

THE BROOKLYN CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of Collections Management Policy

This document establishes policies pertaining to the collections of The Brooklyn Children's Museum (hereinafter referred to as "BCM") that adhere to the highest ethical and management standards and procedures as formulated by the museum profession. The document emphasizes those aspects of collection management most relevant to and consistent with the purposes and activities of BCM.

B. Authority

The primary responsibility for the daily application of the statement here set forth lies with staff of the Museum's Collections Department (hereinafter referred to as "curatorial staff" or "curator(s)"). Ultimate authority for all phases of collections management rests with the Board of Trustees.

C. Public Disclosure

This statement of Collections Management Policy will be furnished to all trustees, members of BCM staff and the American Association of Museums. Upon request, this policy will be available to other museums, to present and potential donors to BCM, to governmental authorities or any interested responsible individual. Any substantive amendments to the policy shall be reported to the above parties.

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I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS

A. Purpose

The collections constitute the primary resource through which BCM exercises its mandate of providing educational experiences by means of employing tangible objects in exhibitions and programs for young people in accordance with BCM's vision, mission, and goals. The collections therefore fulfill the following criteria:

1. Collections are resources selected to achieve educational goals through factual, aesthetic, cultural, scientific or other means of interpretation, tactile as well as visual.
2. The main areas of collections use are exhibitions, public programs, school class programs, workshops, loans, and outreach programs.
3. Authentic objects comprise the core of the collections. Reproductions shall be employed only for specific educational purposes and shall be so identified.
4. Objects are accepted only if they can be maintained, preserved, and utilized without loss of their physical integrity.
5. As the steward of valuable collections, BCM assumes the responsibility to maintain and interpret its collections in order to preserve the past, inform the present, and provide for the future.

B. Scope

1. Collections areas of particular concern to BCM fall within the broad categories of cultural history, ethnography, natural history, and science with the many sub-disciplines implied.
2. In general, only objects that are relevant to the purposes and activities of BCM are considered for permanent inclusion in the collections.
3. BCM accepts objects to strengthen areas in which it has a specialization and/or historical interest.
4. BCM acquires objects that broaden the comparative base of established disciplines and upgrade the quality of the collections.
5. BCM acquires objects representing contemporary material culture to illustrate the present, to compare materials and methods of manufacture, and to provide for historical continuity.

II. ACQUISITION OF COLLECTIONS

A. Conditions of Acceptance

1. Title to all objects acquired for BCM collections must be free and clear, without restrictions or limitations as to use or further disposition. Gifts may be displayed, stored, loaned, maintained or disposed of at the sole discretion of BCM.
2. Objects will not be accepted on conditions that would require that the collection of which they form a part should be kept together permanently and/or displayed as a discrete collection.
3. BCM acquires rights of reproduction, publication and copyright in accordance with government regulations regarding acquisition.
4. Objects will not be accepted if they are offered in violation of international, federal, or state laws. Donors/collectors must warrant that they have complete and unrestricted rights to ownership in accordance with such laws and, in the case of imported materials, they must make every effort to provide documentation to establish legal entry into the country.

B. Evaluation of Gifts

1. Gifts to BCM are tax deductible to the extent permitted by the Internal Revenue Code and applicable law and regulations.
2. No employee of BCM shall give appraisals for any purpose, including establishing the tax-deductible value of gifts offered to BCM.
3. No employee shall identify or otherwise authenticate for persons or agencies objects under circumstances that could encourage or benefit illegal, unethical or irresponsible traffic in such materials.
4. Identification and authentication (but not appraisals) by employees may be given for scientific or educational purposes or in compliance with the legitimate requests of governmental bodies or their agents.

