



MUSEUM
OF THE
BIG BEND

COLLECTION POLICY

Museum of the Big Bend
Sul Ross State University

A Member of the Texas State University System

The Mission of the Museum of the Big Bend, a Department of Sul Ross State University, is to collect, preserve, exhibit and interpret the cultural, historic and natural materials that relate to the prehistory and history of the Big Bend of Texas and Mexico, with an awareness of the regions's cultural diversity.

November 2010

I. Introduction

A museum's collection is governed by the policies that are adopted to protect, conserve and make them useful to the public. Concise policies allow the Museum of the Big Bend to plan a course of action that is favorable, timely and understood by all. Policies serve as rules from which all other action may be taken, which in this case, is related to the Collection of the Museum.

As the Collection continues to grow, it is imperative that the Museum of the Big Bend staff execute and provide a procedural process to follow the policies. With over 100,000 objects already in the Collection, the task of proper handling and accounting of the Collection is of the utmost importance.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that material culture accepted by the Museum is properly inventoried, protected, stored and handled in a safe manner that will safe guard each object in perpetuity.

This document is assembled from previous policies, specifically from the Museum of the Big Bend Policy Manual that was revised in July 1992. These earlier policies have been amended and augmented with new policies that incorporate changes that have occurred due to legal issues and museum ethics.

Background

The Collection of the Museum of the Big Bend began on December 7, 1925 when the Trans-Pecos Museum and Historical Society was organized in Alpine to research the history, folklore and sciences of the region. In January 1926, the name was changed to the West Texas Historical and Scientific Society and the organization was chartered by the Legislature in April of that year.

In 1936, the Texas Centennial Commission of Control, in cooperation with the Works Projects Administration, provided money for a museum building on the campus of Sul Ross State University. Dedicated on May 1, the building would serve as the museum until 1965, when it was remodeled to serve as the University Center. At this time the Collection was moved to an underground bowling alley and the name changed to the Museum of the Big Bend.

In the mid- 1990's, when the bowling alley became untenable, the Museum was once again moved into the first floor of the renovated former women's dormitory, Lawrence Hall. The primary Collection is stored on the first floor and in the basement. Off site areas include storage in Fletcher Hall, Smith Hall and Smith Hall Annex.

The Collection

Mission Statement

The mission of the Museum of the Big Bend, a Department of Sul Ross State University, is to collect, preserve, exhibit and interpret the cultural, historic and natural materials that relate to the prehistory and history of the Big Bend of Texas and Mexico, with an awareness of the regions' cultural diversity.

Stewardship of the Collection

The Museum is a repository for the cultural, historic and natural materials that relate to the Big Bend area. It is the responsibility of the Museum to be held in the highest trust by the community to protect, exhibit, allow access to and interpret the Collection in perpetuity. However, as situations and policies change, it is sometimes necessary to alter the status of an object within the Collection, to deaccession an object from the Collection or to exchange objects between institutions.

Through the use of educational programs, exhibitions, publications and scholarly research, the Museum attributes importance, meaning and value to its Collection. Over time the meanings of the Collection can change as well as the type of objects collected. These changes can reflect the attitudes of the original makers, how the objects were originally used, the knowledge of the collectors and the understandings of scholars who study the objects as well as the changing attitudes of the Museum.

Collection Management

There is no higher obligation for a museum than the care and protection of its collection, a public trust of the greatest magnitude. The Collection of the Museum of the Big Bend includes approximately 100,000 objects. A procedures manual describing the method of recording accessioned items is in place along with a Collection Policy which will undergo periodic review and reassessment. By reviewing the Collection Policy on a regular basis, staff will ensure that the policy shall conform to recognized standards and practices established by the American Association of Museums (AAM), the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the Registrar's Committee of the American Association of Museums (RC- AAM).

While conforming to recognized professional museums practices, the Collection Policy of the Museum of the Big Bend shall also consider the unique nature of the institution and its relationship to the larger community. All materials collected shall possess educational and cultural significance to the natural history, prehistory and history of the Big Bend and Trans-Pecos regions of Texas. The Museum shall follow the ethical policies of the international community and refuse all Mexican artifacts that have entered the United States illegally. This policy shall govern cultural materials from other nations as well. In addition, special collections of geological and natural history specimens will be collected due to the high interest in the geologic and natural history of the region. Materials which do not fall within this Collection

scope will be collected only if they possess exceptional educational value and deemed useful to the Museum's existing Collection. It is the goal of the Museum to store and preserve the Collection according to the highest professional standards.

