



The Harlem Museum and Welcome Center  
Home of the Laurel and Hardy Museum of Georgia  
135 N. Louisville Rd, Harlem, Georgia 30813

9 Jan 2020

## **Collections Management Policy**

The Harlem Museum and Welcome Center, Home of the Laurel and Hardy Museum of Georgia (HM)

### **I. Mission Statement**

- Our mission is to inspire knowledge, understanding, and learning about all of Harlem, Georgia's rich history, including Oliver Hardy and his comedic partner Stanley Laurel.

### **II. Vision**

- The Harlem Museum (HM) will reflect the history of Harlem in its entirety and will continue to include the Laurel and Hardy Museum of Georgia (LH). This vision will be reflected in all of its practices, working with the local community and the international community to ensure the best information and collection is able to be provided to the broadest audience.

### **III. Values**

- High professional standards in museum and collection management;
- Showing respect, grace, and gratitude to visitors, donors, supporters, volunteers, and staff;
- Responding to the changing needs of the community we serve;
- Fiscal prudence and transparency;
- Boldness, with measured decision making and high standards of implementation;
- Integrity; free and open discussion; a light touch, and a sense of humor;
- Involvement of Committee Members in the life of the HM and the contribution of each person's talents and influence.

### **IV. Purpose of this Collections Management Policy**

- This policy is intended to document procedures and practices that guide the HM in the development and care of the museum's collections.
- Through this Collections Management Policy, the HM ensures that:
  1. All items are documented in the collections database;
  2. The HM collections are appropriately accounted for in accordance with this policy, State, and Federal guidelines and laws;
  3. Collections are protected, secured and cared for;
  4. Acquisition, deaccessioning, and loans of items in our collections are conducted in a manner that aligns with the HM's mission, complies with applicable laws, and reflects high ethical standards;



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5. Disposal of collection items through sale, exchange, or other means is solely for the furthering of care of the collection. Proceeds from any sale are used only to invest in further collections or to improve the current collections integrity;
6. The HM will make available to qualified researchers and scholars materials relating to the collections unless they are confidential or would suffer physical harm if handled;
7. Collection related activities will always promote the public good rather than individual financial gain.

#### **V. Duties of the HM Board**

- The HM Board will maintain the power to accept or decline major acquisitions, loans, and displays presented by the HM Director that are deemed contrary to the HM's Mission.
  1. This power is to be decided by a majority vote with a quorum of board members present.
    - If a quorum of board members is not present for an acquisition/deaccession vote, the decision will be entrusted to the HM Director.
  2. "Either of two circumstances defines major Acquisition/Deaccession:"
    - The item requires 100 sq. ft. or more of exhibition space.
    - The item is valued at \$15,000 or higher.
- All non-major acquisitions and deaccessions are under the power of the HM Director or HM Curator in consultation with HM Director.

#### **VI. Acquisitions**

- **General Principles**
  1. The HM Director should accept only items that significantly further the mission of the HM.
    - Acquired items must be in, or capable of being returned to, an acceptable state of preservation unless the deteriorated condition is integral to the meaning of the item.
    - The HM must be able to display, store, and care for the proposed acquisition.
    - The HM is committed to collecting with the highest ethical and professional standards.
- **Purchase Procedures**
  1. Proposed purchases must be accompanied by a detailed report, including a description of the item's condition, history, importance to the Museum's



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collection, intentions for display/storage, and the account with which the purchase will be charged.

- The HM Director must approve any purchase and proportionally fit within the year's budget.
- Any purchase that is deemed necessary but proportionally beyond the HM's yearly budget must be presented to and approved by the HM Board with a majority vote.

- **Procedures for Accepting Gifts or Bequests**

1. Proposed gifts or bequests must be accompanied by a detailed report, including a description of the item's condition, history, importance to the HM's collection, and intentions for display/storage.
2. The HM does not accept restrictions or special requests on gifts.
3. The HM requires that donors transfer all rights of gifts or bequests to the museum.

- **Procedures for Accepting Loans**

1. The HM Director will write out a loan agreement with the owner of the loaned item.
  - The agreement must include a description of the item's condition, history, importance to the HM's collection, intentions for display/storage, the agreed timeframe of the loan, and an heir to which the item will be returned at the end of the loan should the owner pass away.