C. Other Conditions

1. Objects may occasionally be accepted that are recognized as inappropriate for permanent incorporation into the collections, if and only if, they form part of an offering that also includes objects relevant for permanent acquisition. Such objects will be kept for eventual disposal in conformance with the policies on deaccessioning herein set forth (Section III.D).
2. Objects without complete collection data or provenience may be accepted at the discretion of curatorial staff if they are deemed valid for inclusion into the collections by other criteria such as aesthetics, educational use or local significance, and if their acquisition complies with Section II.A.
3. Conditions for the acceptance of bequests shall be the same as those herein set forth for offers of gifts.

D. Personal Collections

It is recognized that personal collecting may enrich the professional ability of trustees and staff members. To avoid any appearance of competing with BCM and to prevent any possibility of conflict of interest, trustees and staff members (full and part-time) shall adhere to the following criteria:

1. They shall advise the Board of Trustees or Director, as appropriate, of their personal interests and collections at the time of their appointment or employment, and they shall disclose the initiation of any new collections or acquisitions in subject areas represented in the Brooklyn Children's Museum's collection.
2. They shall not compete with BCM in the acquisition of objects directly or through a third party.
3. They shall not act as dealers (buying and selling for personal profit). It is recognized that there is a difference between dealing and occasional sales and purchases to upgrade personal collections.
4. They shall not accept personal gifts or discounts from dealers with whom BCM also does business, as such activities constitute special favors.
5. It is recognized that collections acquired before appointment or employment, family inheritances and collections outside BCM's field are exempt from policy restrictions.
6. It is recognized that a donor and a staff member may have a close personal relationship in addition to a professional one. In such circumstances the donor may genuinely wish to present a gift to a staff member. Such transactions must be in compliance with the Employee Handbook, IV.E.

E. Authority and Procedure of Acceptance

1. Offers of gifts and bequests in excess of \$5000 (estimated value) will be presented to the Program Committee of the Board of Trustees with the recommendations for acceptance or rejection of the curatorial staff, the Program Steering Committee, and the President.
2. Action of the Program Committee will be reported to the Board of Trustees for final authorization of acceptance or rejection.
3. A legal instrument of conveyance recording the transfer of gifts to BCM and acceptance of gifts will reside with both the donor and BCM. All copies will be signed and dated by both parties. The donor's form will clearly state the terms of BCM's acquisition policy.

4. If a gift offer is rejected, the object(s) will be returned to the owner within thirty days. If the owner does not accept the return of the object(s), they will be disposed of at the sole discretion of BCM.

F. Purchase of Objects

1. When feasible and possible, the curatorial staff may purchase relevant objects for the collection up to \$1000 in value in amounts not exceeding the sum allocated in the current BCM fiscal year budget. Purchases over \$1000 or not covered by the current BCM fiscal year budget for collections acquisitions will be reviewed by the Vice President for Programs or the Program Steering Committee. Proposed curatorial purchases over \$1000 in value will be presented to the Program Committee for approval.
2. Purchase may be at public auction, from dealers and private individuals if they constitute legitimate purveyors of objects and can provide documentation supporting ethical acquisition of the objects.
3. In special cases, or if an unexpected opportunity arises to acquire an object or collection of outstanding quality and/or significance to BCM, the Program Committee may recommend authorization of supplementary purchase funds beyond those in the budget.

G. Exchange of Objects

1. Relevant objects may be acquired through the reciprocal transfer of objects with another institution at the recommendation of curatorial staff with approval of the Program Committee through the same procedures set forth for the disposition of objects (Section III.C).
2. Objects may be acquired through exchanges with dealers or individuals at the recommendation of curatorial staff and with the approval of the Program Committee through the same procedures set forth for the purchase of objects (Section II.F).

