

Elmhurst History Museum Collections Policy Updated March 20, 2023

Introduction

Mission

The mission of the Elmhurst History Museum (EHM) is to engage people with history through thoughtful collection, enlightening exhibits, and diverse educational experiences.

Vision Statement

We aspire to be a vibrant, vital, high quality cultural arts destination that makes history relevant and inspiring to a broad regional audience.

Value Statement

EHM is a valued cultural institution for residents of Elmhurst, nearby suburbanites, and museum-goers from throughout the greater Chicagoland area, drawing visitors and tourism dollars to the community. The Museum preserves the story of Elmhurst and enhances quality of life by providing unique cultural and educational opportunities through high-quality exhibits, services, and programs.

History

EHM, founded in 1957, is an award-winning local history museum with regional appeal. The Museum is located in a historically significant structure known as the Glos Mansion, which is the former home of Elmhurst's first village president, Henry L. Glos, and his wife, Lucy. The Museum opened in January 1957 on the third floor of the Glos Mansion, which at the time also housed Elmhurst's City Hall. The Museum moved to the Wilder Mansion at Wilder Park from 1965-1975, and then returned to its current location in the Glos Mansion in 1975. The Churchville Schoolhouse also plays a part in the Museum's role in the community. Acquired by the City in 2001 and opened for programming in 2011, this historic Schoolhouse is operated by the Museum, offering school groups a 1910 classroom experience.

Statement of Authority

EHM is a department of the City of Elmhurst, and is overseen by the Elmhurst City Council. Subsequently, the Museum Collection is property of the City of Elmhurst. The Museum is operated by a paid professional staff, and supported by a strong corps of volunteers. The Museum Director is the liaison with the City, reporting to the City Manager, who in turn reports to the Elmhurst City Council.

Both EHM and the Churchville Schoolhouse are supported by the Elmhurst Heritage Foundation, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. This citizen-led organization stimulates broad-based support for local history, EHM, and the Churchville Schoolhouse through advocacy, education, and fundraising. The Foundation has no governing role within the City of Elmhurst's

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museum department, nor does it cover operating costs, but instead is characterized by strategic planning, outreach, and private fundraising to enhance the Museum's visitor experience.

Code of Ethics

EHM adheres to the "Code of Ethics for Museums" adopted by the American Alliance of Museums. The distinctive character of museum ethics is derived from ownership, care and use of objects, specimens and living collections representing the world's natural and cultural commonwealth. This stewardship of collections entails the highest public trust and carries with it the presumption of rightful ownership, permanence, care, documentation, accessibility, and responsible disposal.

Museum staff members and Foundation board members are prohibited from privately acquiring and collecting artifacts that may present a conflict of interest between themselves and the Museum. Staff members are prohibited from using Museum materials and storage for private collections. Staff members may not reproduce objects from EHM collections for private sale or gain.

EHM will not knowingly accept any artifact that has been stolen or illegally exported from its country of origin or whose recovery involved the destruction of historic or archaeological sites. The museum will not offer appraisal services or monetary valuation to the public for artifacts of any kind.

Collections Policy

Scope of Collection

EHM shall collect artifacts and archival materials in support of the statement of purpose. These materials will be collectively referred to as the Museum Collection. The criteria for acceptance of any object include its condition, function, relevance to the Museum's mission, and the Museum's fiscal and physical ability to perpetually and properly care for the item.

Items to be collected shall be associated with or represent one or more of the following criteria:

- History of the structures, sites, and parks in and around Elmhurst
- History of individuals who either were born in or resided in the City of Elmhurst
- History of businesses operating in Elmhurst
- History of the Glos Family and the Glos Mansion
- History of the development of Elmhurst as a modern suburb
- Directly related to the general history, growth, and development of the Elmhurst community, Addison Township, York Township, and surrounding communities, as appropriate.

The Museum Collection is divided in three categories: the manuscript collection, the education collection, and the artifact collection. Items falling into the manuscript collection will be marked by an M at the beginning of the accession number. Items falling into the education collection will be marked by an E at the beginning of the accession number. Items in the artifact collection will be numbered without a letter prefix.