**VII. Staff Policies Related to Acquisitions**

- **Appraisals of Proposed Acquisitions**

1. The HM does not provide appraisals for any item, acquisition or otherwise. Under current IRS guidelines, the HM cannot act as a qualified appraiser because of its inherent conflict in its role as a donee.
2. The HM Director or Curator can suggest local appraisers but cannot participate in the arrangement or payment of the appraisal.
3. If the item is the possession of the museum via a loan, the appraiser must have written approval from the HM Director to gain access to the item.

- **Provenance Guidelines**

1. The HM will rigorously research the provenance of an item prior to acquisition to determine that the Museum can obtain a clear title.
2. For all acquisitions, the HM will make every effort to obtain from sellers and donors all available information and accurate written documentation concerning the ownership history of the item.



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3. For any purchase of a single item over \$150,000 and for all items coming from abroad for acquisition by the HM, the museum will obtain all recent import and export documentation.

**- Personal Collecting by Staff**

1. The HM recognizes that its employees may have personal collections of items that would be considered valuable to the museum. Any employee will be trusted to ensure there is no conflict of interest with their private collection and the collections of the HM.
2. Any employee who has an interest in an item from the museum collection that has become available for purchase is expected to place the HM's interests ahead of their own.
3. If an employee has any item he/she is making available for purchase that would benefit the mission of the HM, the employee is expected to give the HM the first opportunity to acquire the said item.
4. Each employee is expected to exercise reasonable judgment in determining whether the scope of his or her private collection and /or collecting activities is such that the matter should be discussed with the HM Director.
5. Unless personal collecting activities are minimal, they should be discussed and indicated upon employment.

**- Dealing in Items by Staff**

1. An employee shall not act as a dealer in the acquisition or deaccession of any item in the HM's collections.
2. The only people with authority over the acquisition and deaccession of collections are the HM director or HM Curator in consultation with the HM Director.

**- Gifts to Staff**

1. An employee must obtain the written consent of the HM Director prior to accepting any gift from a person engaged in museum related activity. This approval includes but is not limited to, a donor, dealer, board member, collector, or vendor. Gifts of cash are never appropriate. Employees are also prohibited from borrowing, or owing money to any person engaged in HM related activity except in the context of standard business agreements with financial service entities.

## **VIII. Accessioning**

**- General Principles**

1. The term "accessioning" means that an item is added to the inventory of the museum's collections. Accessioning should take place after the acquisition process.



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- All items will be added to the collections database with a unique number-letter sequence.
- If a previous item has been deaccessioned, that number-letter sequence cannot be reused for a new item. Records of what happened to the deaccessioned item must be kept in the database.
- This number-letter sequence will correspond to the physical location of the item when in collections storage.
- If an item is removed from storage for exhibition, a notice will be placed in the proper storage location with the exhibition location.

## **IX. Deaccessioning**

### **- General Principles**

1. The term 'deaccessioning' means that an item from the museum's collections is removed from inventory and made available for purchase, exchange, loan, or other means of disposal. Any deaccessioning should be done solely for the advancement of the HM's mission. The criteria that determine deaccession include, but are not limited to the following:
  - The item no longer furthers the mission of the HM
  - The item is redundant or is a duplicate thus becoming unnecessary
  - The item is of far less quality than other items in the same category of collection or than an item in the process of being acquired
  - The item lacks sufficient aesthetic merit or historical value to warrant retention
  - The HM is ordered to return the object to its original and/or rightful owner by a court of law;
  - The HM determines that another entity is the rightful owner of the item;
  - The HM determines the return of the item is in the best interest of the museum.
  - The HM is unable to conserve the item in a responsible manner.
  - The item is unduly or impossible to care for adequately.
  - The HM will follow all stipulations outlined in a will for any item bequeathed to the museum collections, once it is accepted into the collections.
2. No Board Member, employee, volunteer, or family member of such individuals may purchase deaccessioned items without written approval from the HM Director.
3. All funds received from deaccessioned items will be used to purchase other collection items or improve the overall care and integrity of the collections.



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- **Guidelines for Deaccessioning Gifts**
  1. The HM will always give the gifting owner of the item the first opportunity to acquire the item.
  2. If the original owner is not alive, the gifting owner's heirs should be given the first opportunity to acquire the item.
  3. If efforts have been made to contact the gifting owner prove unsuccessful, the item may be placed for other methods of deaccessioning.
  