H. Ethics of Acquisition

1. All gifts, purchases or exchanges must be accompanied by appropriate documentation indicating terms of the transaction. All documents must be signed and dated by the parties involved.
2. BCM will request proof of authenticity and provenience to the extent that donors and dealers can comply. BCM will not acquire collections of doubtful origin, authenticity, or ownership.
3. BCM will acquire collections only when it has been determined that they have been collected, exported and imported in full compliance with the laws and regulations of the country or countries of origin, of the federal government of the United States and of individual states within the United States. Such provision includes materials collected under circumstances that would support or encourage irresponsible damage to or destruction of biota, collecting sites, cultural monuments or human burial places. This policy constitutes adherence to all existing laws and regulations and to the guidelines of professional societies.

a. Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

BCM supports and will act in compliance with all requirements set forth in NAGPRA. Should repatriation requests occur, BCM will follow NAGPRA guidelines. BCM will strive to interpret Native American material with accuracy, sensitivity, and respect for the people of origin.

b. Federal and State Licenses

BCM maintains the following licenses to hold, preserve, and interpret specimens for educational purposes:

Federal Fish and Wildlife Permit – Special Purpose Possession (for possession of lawfully acquired migratory birds, their parts, nests, or eggs)

Federal Fish and Wildlife Permit – Eagle Exhibition (for possession of four bald eagles, eggs, and feathers)

New York State Fish and Wildlife License (for possession of endangered/threatened species)

New York State Fish and Wildlife License (to collect or possess vertebrates and invertebrates)

4. BCM will no longer acquire human remains.

III. DEACCESSIONING AND DISPOSAL OF COLLECTIONS

A. Reasons for Deaccession

1. Non-relevance: Any object no longer relevant or compatible with BCM's stated purpose may be disposed of. These circumstances may arise from wholesale acquisitions in the past, a reorganization or change of emphasis within BCM itself, or objects accepted as part of larger acquisitions as stated in Section II.C.1.
2. Maintenance: Any object that cannot be properly stored, preserved or used in a professional manner to insure its integrity may be disposed of. This situation may result from undue size, excessive quantities of similar objects, fragility or other unique circumstances.
3. Deterioration: Any object subject to irreversible deterioration, infestation or inherent chemical hazards that may imperil the condition of other objects or employees may be disposed of by destruction or discard.
4. Fraud: Any object determined to be fraudulent or an otherwise gross misrepresentation of an authentic object may be disposed of.
5. Quality: Any object of poor quality that hinders the upgrading of collections and occupies valuable storage space may be disposed of.
6. Illicit Property: Any object acquired contrary to the regulations set forth regarding illicit property as stated in Section II.H.3 may be disposed of after notifying the proper authorities and acting upon their recommendations.

B. Authority for Deaccessioning and Disposal

1. Recommendations for deaccessioning and disposal originate with the curatorial staff and are discussed with the Program Steering Committee and subsequently submitted to the President.
2. The curators (Director of Collections) and President present deaccessioning and disposal recommendations with all pertinent data, including any precatory conditions relating to the object,

to the Program Committee for review and action.

3. The decision of the Program Committee is referred to the Board of Trustees for final approval or rejection.
4. No objects with legal impediments or restrictions may be disposed of without the advice of legal counsel.
5. The Collections Department and Program Steering Committee shall agree upon the necessity of disposal and means of disposal of any object. The President and Program Committee shall review and approve their recommendations.
6. After attempting to establish ownership of objects in the collection that have no records or accession numbers, deaccession and disposal of these objects will be handled in the same way as accessioned objects.

C. Methods of Disposal

1. Exchanges: Reciprocal transfer of objects with a similar cultural, scientific or educational institution is the most desirable means of disposal. Such transfers increase the probability of preserving materials for the future and keeping them within the public domain.
2. Gifts: Objects may be given to a suitable institution if they have special regional or historical significance to that institution and such a gift is considered to be in the best interests of society.
3. Destruction: Objects subject to irreversible deterioration or infestation or posing chemical hazards that may imperil the condition of other objects or employees may be destroyed as set forth in III.A.3. If portions of the objects may be employed in restoration and rendering useful objects of like kind, such portions shall be salvaged prior to destruction. Photographs shall document the condition of objects disposed of in this manner.
4. Sale:
 - a. Objects may be sold through public auction if the value of the object(s) warrants such action.
 - b. Non-museum quality objects of no relevance or little value artistically, scientifically or historically may be disposed of by a public sale at BCM. Disposal of such objects will be announced through appropriate public and museum news media prior to sale.
5. Repatriation in accordance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990.