III. Governance

In 1997 the Museum of the Big Bend was merged administratively and functionally with the Center for Big Bend Studies and moved to Lawrence Hall. The Director oversees the staff and operations of the Museum and reports to the Director of the Center. The Center Director reports to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs, who in turn meets with the President of the University.

Museum Support Group

The Museum Support Group was founded to assist the Director of the Museum of the Big Bend in the formulation of policy, and or in areas of fund raising, promotion, community relations and development. With the establishment of such a group of carefully selected appointees, a vital link was forged between the Museum and the community.

The Museum Support Group consists of not more than 12 members, which include not only appropriate community leaders, but also ex-officio members i.e. Sul Ross State University President, Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Director of the Center for Big Bend Studies and the Director of the Museum of the Big Bend. This group will serve in an advisory capacity in matters related to the goals and mission of the Museum of the Big Bend.

IV. Ethics

The Museum of the Big Bend, including its staff and Museum Support Group, subscribes to the ethics statements of the American Association of Museums (AAM), the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and all other appropriate standards of professional ethics and performance, including the Museum's own written policy. The Museum of the Big Bend subscribes to the principles and recommendations of the UNESCO conventions Concerning the Protection of the Cultural Heritage and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

Personal Collecting

Upon entering a personal relationship with the Museum of the Big Bend, Museum Support members and staff members must disclose any and all areas of personal collecting and agree to refrain from any collecting activities that are in competition with the Museum of the Big Bend. No Museum Support Members, staff member or volunteer will present himself/ herself as representing the Museum of the Big Bend in negotiating or purchasing for personal collections.

Personal Gain

All Museum Support members, staff, volunteers and interns will not use the reality or even the

appearance of using their positions, information or access gained from their positions for personal gain.

Personal Use

Artifacts from the Collection are not available to any individual for personal use, either on or off the premises, or for any other purpose contrary to the Museum of the Big Bend's mission statement and Collection Policy.

Dispositions of Collection Artifacts

Artifacts from the Museum of the Big Bend Collection will not be given, sold, or otherwise transferred, publicly or privately to individuals or family members of individual who are Museum Support members, staff members, interns or volunteers of the Museum of the Big Bend.

V. Collection Management and Accessions Authority

The Collection Manager

The Collection Manager is responsible for decisions regarding the storage, care, research and expansion of the Collection under his/ her care. The Collection Manager has the responsibility of maintaining the Collection records. Input from other staff member and conservators, allows the Collection Manager to implement decisions, manage storage facilities and decide on how best to manage and care for incoming and outgoing loans.

The Accessions Committee

The Accessions Committee will be composed of the Director of the Museum of the Big Bend, Collection Manager and Curators who will determine on a case by case basis objects that are being offered to the Museum of the Big Bend as a part of the Museum's Collection. Title to all objects acquired for the Collection shall be obtained free and clear without restrictions as to use or future disposition. Conveyances between the donor and the Museum of the Big Bend will be generated through the Collection Manager and will include an adequate description of the object, necessary curatorial information, the value of the object at the time of donation, the conditions of transfer and provenance of the object detailing ownership and legal origins. The Museum will keep copies of all correspondence materials with the donor's file.

VI. Acquisitions

The authority to accept and acquire materials for the Museum of the Big Bend Collection rests solely with the Accessions Committee. No employee, volunteer, public body or official or Museum Support member may obligate the Museum of the Big Bend to acquire an object for the Collection.

The Museum will acquire collection materials by means of gifts, bequests, purchases, transfers, exchanges, fieldwork or any other transaction by which title to the material passes to the

Museum of the Big Bend. All specimens obtained through field collection shall be accompanied by all appropriate permits, letters of consent from property owners and necessary documentation to establish that materials were collected in accord with local, state, federal and international law.

The Museum may accept acquisitions for the Collection if the items meet all of the following criteria:

1. Supports the Museum of the Big Bend mission statement.
2. The object is unique in a collecting area and would thereby enhance the Collection.
3. The object is in good provenance.
4. Full title and all rights shall be transferred free and clear, with no restrictions or preconditions.
5. Provides status of copyright ownership (when applicable).
6. Complies with laws and treaties governing cultural properties.
7. Supports research, education or exhibition uses.
8. Does not duplicate other objects already in the Collection.
9. The object will be treated according to museum standards and kept in good faith.
10. Meets the storage and resources that can be provided.

