

# Collections Management Policy

---

Cable Natural History Museum

**June 2012**

## **Introduction**

### ***Mission***

To connect people to Northwoods nature through educational experiences that inspire wonder, discovery and responsibility.

### ***Statement of Purpose***

The Cable Natural History Museum maintains quality natural history collections to promote its mission through exhibition, research, and education.

### ***Background and History***

Founded in 1967, the Cable Natural History Museum was built with funds donated by the Mary Livingston Griggs and the Mary Griggs Burke Foundation of St. Paul, MN, as a tribute to Mary Burke's mother (Mary Griggs) and a gift to the town of Cable. The Museum showcased the natural history collections and art of town resident Lois Nestel, who became the Museum's first director.

Lois Nestel was a self-taught naturalist, taxidermist and artist. During her 21-year tenure as Director, she built a collection of paintings and drawings, taxidermy mounts, illustrations, natural history manuscripts, models, and preserved specimens. These specimens and objects were the beginnings of the Cable Natural History Museum's present day collections.

Taxidermy mounts, pelts, plants, bones, feathers, insects, study skins, and other such items were donated to the Museum over the years by various donors. Today the Museum houses around 10,000 items in its collections.

### ***Commitment to Collections Stewardship***

The Cable Natural History Museum was built upon Lois Nestel's collections representing the Northwoods ecosystem of Wisconsin. As such, it is incumbent upon the Museum to ensure that items in our collections are acquired and maintained under the most ethical standards. The Museum makes collections stewardship a priority in its operation.

## **Authority**

### ***Board of Directors***

The Cable Natural History Museum is governed by a Board of Directors. In regards to Collections Stewardship and Management, the board is responsible for the financial affairs of the Museum as well as ensuring Museum policies are practiced. The Education Committee of the Board of Directors is responsible for assisting and advising the management of Museum collections.

### ***Museum Director***

The Museum Director works closely with the Board of the Directors and has full responsibility and authority for the management and coordination of the Museum's operations, staff, and their activities. The Museum Director also has authority of the physical plant, ensuring that Museum property is well maintained and safe. In regards to Collections Stewardship and Management, the Museum Director is responsible for overall Museum operations, delegating an annual budget for the collections department, ensuring a safe and well maintained environment to house the collections, supervising the Naturalist/Curator's job responsibilities, and communicating collections management issues to the Board of Directors.

### ***Naturalist/Curator***

The Naturalist/Curator is the primary manager of the Museum collections. The Naturalist/Curator is responsible for managing the collections through accessioning and deaccessioning, maintaining a database, storage of specimens, environmental control and monitoring, and facilitating the growth and long-term care of the collections. The Naturalist/Curator- is also responsible for maintaining current federal and state permits regarding specimens, both preserved and living.

### **Scope of the Collections**

The Cable Natural History Museum's collections consist of plant, animal, and geological specimens representative of Northern Wisconsin. This geographic area covers the Northern Highlands and Lake Superior Lowland regions. Specimens of species that are not native to Northern Wisconsin can be considered in the Museum's collection for comparative purposes.

The collections are held in public trust for educational and scientific purposes.

### **Collections Categories**

All specimens in the collections fall into one of two categories: Scientific or Teaching.

The Scientific Collection consists of specimens that hold scientific value for research or education. Usually they are associated with specific data that would prove useful to those wishing to conduct scientific research. These specimens are generally not available for "hands-on" use by Museum program participants and visitors.

The Teaching Collection consists of specimens that are suitable for use in educational settings. Some specimens in the Teaching Collection can be used for "hands-on" programs. They generally have no scientific data associated with them. Specimens whose catalog numbers end with the letter "T" are identified as part of the teaching collection.

Specimens may be transferred from the teaching collection to the scientific collection, and vice versa. The Naturalist/Curator will determine if it is necessary to do so and make the proper arrangements in the catalog.

## **Accessions and Acquisitions**

### ***Accession Policy***

1. Specimens that are accessioned into the Museum's collection must meet the qualifications described in the scope of the collections.
2. The Museum shall only accession objects that it intends to keep for the foreseeable future. Items donated to the Museum that are intended to be sold should not be accessioned into the collections.
3. The Museum must be able to provide proper storage, management, and documentation for the accessioned specimen without compromising its ability to properly store and care for other objects already in its possession.
4. The Museum Naturalist/Curator is responsible for accessioning and cataloging collection elements and maintaining records.
5. The Museum Naturalist/Curator will make decisions regarding accessioning of specimens, with guidance from the Museum Director.
6. All accessions must be documented according to the accession record worksheet.
7. All accessions must be acquired in an ethical and legal manner as outlined according to the American Alliance of Museum's current standards regarding collections stewardship (See Appendix I).