- **Guidelines for Deaccessioning Loans**
  1. The HM will return loaned items as per the loan agreement with the owner or heir of the loaned item.
  2. If the owner or heir cannot be contacted within 90 days of the expiration of the loan, the loaned item will become the property of the HM. It will be either be added and remain in inventory as part of the permanent collection or be deaccessioned. The choice will be made based on the needs and mission of the museum.
  
- **Procedures for Deaccessioning**
  1. The HM Director has the final say in deaccessioning all collections items that are not deemed "Major Acquisitions."
  2. The HM Board must approve major Deaccessions by the guidelines outlined in section III of this document.
  3. The deaccessioned item will be removed from storage and annotated in the database as to date it was deaccessioned, manner of disposal (i.e. auction, loan return, gift return, damaged beyond repair, etc.), and individual(s) or entities making the decision (i.e. HM Board, Director by name and position, or Director and Curator by name and position).

## **X. Care of the Collections**

- The HM shall conserve all items in its collections in accordance with the highest standards. The HM will provide a safe and appropriate environment for all of its collections. This environment should be secure and environmentally controlled to ensure benefit for the present and future generations. The temperature should remain between 55° F and 70° F not to exceed a 5° swing in temperature during a 24 hour period. The museum will maintain a Collections Emergency Plan. The HM's conservation standards must be met or exceeded by any other party that loans to or borrows any item from the museum. The HM staff will maintain documentation on all items in the museum's collections.



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### **XI. Records and Inventories**

- The HM will maintain accurate and up-to-date records of all items in collections and on exhibit.
- These records will be recorded in the museum's database and will contain the location and condition.
- All documents involving the acquisition and deaccession of items will be kept by scanning them into our digital database as well as filing them in paper form.
- All records created or received in transactions of the HM's business are the property of the museum and must not be dispersed or destroyed except per the record retention policy and applicable State and Federal guidelines and laws.
- The HM will make item-specific records available to anyone purchasing or loaned a collections item.
- Maintaining records is the responsibility of any and all HM staff under the direction of the HM Director.
- There will be a full collections inventory taken at least once each year. Yearly inventories are reported to the HM Board for informational purposes.
- Each storage box/container will have a readily accessible folder with a complete inventory of the box and any notices for items that are on exhibit, on loan, or deaccessioned.
- Each storage unit that does not have storage containers will have an inventory by unit and a closable folder with a complete inventory of the box and any notices for items that are on exhibit, on loan, or deaccessioned.
- Items on exhibit should be recorded present daily with a walkthrough of the exhibition space.

### **XII. Access to the Collection**

- It's fundamental to the HM's mission that items in the Museum's Collections are accessible to promote the appreciation, education, and significance.
- The primary way of making collections items accessible is through the exhibition of the items.
- The HM will provide access to collections not on exhibit for education and research with the HM Director's written approval. Qualified researchers and scholars may gain this approval unless materials/items are confidential or would suffer physical harm if handled.
- The HM will support continuing scholarly investigation and research in order to document, publish, and advance understanding of the museum's collections through collections loans and onsite research
- The HM shall support and encourage the awareness and knowledge of Harlem and Laurel and Hardy's history by making information available through educational programs, its



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website, and a variety of other avenues as deemed appropriate by the HM Director, HM Board, and/ or the HM Curator in consultation with both parties. This support and encouragement will be made available to people of any age group promoting public engagement.

### **XIII. Outgoing Loans**

- To bring awareness to the history of Harlem and Laurel and Hardy, the HM is encouraged to loan museum owned items from its collections to other viable institutions.
- Loans are at the HM Directors discretion but must be accompanied by strict records that will include a loan agreement that will be no longer than a calendar year and a detailed account of the condition and estimated value of the item(s).
- At the end of the loan agreement, loanees must return all items on loan unless specified on the loan agreement by the HM Director, or the HM Director grants a secondary loan agreement for extenuating research purposes.
- If an institution breaks the loan agreement in any way, they are to be refused loans for a minimum of five years and up to 20 years, depending on the severity of the infraction.
- When loans are returned, they will be assessed as to their current condition, evaluated for new care requirements, and determined whether any damage is detrimental to the HM's mission.
- Based on the returning loan item's assessment, it will be returned to inventory or deaccessioned.

### **XIX. Effective Date**

- The revised policy will be effective upon approval by the HM Board and will supersede all prior policies on the topics addressed herein.





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

Board Member: Phil Turner

Board Member: Laurie Sargent

Board Member: Robert S. Wilson

Board Member: Z...

Board Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Board Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Museum Director: [Signature]

Museum Curator: [Signature]