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The *Manuscript Collection* includes documents, photographs (including negatives and slides), postcards, and other items considered to be archives material.

The *Artifact Collection* includes three dimensional items of material culture.

The *Education Collection* includes items that have been found to be redundant or outside the scope of the collection but still retain value in their ability to be emblematic of a general story or theme and can be used as hands-on teaching tools in exhibits or programs. Wear and tear is expected through this use, and the preservation of these items is not an essential priority. These items will be given an accession number for organizational purposes, but will not be subject to the same rules as the artifact and manuscript collections concerning their value within the scope of collections, procedures for acquisition and accession, and procedures for deaccession. Education Collection items can be acquired and disposed of at the discretion of the Supervisor of Education Services and/or the Curator of Collections without further consultation from the Director or City Council. Items that have been deaccessioned from the Artifact and Manuscript collections can be retained for use as Education Collection items.

Acquisitions Policy

Methods and Criteria of Acquisition

For the purpose of this policy, *acquisition* is the process of obtaining complete and total ownership and physical possession of an item. *Item* is an object, either two dimensional or three dimensional, that can be or has been obtained by the Museum through acquisition to enhance or further the mission of the organization. Items may be acquired by four methods: gift/donation, purchase, exchange, or staff/field collection. In all methods of acquisition, an effort should be made to determine object provenance.

Donations

The primary and preferred method of acquisition is donation. The donor must have clear title to the artifact considered for acquisition. Items accepted into the collection can be used by the Museum without restriction by the donor to its use, exhibition, interpretation, or disposal. Items can be refused based on their marginal value or interest in relation to the scope of collection. The Museum also has the right to refuse unsolicited and anonymous donations that lack proper documentation. The Museum is under no obligation to accept items in poor physical condition or those that require extensive repair. Donated and accessioned items cannot be reclaimed by the donor. All acquired items will have permanency in the collections as long as they retain their physical integrity, their authenticity, and their purpose in relation to the scope of EHM collections and mission.

Purchase

If an item can only be obtained through purchase, the same criteria apply in its acquisition as if it were a donation. Additional factors to consider in acquiring an item through purchase include the availability of funds to cover the purchase, the fairness of the item price, and whether the object, or a similar object, could be acquired elsewhere via donation.

Exchange

If an item exchange is to occur, it can only be with another public institution. At no point should an item exchange be made with a private individual or collection. The outgoing item in the exchange should either be a duplicate in the collection or one that does not figure into the EHM mission. At no point should unique artifacts or artifacts that figure into the main mission of the Museum be considered for exchange. Prior to exchanging an item, it must first be removed from the collection following the appropriate deaccession criteria and procedures (below). Upon receiving an item in an exchange, the original donor information from its former institution must be associated with said item, as it is now a part of the item's provenance, but a new EHM accession number will be applied.

Temporary Registration Receipts

All items given to the Museum with the intention of being donated must be accompanied by a Temporary Registration Receipt (TRR). This is merely documentation that the artifact is in the temporary care of EHM, and not the accession of the item into the collection. The TRR is put into its own TRR file that, based on whether or not the donation is accepted into the collection, could ultimately become its accession file. The donor information, the potential donation, and the TRR number are subsequently recorded in a TRR ledger. The item(s) will then be put into temporary storage to await a review by the Collections Review Committee.

On the TRR, the potential donor must indicate whether or not he/she would like the item returned to them if the Museum decides not to accession the object into the collection. If they indicate they do not want the item returned, EHM has the right to ethically dispose of the object in any manner it sees fit. If the potential donor indicates they would like the item returned, they will have six months to retrieve the object, starting from the date they were notified of the Museum's decision not to retain the donation. At the expiration of this six month period, if the Museum has made a good-faith effort to return the item to the donor, the Museum gains the right to dispose of the object.