D. Ethics of Disposal

1. Only for clear and compelling reasons shall objects be disposed of contrary to the advice of the curatorial staff.
2. Disposal will comply with all export/import, environmental, or sacred object laws and professional standards and practices.
3. Objects that are presented to the Program Committee for disposal with a value of \$5000 or more must be accompanied by one outside appraisal. The Committee may request appraisals for objects with a value of less than \$5000.

4. Objects that are presented to the Program Committee for disposal with a value of \$8500 or more must be accompanied by two outside appraisals.
5. BCM will notify the office of the Attorney General of New York State fifteen days prior to the disposal of any object valued in excess of \$15,000. All information pertinent to the proposed transaction will be forwarded to the Attorney General's office.
6. Under no circumstances will there be direct sale, exchange or other means of disposal of objects to BCM trustees, staff, volunteers or any third party acting in their behalf.
7. Trustees and staff may compete legitimately for objects that are disposed of at public auction or sales where they have not been privy to special information.
8. Objects may not be disposed of through the BCM store under any circumstances.
9. Public announcement will be made prior to the public sale or auction of objects when deemed advisable.
10. In the case of monies accrued from disposal of objects received through gift, bequest, purchase, exchange or an unknown source, the proceeds must be used for collections acquisition.
11. In the case of monies accrued from disposal of objects received as gifts, the original donor's name will revert to any new object(s) acquired with the proceeds of sale in so far as is practicable.
12. Sacred artifacts, human remains, and specimens representing extinct, endangered, threatened or other protected species will be deaccession and disposed of after notifying the appropriate Federal and/or State agencies and soliciting their directions for proper disposal.
13. Consideration will be given to placing objects with another tax-exempt public institution as set forth in Section III.C.

E. Records of deaccession and disposal

A record of deaccessioned objects will be kept, as part of BCM's collection records, including the reason for deaccession, and the means of disposal.

IV. LOAN POLICY

A. Authority

Authority for deciding upon the advisability of loans rests with the curatorial staff with the approval of the Director.

B. Outgoing Loan Criteria

The following criteria shall govern the availability of material for any loan including the Portable Collections Program:

1. The borrowing agency must be a bona fide scientific, cultural or educational institution.
2. No loans will be made to individuals.
3. Objects will not be removed from BCM exhibitions for loan to another institution.
4. Objects will not be available for loan if the loan would interfere with scheduled BCM programming.
5. Objects will not be loaned if their condition, rarity or importance is such that their removal from BCM would threaten their integrity.

C. Outgoing Loan Regulations

All loans, except the Portable Collections Program, will be subject to the following regulations, and no loans shall be made where the rules are not adhered to:

1. The Borrower must insure the objects to the full amount specified by BCM, door to door, with the best available coverage.
2. The Borrower must arrange and pay for transport in both directions by methods acceptable to BCM.
3. Objects placed on public exhibition must be in locked or otherwise adequately secure cases, or when large objects are involved, so displayed as to provide maximum security.
4. Only adequately trained personnel shall be permitted to handle, move or pack material.
5. No material shall be altered, embellished, modified, cleaned, repaired or dismantled in any way without authorized and written permission of BCM. No means of support may be used that leave marks or evidence on the objects.
6. Borrowed material may not be used for any commercial purpose whatever except for normal exhibition catalogue or public relations purposes.
7. No objects may be re-loaned by a borrower without permission of BCM.
8. Packing for return shipping must be in the same manner as, equivalent to, or better than the original packing.
9. BCM may require that loans be accompanied by a BCM staff member both outgoing and incoming, and that packing, mounting, dismantling, and repacking be done under supervision of a BCM staff member at Borrower's expense.
10. Any costs incurred as part of object preparation, or procedures noted above shall be part of the loan agreement.