Documents Necessary for Transfer of Title

The Museum requires the following documents for gifts to the Collection:

1. A completed Deed of Gift transferring the title of the object to the Museum. The Deed of Gift will be generated by the Collection Manager detailing the objects to be donated. The Deed of Gift must be signed by the donor.
2. Verification that the object is in the physical possession of the Museum or that the donor has relinquished control of the property.

Special Circumstances

Whole Collections

Whole collections will be accepted only if the collection is predominately related to the Museum of the Big Bend and if the collection has distinct merit as a whole.

Non Accessioned Gifts

The Museum of the Big Bend may acquire objects that are not accessioned into the Collection. These items may include general education materials, research materials and other similar objects. Non- accessioned objects shall be so declared on the Deed of Gift and the donor(s) must be informed that their gifts are for the benefit of the Museum but will not be accessioned into the Collection.

Illegally Collected Materials

The Museum of the Big Bend will not accept or acquire objects that have been illegally obtained, imported or collected; or that were recovered in a way that would encourage or support illegal or irresponsible collection, or that would damage or cause destruction of natural or cultural objects, resources or sites.

Extended or Indefinite Long Term Loans

It is the policy of the Museum of the Big Bend not to accept objects in the form of extended or indefinite loans. These materials are subject to recall by donors or their heirs and may present legal complications. In addition, these loans must be insured for what could become an indefinite period, placing a monetary drain on the Museum's funds. Materials can be accepted from individuals for temporary or short term loans. The temporary loan must comply to a stated loan period between the Museum and the owner. Materials accepted for temporary loan will be used only for special exhibits, programs or study.

Appraisal, Monetary Value and Internal Revenue Service Compliance

The Museum of the Big Bend will not provide donors with monetary appraisals for artifacts. Appraisals or valuation for tax purposes are the responsibility of the donor. The Director and Collection Manager shall maintain a list of qualified service providers in various categories and shall be consulted as the need arises.

The Collection staff may place an internal monetary value on materials for insurance purposes only. The Museum of the Big Bend will comply with all current Internal Revenue Service rules and reporting regulations of charitable contributions.

VIII. Deaccessions and Disposal

Deaccessioning is a formal process to remove an object legally and permanently from the Collection. Disposal is the means by which both accessioned and non-accessioned objects are removed from the Collection. Decisions to deaccessioning objects in the Collection are not made lightly and are made after extensive deliberations and input from the Museum staff.

Deaccessioning and the process to deaccessioning are designed to keep the Museum's identity clear and focused. When properly used, this process can assist the Museum in defining its mission, planning for the future and improving the Collection.

Reasons For Deaccessioning Objects From The Collection

An object may be deaccessioned from the Museum of the Big Bend's holdings when one or more of the following conditions exist:

3. The artifact does not fall within the scope of the Collection. Specifically, the artifact is not associated in any way with the Big Bend region.
4. The artifact is comparable but inferior to another object in the Collection.
5. The artifact is in such poor physical condition that conservation is not feasible or that would make the object essentially false.
6. The artifact is a danger to the health and/ or safety of the general public, staff or to other artifacts in the Collection.
7. The artifact is a fragment or portion of an artifact, or a part of a set, which is only meaningful as a whole.
8. The artifact is determined to have been acquired in a manner contrary to the Museum of

the Big Bend acquisition policy or if the artifact is determined to have been illegally exported from its country of origin.

9. The artifact is subject to cultural repatriation through the Native American Graves Preservation and Repatriation Act of 1990, or any other local, state, national or international law, ruling, agreement or convention.
10. The artifact requires storage or conservation that the Museum of the Big Bend can not provide.

Restrictions and Title Clearance

1. Under no circumstances may a deaccessioned item be returned to the previous owner.
2. No item may be deaccessioned without proof of clear title. Artifacts without clear title must be converted by due process of the law before they can be deaccessioned from the Collection.

Deaccessioning Authority

The Collection Manager shall periodically review the Collection and make recommendations to the Museum staff and Director for artifacts to be deaccessioned. For items that fall under NAGPRA guidelines, these will be dealt with by following procedures established by the National Park Service.