Collections Review Committee

The Collections Review Committee, consisting of the Museum Director and the Collections and Curatorial staff, shall meet quarterly throughout the calendar year to review donated items that have been assigned TRR numbers. The committee decides if the artifact meets the acquisition criteria and that it fits within the scope of collections. Items which are deemed to fit these requirements are accepted into the collection and will be accessioned. Items that do not meet the accession criteria are either returned to the donor (if that was indicated on the TRR) or disposed of in an ethical and transparent manner (see disposal methods Deaccessioning Procedures).

Accessions

Items accepted into the collection by the Collections Review Committee will undergo the process of accession. Before formally accepting an item into the collection, a deed of gift,

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signed by both the donor and a representative of EHM, is required to be on file. The deed of gift includes a list of items being donated, donor contact information, and the signature of the donor. A completed deed of gift transfers ownership of the item(s) to EHM without restriction or condition.

The donor will be presented a deed of gift, already filled out by the Museum representative, along with a second copy of the deed for the donor's records, a thank you letter, and a return envelope. Once the deed of gift is signed by the donor and returned, the Museum has official ownership and control over the item, allowing it to be entered into the collection.

The item will be then be registered and assigned an accession number, which will be recorded in the accession log as well as marked on the object itself using best-practice technique. The TRR folder that identified the donation will be relabeled and become the accession file, holding the TRR receipt, the deed of gift, and any other pertinent information concerning the item. This information will be stored in a newly created accession file for the particular acquisition.

Following its accession into the collection the item should be entered and cataloged into the collections database. If the database is not immediately accessible, a catalog worksheet will be filled out, put into the appropriate accession file, and entered into the database at a later date.

Found In Collections

An item that cannot be traced to supporting accession or loan documentation will be considered "Found in Collection" and registered under that status. It will be given a trinomial accession number for the year it was found, the second number being 1 (ie 2014.1.__).

Deaccession Policy and Procedures

Deaccessioning is the formal process of removing an item from the Museum Collection. Prior to recommending an item for deaccession, it should be verified that the Museum is legally free to do so.

Criteria

If no apparent restrictions prohibit the removal of an item from the collection, the criteria for deaccession are as follows (any one applicable criterion makes an item eligible for deaccession):

- The object does not support the mission of the Museum or is outside the scope of the collection.
- The object is in such a condition that it poses a risk to the safety of the collection or the health of the Museum staff.
- The object has deteriorated to the degree that it can no longer be satisfactorily interpreted or used for educational purposes.
- The object is determined to be a fake or forgery.
- The object is a casualty of accidental loss (theft or breakage).
- The Museum lacks the resources to properly preserve or care for the object.

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- The object is subject to donor restrictions the Museum is no longer able to meet.
- The object is a duplicate and is better represented by a different copy/version.
- The object is subject to repatriation under Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPR) guidelines.

Procedure

The recommendation for deaccession for a particular item should be justified in writing, directly stating which of the above criteria apply to the object and the recommended method of disposal. Legal title and any possible restrictions on the object should be verified as well—this is usually deduced from the deed of gift, but if there is any ambiguity, an attorney should be consulted on the matter. The recommendation is made and written by the Collections staff. The recommendation would then be given to the Director for approval, who, upon approving, would forward the recommendation to the Elmhurst City Manager, the appropriate committee, and the City Council for the final say in the process. The City Council is ultimately responsible for the Museum Collection and has the authority to deaccession an item. The original donor of the deaccessioned object may be notified of the action at the Director's discretion.

In the interest of efficiency, a group of items marked for deaccession from the same donation can be enumerated and submitted for approval on a single form. The signature approval of candidates for deaccession can then be made all at once by each level of authority rather than on an item-by-item basis. This does not preclude the ability to deaccession items from the same donation on an item-by-item basis.

Disposal

Once an object has been deaccessioned, it must be properly disposed. Depending on the situation of the object, there are several ways to dispose of deaccessioned items. Keeping the advancement of the Museum's mission in mind, all efforts must be made to keep the item within the public domain. This could be through a donation to or an exchange with a different museum or cultural institution, or failing that, a public sale. Proceeds from a public sale should go towards a restricted account designated for acquisitions or conservation of items in the Museum Collection. Items can also be disposed of through physical destruction, particularly those whose interpretive value has decreased due to deterioration or breakage.

