

Developing a Collections Management Policy for the Shoreline Historical Museum



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FRAMING

A study commissioned by 4Culture on the opportunities and needs of King County, WA heritage organizations found that the lack of staff/volunteers with collections care experience and expertise was the greatest challenge currently facing the collections at the 72 organizations surveyed (King County Heritage Report, 2016). As a result of this lack of experience, many organizations may operate without developing and following a Collections Management Policy, which the American Alliance of Museums designates as one of the five core documents of any museum. This broader trend also holds true at Shoreline Historical Museum, which depends primarily on volunteers and had only a basic and outdated Collections Management Policy at the beginning of this project. The museum has recently moved into a new space and may be able to allocate more resources to collecting in the future, making this an opportune moment to reevaluate their collections policies.

PURPOSE & DELIVERABLE

The goal of this thesis project was to develop a Collections Management Policy that:

- ❖ Supports the mission of the Shoreline Historical Museum.
- ❖ Provides guidance for staff and volunteers on managing the museum's collections regardless of their previous collections experience.
- ❖ Allows museum leadership to establish and enforce collections policies.

Shoreline Historical Museum Collections Management Policy	
2022	
I.	Mission of the Shoreline Historical Museum
II.	Introduction to the Collections Management Policy of the Shoreline Historical Museum
III.	Scope of Collections
IV.	Accessions
V.	Deaccessions and Disposals
VI.	Loans
VII.	Inventory
VIII.	Risk Management
IX.	Glossary
X.	Appendices
	Appendix A: Collections Committee Responsibilities
	Appendix B: Questions to Ask When Considering Accessions
	Appendix C: Questions to Ask When Considering Deaccessions
	Appendix D: Summary of Washington State Abandoned Property Laws

PROCESS

- ❖ In the Fall of 2021, I began researching Collections Management Policies and best practices in small, volunteer driven historical organizations.
- ❖ Next, I met with Shoreline Historical Museum's Executive Director to identify their collections related needs.
- ❖ In January 2022 I enrolled in The American Association for State and Local History's Collections Management course and began to develop the sections of the policy one by one.
- ❖ Throughout the process the document was shared with the Executive Director and the Board of Trustees and their feedback was incorporated.
- ❖ In February of 2022 a draft of the document was submitted to my advisory committee for their feedback and revised accordingly.
- ❖ The completed document was then presented to the board in April of 2022.

CONCLUSION

The Collections Management Policy created through this project will allow Shoreline Historical Museum to continue to develop their collections in an organized, ethical, and intentional way. Through the process of creating this policy, the Board of Trustees became interested in establishing a Collections Committee and has demonstrated the intention to maintain the document through regular review.

Key References

- 4Culture (2016). *King County heritage report: Understanding the field.*
- Lord, D.L. & Lord, B. (2009). *The manual of museum management, second edition.* AltaMira Press.
- Reibel, R.B. (2018). *Registration methods for the small museum, fifth edition.* Rowman and Littlefield.
- Simmons, J.E. (2018). *Things great and small: Collections management policies, second edition.* Rowman and Littlefield.