at other institutions as part of the routine arrangement for many research loans.

NEWWho Can Authorize Deaccession and Disposition1. Accessioned objects – General

In general, the person in charge of the collection initiates the deaccession of objects. The object intended for deaccession shall be given an estimated dollar value by the person in charge of the collection. The head of collections and/or President/CEO must concur in this valuation. Where the deaccession involves a number of related articles, they shall be valued as a group.

If the market value of the object is \$100 or less, the section head or head of collections has the authority to deaccession and dispose of the object. If the market value is less than \$2,000, deaccession may be authorized by the head of collections. If the market value exceeds \$2,000, the deaccession must also have the approval of the Museum's President/CEO and Board of Directors. If the market value of the deaccession exceeds \$5,000 the Museum must additionally have the approval of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors.

2. Accessioned objects - Special Cases

- Native American Collections:** If the proposed deaccession is of Native American origin, deaccession must also have the approval of the Museum's Board of Directors and the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors regardless of value. However, if the proposed object has been determined to be repatriable under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the Museum is obligated by law to deaccession and return it to the tribe (see the Museum's Repatriation Policy and Procedures). The Museum will not bring this to the Board of Directors or the Milwaukee County Board for approval, but will notify both, in writing, at their next scheduled meeting.
- Human Remains:** Deaccessioning of all human remains not covered by international, federal, state and local laws and regulations must be approved by the Museum's President/CEO, Board of Directors and the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors.
- Natural Science Collections:** Persons in charge of natural science collections may be authorized by the head of collections to deaccession small quantities of specimens to be retained by scholars at other institutions as part of the routine arrangement for many research loans.

3. Non-Accessioned objects.

In the case of non-accessioned objects of little or no value (less than \$100), the person in charge of the collection may be authorized by the head of collections to dispose of the object(s). If the valuation is less than \$2,000, the head of collections shall have the authority to approve disposal and if greater than \$2,000, the President/CEO shall have the authority to approve disposal.

- Changed use of proceeds from deaccession/disposition to reflect the standards established by the American Alliance of Museums and other organizations. (**Section II G: Use of Proceeds of Deaccession/Disposition**).

OLDUse of Proceeds of Deaccession

Proceeds from the sale of a deaccessioned article shall be used solely for the acquisition of objects for the museum's collections and shall in no event be used to defray its operating expenses, and all such proceeds shall be held in a Trust Account until they can be so used.

In general, the only permitted use shall be the purchase of a desired addition or additions to the Museum's collections, giving priority first to the collection from which the article was deaccessioned, second to other collections in the same department, and third to collections in other departments of the Museum.

In special situations, when it is in the best interests of the Museum, such proceeds may be used to defray the cost of restoration or conservation of a specific collection or collections, with the priorities being the same as those stated in the preceding paragraph.

It shall be the responsibility of the Museum and the Registrar to comply with all requirements of applicable federal and state law, including any requirements of the Internal Revenue Service.

NEWUse of Proceeds of Deaccession/Disposition

Proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned/disposed objects shall be used for the direct care and/or acquisition of collections and shall be accounted for in a restricted fund overseen by the head of collections and President/CEO.

It shall be the responsibility of the Museum and the Registrar to comply with all requirements of applicable international, federal and state law, including any requirements of the Internal Revenue Service.

- Added a section: **Section IX Intellectual Property**.
- Added definitions – Appendix I.
- Added a list of policies and documents referred to in the Collections Policy – Appendix II.
- Removed all addendums from the policy as they should not be part of the policy – they were procedural or had information that was already covered in the Collections Policy.