Items can be retained for use in the Education Collection at the discretion of the Supervisor of Education Services and/or the Curator of Collections. In this situation, the deaccessioned item will be assigned a new Education Collection number and no longer be governed by the same policies that apply to the Artifact and Manuscript Collections.

Never should deaccessioned artifacts be sold to private collectors, members of the Museum staff, City of Elmhurst staff, or board members of the Elmhurst Heritage Foundation.

Documentation should be made throughout the entire deaccession process and kept permanently in the item's accession folder.

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Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

If the cultural affiliation of Native American human remains, funerary, or sacred objects is established, EHM, upon the request of a legitimate claimant, shall return such remains or objects where, as required by NAGPRA: (A) the requesting party is the direct lineal descendant of an individual who owned the sacred object; (B) the requesting Native American tribe or organization can show that the object was owned or controlled by the tribe or organization; or (C) the requesting Native American tribe or organization can show that the sacred object was owned or controlled by a member thereof, provided that in the case where a sacred object was owned by a member thereof, there are no identifiable lineal descendants of said member or the lineal descendent, upon notice, have failed to make a claim for the object under NAGPRA. A list of the items will be presented to the Museum Director for deaccession approval. Deaccessioning of NAGPRA-eligible items will be completed by City Council as is the case for any collection item.

Collections Management

EHM shall ensure that collections under its stewardship are protected, secure, cared for, and documented, and shall plan for their future needs and growth. Acquisition, loan, deaccessioning and disposal activities will be conducted in an ethical manner that respects the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources. EHM shall maintain detailed guidelines and procedures for the management and care of the historic artifacts and archival materials in respect to professional standards, and these will be revised periodically by the Collections staff.

Collection Conservation

Staff Responsibility

In general, all staff members have an obligation to care for the Museum Collection. However, it is primarily the duty of the Collections staff (the Curator of Collections and the Registrar) to oversee the day-to-day well-being of both the artifact and manuscripts collection. As a rule, only the Collections staff and the Curator of Exhibits should handle artifacts and manuscripts. Trained volunteers and interns can do so under the careful supervision of the Collections staff.

Storage

Preventative conservation methods should be applied whenever possible to the storage of artifacts and manuscripts, both in the museum building and at off-site storage. This includes appropriate environmental control through an adequate HVAC system, moderated light levels, an Integrated Pest Management plan, and the use of archival storage materials to ensure deterioration due to inherent vice and external elements is kept to a minimum.

Risk Management/Insurance

Steps to deal with potential disasters and disturbances will be outlined in a Museum Disaster Plan, describing what qualifies as a disaster, protocol for the safety of Museum staff and visitors, and how to recover/evacuate the Museum Collection in the wake of a disaster. The Museum is locked and monitored by a security system during off-hours. Off-site storage is

locked and monitored by a security system whenever a staff member is not present. Risk can be reduced through periodic reviews of the Museum's electrical, water, and security systems.

EHM utilizes exhibit furniture with locks and guard rails to reduce the risk of harm to artifacts by visitors. The visiting public is greeted and monitored to reduce the risk of vandalism or theft of artifacts on exhibit. Researchers are supervised while utilizing the manuscripts collection in the research room.

The items in the Museum Collection stored in both the Glos Mansion and the off-site storage facility are insured with a Fine Arts policy, covering any and all artifacts within the Museum Collection or custody. The buildings are covered with a different insurance policy.

Documentation/Registration

All items, both in custody of EHM and within its Museum Collection, will be properly documented and registered at all stages of the acquisition, loan, accession, or deaccession processes. Objects within the Museum Collection will be properly cataloged, either on catalog sheets or in the electronic database.