Exceptions

If an item poses immediate and serious threat to people or the Collection, the item may be deaccessioned immediately by the Collection Manager.

Disposition of Artifacts

1. Sale, transfer to, or trade with another non- profit museum or institution
2. Sale by public auction or in the public marketplace
3. Destruction or disposal which must be attested to in writing by the Collection Manager.

Documentation

A complete record of the condition and circumstances under which items from the Collection were deaccessioned and disposed shall be maintained in perpetuity in the Museum of the Big Bend's permanent Collection records.

Use of Funds

Proceeds realized from the sale of deaccessioned items must be placed in an account for the express purpose of preservation and acquisition of the Collection.

IX. Loans

Authority

The authority to approve and sign incoming and outgoing loans rests with the Director of the Museum of the Big Bend and the Collection Manager. A written loan agreement must be in place

prior to receipt or shipment of loan materials. The Collection Manager shall maintain complete records of all loans, maintain a loan log for insurance purposes and track loan activity.

Incoming Loans

Incoming loans are accepted for temporary exhibition, research, copying, or other reasonable temporary use for a specified period of time, not to exceed a year. If the items are required past this time period, the loan shall be renewed by the Collection Manager and the loaning institution, individual or group and shall be for an additional year, up to three years. The artifacts borrowed may be from private collectors, individuals, corporations, galleries, private or public institutions or commercial establishments.

Packing and Transit

Packing and transportation arrangements shall be made by the Museum of the Big Bend staff. Artifacts are accepted only if they are in condition to travel and may be properly cared for and exhibited while on loan to the Museum of the Big Bend.

Insurance

Insurance on outgoing loans will be handled on a case by case basis. Ordinarily, the Museum of the Big Bend will not take out insurance on loans if the items are covered by the lender's personal insurance identifying the Museum of the Big Bend as additionally insured.

The Museum of the Big Bend may insure incoming loans under its own fine arts policy. In this instance, a loan log must be generated indicating date of arrival of artifacts, value, and date of departure. The Collection Manager will be responsible for this log and will make copies available to the Museum secretary for filing.

Long Term Loans

It is not the policy of the Museum of the Big Bend to accept long term loans. The period of the loan shall be specific. Any changes in the time period shall be in writing and generated through the Collection Manager. It is the goal of the Museum of the Big Bend to return all outstanding long-term loans or convert them to gifts.

Limitations

The Museum of the Big Bend shall not perform or allow any repairs, alterations, or conservation treatment on any loaned item without the lender's prior and specific written permission.

Outgoing Loans

Outgoing loans may be made for exhibition, educational or scholarly purposes to institutions or organizations that agree in writing to meet specific requirements. All loans must be for a stated term, agreed to by both parties on the Outgoing Loan Agreement form.

Conditions

The criteria for evaluating outgoing loan requests include:

1. The Museum of the Big Bend must have clear title to an artifact to consider that object

- for an outgoing loan.
2. The nature and condition of the artifact.
 3. The availability of the artifact.
 4. The ability of the Museum staff to process the loan without placing undue strain on the staff and sufficient lead time.
 5. The specific proposed use of the artifact.
 6. The value of the artifact and the potential impact of the loss or damage of the artifact to the Collection.
 7. The borrower's ability to meet professional standards of care for the artifact.
 8. Artifacts will not be loaned to individuals.
 9. The borrowing institution shall provide a facilities report documenting conditions.
 10. The borrower must provide wall to wall insurance or indemnification. A certificate of insurance must be presented to the Museum of the Big Bend before the artifact is lent.

Limitations

1. The Museum of the Big Bend has authority to rescind a loan if it becomes apparent during the course of the loan that there is a risk to the artifact(s).
2. The borrower may photograph, videotape or otherwise reproduce borrowed artifact(s) for education, publication and/ or publicity purposes only.
3. The general public may photograph the artifact(s) without the use of flash or tripod.
4. Artifacts on loan from the Museum of the Big Bend shall not be treated or altered in any way without specific and prior written approval by the Collection Manager
5. Borrowed artifacts may not be reproduced for sale by other institutions or individuals without express permission from the Museum of the Big Bend, with appropriate compensation.
6. Loaned artifacts will be credited to the Museum of the Big Bend or as stated on the Outgoing Loan Agreement form.