D. Incoming Loans

1. Incoming loans shall be accepted only for purposes of exhibition and must conform to the same provisions concerning ethical acquisition as stated in Section II.H.3.
2. Security and storage concerns dictate that no indefinite or long-term loans will be accepted.
3. Exceptions to this rule may be made only in extraordinary circumstances with approval of the Program Committee and the Board of Trustees.

E. Loan Documentation

Appropriate loan forms shall prescribe the procedures for outgoing and incoming loans. A complete record of loan transactions shall be maintained by the Collections Department.

V. MANAGEMENT OF COLLECTIONS

A. Authority and Responsibility

1. The Collections Department retains authority concerning access and use of collections based upon knowledge of the objects, including such factors as condition, rarity, fragility, importance and quantity of objects of similar kind in the collections. The head of the Collections Department acts as chief curator and coordinates all activities relating to collections in accordance with the Collections Management Policy.
2. Should a situation arise where collections preservation and collections access conflict, preservation shall take precedence.

B. Security and Preservation of Collections

1. Collections shall be housed in a secure storage area with temperature and humidity controls, fire safety equipment, integrated pest management, and controlled access.
2. Collections used in exhibitions may not be allowed to deteriorate through the improper use of light or lack of temperature and humidity controls. Curators (Collections Department staff) may remove objects from exhibition if they determine that conditions are causing deterioration.
3. Curatorial staff shall carry out and keep up to date inventory and condition reports of collections on a regularly scheduled basis.
4. Curatorial staff shall establish priorities for object conservation. In addition to preventive measures (V.B.1 & 2), the Museum shall provide for conservation in accordance with prevailing principles and practices in the field of object conservation.
5. Collections appraisal records shall be kept up to date by periodic appraisals by outside professional appraisers or by reference to current sales values for comparable objects.

C. In-House Access

1. Collections objects will be accessible for programming whenever BCM is open subject to the following criteria:
 - a. Only staff members specially trained in the use and handling of objects may use collections for educational programs. Supervisors of the Collections and Education Departments shall determine the qualifications of individual staff members.
 - b. Approved objects may be used in programming with school classes and workshops.
 - c. Objects used in public programming must be placed in secure, transparent containers and may not be touched or handled by members of the public, except by specific authorization of the curatorial staff.
 - d. Objects relating to predetermined subject matter may be used for outreach programs by appropriate educational staff members. These objects will be specially packaged to safeguard them in transport. Exceptions to these regulations must be specifically approved by the curatorial staff.
2. Objects may be used in exhibitions if displayed in secure cases with appropriate room controls. Large objects may be freestanding at the discretion of the curatorial staff.
3. Objects may be photographed by in-house staff under supervision of the appropriate Collections Department staff member. The Museum retains copyright of images it produces.
4. Objects shall be available to staff members for valid research or investigative projects related to BCM activities.
5. Objects shall be available for reproduction, adaptation, representation, or inspiration for marketable products only in accordance with Section V.A of this Policy and with the permission of the Museum's President. A prototype must be approved by the Program Steering Committee.
6. Staff members must report damage or theft of objects to the Collections Department.

D. Outside Access

1. Collections may never be used for events outside the educational scope of BCM's purposes. They may not be loaned to staff, trustees or other parties for personal purposes.
2. Loans of collections objects will be sanctioned only through established loan programs as stated in Section IV.
3. Legitimate visitors may view collections in storage only with prior permission during normal opening hours and under conditions assuring the safety of the collections.
4. Outside maintenance personnel, contractors, and researchers must be accompanied at all times in the storage areas.

E. Ethics of Access and Use

1. Staff members may not use collections for their private purposes or personal gain.
2. BCM will respect the origin and cultural context of all objects. Objects will not be used in any way construed as debasing or offensive to the sensibilities of their creators.
3. Efforts are made to accommodate the beliefs and potential concerns regarding use of animal and human remains of BCM's diverse audience.