Inventory

A full inventory should be undertaken by the Collections staff once every five years to maintain an up to date record of where all items in the collection are at all times. The inventory will confirm the location and condition of each item in the Museum Collection, and any changes will be noted in the collections database.

Public Access

The Museum Collection is available to the public through exhibits, physical and online publications, research appointments, and public programs. Artifacts may be brought from off-site storage to the research room in the Glos Mansion if requested of the Collections staff for research purposes. Collections records, which include but are not limited to donor information, artifact location, and insurance valuation, will not be made public.

Image Reproduction Policy

EHM grants permission for public use of images from the collection for a fee. The party requesting the image must fill out a Photo Order Request Form to submit a request. Permission is granted for one-time use only. Written permission from EHM and use fees are required for any additional use. Credit must be given if the image is published or placed in public view. The credit line must read: "Photograph courtesy of Elmhurst History Museum."

All fees are due when the order is placed. Standard turn-around time is two weeks from the receipt of payment. Images will be Jpeg files at 300 dpi and will be emailed or put on a disk. Pricing is listed on the Photo Order Request Form, or can be determined by the Curator of Collections in case of special circumstances. In granting permission for use, EHM does not surrender its right thereafter to use any of the materials from its collection or to grant others a permission of use.

EHM assumes no responsibility for violation of copyright laws, invasion of privacy, or any other improper or illegal use that may arise from reproduction of any EHM image. The Museum does not claim copyright of all pictorial materials in its collection. In all instances the applicant agrees to hold the Museum and its agents harmless against any and all claims arising or resulting from the use of the image and shall indemnify the Museum and its agents for any and all costs and damages arising or resulting from any such unauthorized use.

Research Policy

Patrons contact the Museum via telephone, e-mail, mail and in person with reference inquiries covering a wide-range of subjects. Staff members from the Collections department and volunteers respond to these inquiries. Staff members record reference inquiries, and they are tallied monthly.

**Research Policy fees to be determined*

Loans

Loans are temporary assignments of collections objects either to or from EHM. They do not involve a change of ownership and are for stated purposes of exhibition or research. Loan activities shall be conducted in a manner respectful of ethics and standards of care for all items borrowed or loaned. Loans to EHM shall be for a stated period of time, appropriate to the scope of collections, and given the same level of care provided to the Museum's own collections. Objects must remain in the same condition in which they were received. Any alteration or damage will and must be reported to the lender immediately—repair must not occur without authorization by the lender first. Incoming loans to EHM will undergo condition reporting both on arrival and prior to return. Objects cannot be transferred to a third party without the written consent from the lender. Any changes in the original loan agreement must be made in writing and consented to by both the lender and the borrower.

Loans from EHM will be made only to those institutions able to provide proper care and protection required during transport and exhibition through all phases of the loan period.

Conditions covering the receipt of loans (stated on all loan agreement forms):

- EHM will exercise the same care in respect to loans as it will in safeguarding its own collections.
- Objects lent to EHM will be insured under the Museum's Fine Arts policy covering all objects in the Museum Collection. Insurance will be placed for a valuation stated by the lender, which shall be made in writing. If the lender elects to carry their own insurance, the Museum cannot accept responsibility for any errors or deficiencies in information furnished to the lender's insurer nor for lapses in insurance coverage arising from this practice.
- Unless the Museum is notified in writing to the contrary, it is understood that objects lent may be photographed, sketched, or otherwise reproduced.

- In the event EHM has made an unsuccessful good faith effort to return the loaned property and the lender has made no request for return within five years after the loan termination date, the loan shall be terminated and the material shall then become the property of EHM as an unrestricted and unconditional gift.

Policy Review

This document is a living document, and as such, it should be reviewed and revised at least every 7 years. Collections staff should evaluate the document for effectiveness and appropriate adherences to museum standards of operation. Any changes should be approved by the appropriate authorities with the City of Elmhurst and the revised policy should replace the existing policy.

Recommendations for a policy change or adjustment should be made by the Collections staff to the Director, who can bring the recommendation to the City Council, who has final authority to alter the collections policy.