### ***Gifts***

Specimens that are donated to the Museum voluntarily and without financial compensation are considered gifts. All gifts must be documented using a Deed of Gift form (see Appendix II). The Museum prohibits the donation of restricted gifts, which require the museum to comply with certain requirements that govern the gift's use. All gifts must be accepted free of restrictions. Gifts must also meet all the requirements in the Accession Policy.

### ***Appraisals and Donor Tax Deductions***

The Cable Natural History Museum will not arrange or pay for appraisals of donations, in accordance with the Tax Reform Act of 1984. Internal appraisals will not be shared with donors.

## **Deaccessions**

### ***Deaccession Policy***

Museum staff may recommend an item in the collection be deaccessioned for the following reasons:

1. The item is not consistent with the Museum's mission.
2. The item does not meet the requirements listed in the Accession Policy.
3. The item has deteriorated beyond reasonable repair.
4. The Museum does not have the ability to properly care for an item, which then endangers its well-being.
5. The object or material endangers the Museum's physical structure, collections, staff, visitors, or reputation.

The staff member who is requesting an item be deaccessioned must fill out a Deaccession Recommendation Form (see Appendix III), indicating the reasons by that item should be deaccessioned. The recommendation must be reviewed and signed by the Museum Director and the Board Chairperson.

Once approved for deaccessioning, an item can be disposed of by the following ways:

1. Donation to another non-profit organization.
2. Direct disposal by burning, burial or other method.
3. Exchange with another non-profit organization or dealer.
4. Sale at public auction or through a reputable dealer.

If donated or sold, a clear title shall accompany a deaccession and a record kept on file at the Museum. Proceeds from sales shall go directly to support and enhance the Museum collections.

## **Loans**

### ***Outgoing Loan Policy***

The Cable Natural History may loan specimens in its collection to other institutions. Loans may only be made for educational or scholarly purposes, and must not be used for private purposes. The borrowing institution must complete and sign an Outgoing Loan Form (Appendix IV) and be fully capable of protecting and maintaining the object loaned. The borrowing institution must be able to provide proof of insurance. Outgoing loans must be approved by the Naturalist/Curator.

The Museum retains the right to recall a loan if contract obligations are not being met.

### ***Incoming Loan Policy***

Loans obtained by the Cable Natural History Museum must be made to further the Museum's mission. All incoming loans must be approved by the Naturalist/Curator, consistent with considerations of security, staffing liability, cost, and appropriateness. Lenders must complete and sign an Incoming Loan Form (Appendix V).

### **Collections Care**

The Naturalist/Curator will be responsible for the care of collection, maintaining accurate and thorough documentation, and its responsible use. The Education Committee will advise and guide the Naturalist/Curator, as appropriate, in the care of collections.

### **Access and Use**

Specimens in the Cable Natural History Museum's collections are used primarily to enhance Museum exhibits and for educational purposes. The use of collections must conform to the Museum's mission, and must also be ethical and legal.

The Collections Room may be available for tours and exhibition to the public. Only persons approved by the Naturalist/Curator or Museum Director may handle or touch collections objects, excluding teaching collection objects that are identified as being available for visitors to handle.

Destructive sampling of specimens is permitted only if it does not compromise the integrity of the specimen. It also must be approved by the Museum Director and Naturalist/Curator. If destructive sampling is allowed, only a minimum amount must be used. The purpose of the sampling must be of scholarly pursuit.

### **Risk Management**

At the time of printing, the Museum did not have a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP). Once completed, it will address emergency procedures involving Museum collections.

All specimens in the collection will be documented and covered by the Museum's insurance policy. Items loaned out to other organizations must also be insured, either by the Museum or the borrowing institution.

### **Appraisals and Identification**

Due to conflict of interest, no member of the Museum staff may appraise an item for the purpose of establishing a fair-market value of gifts offered to the Museum.

Identification or authentication of natural history objects by Museum staff is permitted as a service to the public. Individuals wishing to leave their objects on a temporary basis for

identification purposes may do so, but first must read and sign a Receipt for Temporary Deposit (see Appendix VI). At the time of the deposit, a reclamation date must be set within 60 days of the Museum receiving the object. Items not reclaimed after this date will be considered abandoned and will either be added to the collections or otherwise disposed of.

### **Policy Review and Revision**

This collections management policy must be reviewed by the Naturalist/Curator every three years to determine if revisions are needed. Revisions may be made sooner than three years if it determined necessary by the Museum Director or the Board of Directors.