VI. RECORDS AND DOCUMENTATION OF COLLECTIONS

A. Records

1. Every object entering BCM, whether in the form of gift, bequest, purchase or exchange, shall receive an accession number and be recorded in the accession record and digital catalogue. Information shall include, but not be limited to, source, date, description, measurements, origin, condition, value, and image. Storage location shall be noted whenever such information is pertinent.
2. The definitive record of the collections is the digital catalogue. The catalogue number and the accession number shall be identical. The number shall be affixed to the object and appear on all information relating to that object. Objects shall be described and attributed on the catalogue card along with an image.
3. All signed documents and receipts verifying the transfer of objects to BCM from all sources of acquisition shall be properly filed for information retrieval.
4. All records pertaining to deaccessioned objects shall remain in the catalogue and information filed appropriately marked to indicate disposition, date and authority for such action.
5. Requests for anonymity by donors will be honored, but only if this does not obscure the provenience of objects.
6. Duplicate records shall be stored in a safe, secure location outside BCM.
7. Collections insurance shall be determined by authority of the Board of Trustees with the recommendations of the Program Committee and the Director. This shall include provision for the amount of insurance protection, the portion of collections covered and under what circumstances it is required.

B. Documentation

1. Curatorial staff shall solicit as much information as possible concerning objects received from any source. Additional information through research or other means is the responsibility of the appropriate Collections Department staff member.
2. Curatorial staff shall share object information with responsible institutions and colleagues and solicit same in the interests of the broader dissemination of knowledge.

C. Abandoned Property and "Found in Collections"

1. Property loaned or deposited at the Museum with no written contact between the Museum and the owner(s) for at least seven years after the expiration date of the loan or deposit shall be considered abandoned and the Museum will follow New York State laws to obtain clear title.
2. Objects found in the collections for which the Museum cannot provide a record of original ownership, which are not believed to be on loan, and which have been in its possession for an extended period of time shall be accessioned with the acquisition source "unknown." They will be given a number reflecting their special status.

D. Outside Access

1. Access to records shall be limited to legitimate scholarly and legal inquiry, not for purposes of individual monetary gain. The Collections Department shall restrict access to any records deemed confidential such as records of value and donor records.
2. Requests for images or other documentation of collections materials of such nature may be granted at the discretion of curatorial staff. No requests may be granted which are in conflict with any regulations set forth in this policy.

E. Security of Records

1. Physical collections records are stored in the Collections Department and are the responsibility of the head of the Department or the Collections Manager.
2. Access to the electronic catalogue is at the discretion of the head of the Collections Department. Only the head of the Collections Department or the Collections Manager has system administrator rights. Other members of the Collections Department have full user rights. Other staff have "read only" rights.
3. Photocopies of accession records, including Deeds of Gift, are kept in a restricted off-site location. Back-ups of the electronic catalogue are made nightly; a weekly back-up is kept off-site by the Museum's IT department.

VII. COLLECTIONS FUND

A. Purpose of the Collections Fund

BCM shall maintain a Collections Fund consisting of the proceeds received from the disposal of deaccessioned objects and other funds raised for the Fund through donations and grants. The purpose of the Fund is to provide for acquisitions to enhance the collection, made in accordance with Section II, and for object conservation.

B. Authority and Procedures

1. An annual allocation from this Fund for acquisition and conservation will be agreed upon between the President, the Vice Presidents for Finance and Programs, and the Director of Collections. Unexpended funds at the end of the year will return to the Fund. Income generated through the sale of deaccessioned objects will not be used to defray ongoing operating expenses.
2. Upon receipt of a written proposal from the Director of Collections, the President may authorize expenditures exceeding the annual allocation in the event of an extraordinary object, collection, or need for an object arises or an object needs immediate conservation treatment whose cost exceeds the annual allocation.