Temporary Loans

Professional conservators, framers and curators may receive artifacts on temporary loan for purposes of conservation, identification, research, etc. Such custody does not constitute a formal loan or donation to the borrower. Records of all materials on temporary loan will be maintained and retained by the Collection Manager.

XI. Collection Records

The Collection Manager shall maintain permanent Collection records in accordance with the Records Management Guide. Collection records provide legal documentation of the Collection, establish and document provenance and provide a permanent record of care, use and disposition. All Collection records are considered permanent records, to be retained in perpetuity, whether or not the physical item is retained in the Collection. Access is available to the Collection records by appointment with the Collection Manager. Insurance, financial, tax, appraisal and any records declared confidential by the donor shall remain confidential.

Three categories exist to preserve information about the Collection and exhibitions. These records include: Documents, Information Management Records and Task Records.

Documents

7. Deed of Gift
8. Incoming Loan Agreement Form
9. Incoming Receipt
10. Outgoing Loan Agreement Form
11. Outgoing Loan Receipt
12. Research Request Form
13. Photograph Reproduction Request Form

Information Management Records

1. Collection Database
2. Catalog/Accession Manual Records
3. Donor Records
4. Exhibition Documentation

Task Records

1. Condition Report
2. Conservation Report
3. Location Report
4. RH/ Temperature Report
5. Insurance Record
6. Annual Collection Report

XII. General Consideration Of The Collection

1. Security

Every effort shall be made to protect and monitor materials in the Collection, on permanent exhibit and on temporary exhibit against fire, theft, vandalism, infestation, environmental hazards, over handling and natural disaster. A disaster plan shall delineate the specific responsibilities of the Museum of the Big Bend staff.

2. Storage

The Collection shall be stored in storage fixtures and containers that are archival in order to assure that artifacts are available in perpetuity. Temperature and humidity will be controlled and monitored. The Collection will be protected from dust, vermin and other detrimental hazards.

3. Transit

The Collection Manager shall supervise packing and shipping of artifacts. The Collection Manager in conjunction with the Director shall train, provide guidance and supervision on the

proper care and handling, security and other collection procedures as appropriate.

4. Accession Numbers

The Collection Manager will assign each new artifact into the Museum of the Big Bend with its own unique accession number. This accession number will be used to track and document the Collection.

5. Access To The Collection

The Collection of the Museum of the Big Bend exists for the benefit of present and future generations. The public shall be granted reasonable access, by appointment, to exhibited or stored Collection artifacts, for the purposes of research and other educational uses. Access to sensitive artifacts will be decided by the Director, Collection Manager and Curators. The Museum staff may limit the size of groups to storage and Collection areas. Users will be held liable for any damage caused to the Collection.

The Collection areas shall be monitored by professional Museum staff at all times. Outside maintenance staff, outside contractors and researchers must be accompanied at all times while in the Collection areas.

6. Research

The Museum Collection shall be used as a tool to enable scholarly research and that presents research to the public through activities including lectures, exhibitions and publications. The Museum recognizes that differences of opinion may exist and is part of the scholarly process. The Museum supports the right of scholars to hold differing opinions and to express those opinions in a reasonable manner.

The Museum does retain the right to review or edit text and design for the installation of Collection artifacts. However, these efforts may not compromise the intellectual content of research into the Collection.

7. Photography

The Museum of the Big Bend allows exhibit objects to be photographed without the aid of a flash and/ or a tripod.

The Collection may be photographed by Museum staff or a professional, contracted photographer for collection management, exhibit images and public relations efforts.

8. Losses and Damage to the Collection

In the event of thefts, accidental losses or vandalism to the Collection, the incident must be reported to the Director of the Museum. A written report shall be generated concerning the circumstances surrounding the damage, loss or disappearance. Included in the report shall be the monetary value of the object(s), an evaluation of how the loss occurred and a plan to prevent recurrences.

9. Conservation

It is Museum policy to provide conservation measures to the Collection by providing a safe, stable environment for storage and exhibition. The care, management and conservation of the Collection are the responsibility of the Museum staff. Staff must be trained before they may handle artifacts in the Collection. The Museum staff plans, and executes activities, services and programs to ensure the safety, security and protection of the Collection.