## **Appendix I: American Alliance of Museums Standards Regarding Collections Stewardship.**

### **Standards Regarding Collections Stewardship**

- The museum owns, exhibits or uses collections that are appropriate to its mission.
- The museum legally, ethically and effectively manages, documents, cares for and uses the collections.
- The museum conducts collections-related research according to appropriate scholarly standards.
- The museum strategically plans for the use and development of its collections.
- The museum, guided by its mission, provides public access to its collections while ensuring their preservation.
- The museum allocates its space and uses its facilities to meet the needs of the collections, audience and staff.
- The museum has appropriate measures in place to ensure the safety and security of people, its collections and/or objects, and the facilities it owns or uses.
- The museum takes appropriate measures to protect itself against potential risk and loss.

### **Purpose and Importance**

Stewardship is the careful, sound and responsible management of that which is entrusted to a museum's care. Possession of collections incurs legal, social and ethical obligations to provide proper physical storage, management and care for the collections and associated documentation, as well as proper intellectual control. Collections are held in trust for the public and made accessible for the public's benefit. Effective collections stewardship ensures that the objects the museum owns, borrows, holds in its custody and/or uses are available and accessible to present and future generations. A museum's collections are an important means of advancing its mission and serving the public.

### **Implementation**

Museums are expected to: plan strategically and act ethically with respect to collections stewardship matters; legally, ethically and responsibly acquire, manage and dispose of collection items as well as know what collections are in its ownership/custody, where they came from, why it has them and their current condition and location; and provide regular and reasonable access to, and use of, the collections/objects in its custody.

Achieving this standard requires thorough understanding of collections stewardship issues to ensure thoughtful and responsible planning and decision making. With this in mind, national standards emphasize systematic development and regular review of policies, procedures, practices and plans for the goals, activities and needs of the collections.

### **How Does A Museum Assess Whether Its Collections and/or Objects Are Appropriate for Its Mission?**

This is determined by comparing the institution's mission—how it formally defines its unique identity and purpose, and its understanding of its role and responsibility to the public—to two things: (1) the collections used by the institution; and (2) its policies, procedures and practices regarding the development and use of collections (see also the Standards Regarding Institutional Mission Statements).

A review of a museum's collections stewardship practices examines: whether the mission statement or collections documents (e.g., collections management policy, collections plan, etc.) are clear enough to guide collections stewardship decisions; whether the collections owned by the museum, and objects loaned and exhibited at the museum, fall within the scope of the stated mission and collections documents; and whether the mission and other collections stewardship-related documents are in alignment and guide the museum's practices.

### **Assessing Collections Stewardship**

There are different ways to manage, house, secure, document and conserve collections, depending on their media and use, and the museum's own discipline, size, physical facilities, geographic location and financial and human resources. Therefore, one must consider many facets of an institution's operations that, taken together, demonstrate

## CNHM Collections Management Policy, 6/2012

the effectiveness of its collections stewardship policies, procedures and practices, and assess them in light of varying factors. For instance, museums may have diverse types of collections categorized by different levels of purpose and use—permanent, educational, archival, research and study, to name a few—that may have different management and care needs. These distinctions should be articulated in collections stewardship-related policies and procedures. In addition, different museum disciplines may have different collections stewardship practices, issues and needs related to their specific field. Museums are expected to follow the standards and best practices appropriate to their respective discipline and/or museum type as applicable.

### **The standards require that:**

- A current, approved, comprehensive collections management policy is in effect and actively used to guide the museum's stewardship of its collections.
- The human resources are sufficient, and the staff have the appropriate education, training and experience to fulfill the museum's stewardship responsibilities and the needs of the collections.
- Staff are delegated responsibility to carry out the collections management policy.
- A system of documentation, records management and inventory is in effect to describe each object and its acquisition (permanent or temporary), current condition and location and movement into, out of and within the museum.
- The museum regularly monitors environmental conditions and takes proactive measures to mitigate the effects of ultraviolet light, fluctuations in temperature and humidity, air pollution, damage, pests and natural disasters on collections.
- An appropriate method for identifying needs and determining priorities for conservation/care is in place.
- Safety and security procedures and plans for collections in the museum's custody are documented, practiced and addressed in the museum's emergency/disaster preparedness plan.
- Regular assessment of, and planning for, collection needs (development, conservation, risk management, etc.) takes place and sufficient financial and human resources are allocated for collections stewardship.
- Collections care policies and procedures for collections on exhibition, in storage, on loan and during travel are appropriate, adequate and documented.
- The scope of a museum's collections stewardship extends to both the physical and intellectual control of its property.
- Ethical considerations of collections stewardship are incorporated into the appropriate museum policies and procedures.
- Considerations regarding future collecting activities are incorporated into institutional plans and other appropriate policy documents.

## Appendix II: Deed of Gift Form



### Deed of Gift

Cable Natural History Museum

PO Box 416

Cable, WI 54821

Phone: 715-798-3890

Fax: 715-798-3828

Info@cablemuseum.org

Accession No. :

Date of Gift Receipt:

Donor:

Phone:

Address:

Email:

---

Description of Gift:

Where was it collected?

When was it collected?

---

I/we hereby unconditionally and irrevocably give to the Cable Natural History Museum the article(s) that is/are described above.

The Museum will consider the article(s) as unrestricted gifts, which may be used in any manner that is deemed to be in the best interest of the Museum. The article(s) will be used to fulfill the Museum's mission to connect people to Northwoods nature through educational experience that inspire wonder, discovery, and responsibility. Collections shall be available to the public in such a manner that their integrity and well being will be best preserved.

Because the Museum periodically changes exhibits, no object can be considered on/for permanent exhibit. Accessioned objects may be used for exhibition, study, research, loan, examination, or deaccession.

Signature of Donor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Accepted for the Cable Natural History Museum by:

Staff Name:

Title:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Revised 9/21/2012

### Appendix III: Deaccession Recommendation Form



## Deaccession Recommendation Form Cable Natural History Museum

Date:

Accession Number:

Description:

Reason for Descessioning:

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name) (Title)

APPROVED

DECLINED (Please explain reason in the space below)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Board Chair Signature) (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Museum Director Signature) (Date)

Final Disposition (if approved):

## Appendix IV: Outgoing Loan Form



**Outgoing Loan**  
Cable Natural History Museum  
PO Box 416  
Cable, WI 54821  
Phone: 715-798-3890  
Fax: 715-798-3828  
Info@cablemuseum.org

Borrower:

Contact:

Address:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

---

List of Loaned Specimen(s):

<u>Accession No.</u>	<u>Description</u>
----------------------	--------------------

*(Additional Outgoing Loan sheets may be attached if necessary)*

---

Purpose of Loan:

Loan Dates: From: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance:  To be carried by Borrower     To be carried by CNHM     Insurance waived

---

The Borrower hereby acknowledge receipt from the Cable Natural History Museum of the specimen(s) listed above. The undersigned assumes full responsibility for the specimen(s) subject to the condition printed on the back of this Outgoing Loan form until they return to the Cable Natural History Museum.

Borrower's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Loan Approved by:

CNHM Staff Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix V: Incoming Loan Form



**Incoming Loan**  
Cable Natural History Museum  
PO Box 416  
Cable, WI 54821  
Phone: 715-798-3890  
Fax: 715-798-3828  
Info@cablemuseum.org

Lender:

Address:

Contact:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

---

List of Loaned Items(s):

<u>Accession No.</u>	<u>Description</u>
----------------------	--------------------

*(Additional Incoming Loan sheets may be attached if necessary)*

---

Purpose of Loan:

Loan Dates: From: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance:  To be carried by Borrower     To be carried by CNHM     Insurance waived

---

The items described above have been received by the Cable Natural History Museum, as a loan, subject to the conditions on the reverse of this form. I acknowledge that I have read and accept all conditions on the reverse of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lender's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Borrower's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix V: Receipt for Temporary Deposit



### Receipt for Temporary Deposit

**Cable Natural History Museum**

PO Box 416

Cable, WI 54821

Phone: 715-798-3890

Fax: 715-798-3828

Info@cablemuseum.org

Deposit Date:

Depositor Name:

Phone:

Address:

Email:

---

List of Object(s) With Description:

Purpose of Custody:

Identification    Consideration for Acquisition    Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

- 
1. The Depositor hereby releases the Cable Natural History Museum (the "Museum") from all liability regarding any loss or damage to the object(s) covered by this receipt while in the Museum's possession and agrees that the Museum shall not cover such object(s) with insurance. The Museum shall exercise the same care of the object(s) covered by this receipt as it does in the safekeeping of comparable Museum objects.
  2. The Depositor must retrieve the object(s) within 60 days of deposit date. After 60 days, the object(s) will be considered abandoned property and the Museum reserves the right to accession or dispose of the object(s) at its discretion.

DUE DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Depositor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Accepted for the Cable Natural History Museum by:

Staff Name:

Title:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_