



BESSER
MUSEUM
for Northeast Michigan

ART • HISTORY • SCIENCE

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

Approved July 2017 by the Board of Trustees

Effective as July 2017

Replaces Besser Museum Collections Manual June 7th, 2001

This Collections Management Policy and Procedures Manual establishes the foundation for collections management at the Besser Museum. Since the museum was incorporated in 1962, its policies and procedures have been guided by the institution's mission statements and past collection policies. This manual establishes the professional and legal guidelines used to acquire, store, document, use, and dispose of artifacts and specimens. It, along with the museum's *Code of Ethics*, provides the professional framework within which staff, trustees and volunteers operate.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. History of the Museum as a Collecting Institution	3
Major Acquisitions.....	5
II. Delegation of Authority and Staff Positions	6
Volunteers.....	7
III. Code of Ethics	8
IV. Scope of Collections	8
V. Acquisitions	10
Means of Acquisition.....	11
Human Remains and Sacred Objects.....	10
Acquisition Procedures.....	11
Acquisitions for the Education/Exhibit Collection.....	12
VI. Accessioning Objects into the Permanent Collections	13
Procedures, Forms, and Orphaned Objects.....	13
VII. Deaccessioning Objects from the Permanent Collections	14
VIII. Loan Policy and Procedures	15
Borrowing Objects, Incoming Loans, Temporary Custody, Outgoing Loans, Insurance on Loans	
IX. Collections Management	19
Cataloging.....	19
Marking.....	20
Condition Reports.....	21
Object Handling and Transport.....	22
Storage.....	22
Insurance.....	23
Reporting Loss.....	24
X. Inventory	24
XI. Pest Management	25
XII. Reproduction and Copyright	26
XIII. Public Disclosure	26
XIV. Provisions for Review and Change	27
Appendices	28
A. Receipt Identification Form and Log page.....	
B. Accession Record Page.....	
C. Deed of Gift Form.....	
D. Deaccession Form.....	
E. Michigan Public Act 24.....	
F. Incoming Loan Form.....	
G. Outgoing Loan Form.....	
H. Catalog Form.....	
I. Marking Protocol.....	
J. Condition Report Form.....	
K. NAGPRA and FAIF Federal Laws.....	

I. HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM AS A COLLECTING INSTITUTION

In 1971, Dr. Russell H. Wilson, one of the three founders of the Besser Museum, described why the museum was founded and its original intent regarding the collections.

In an address, I gave to Alpena Rotary Club July 17, 1965 about the Besser Museum . . . I pointed out that it is a regional museum covering primarily Alpena and the Thunder Bay Region, but extending within reasonable bounds into close neighboring areas. The fact that it is a regional museum places a limitation upon collections.

A regional museum has a unique opportunity possessed by no other museum or organization. By exhibiting materials from the collections, it may demonstrate the individuality of the community it serves in an intimate, authentic manner which cannot possibly be achieved by a museum, no matter how large, in another community. This distinctive feature will stimulate the interest of citizens in the museum and will aid visitors to understand the community. In other words, the collections should be definitely related to this area.

The second limitation the regional museum should place upon its collections is subject matter as it relates to any one of the three divisions of the museum. Part of the ground floor of our museum is dedicated to the fine arts, and is combined with the art department of Alpena Community College. The collections should illustrate the aesthetic interests and accomplishments of the citizens.

Probably the major interest of our museum will be the historical collections, which should reflect the story of the developments and achievements of the community. The natural history collections should epitomize the geology and geography, and the natural environment and resources of the region.

The third limitation, which should be placed upon collections, is that of function. A museum collects objects for only two reasons. First, it is a repository for objects which must be preserved because of their aesthetic, historic or scientific importance. Such objects must be fully documented, that is, their history, in the greatest possible detail must be on record, otherwise their value for scholars and students is lost. Secondly, the museum is a storehouse for materials which have educational usefulness. These are typical and often commonplace objects, again accurately identified and documented, which may be used to demonstrate physical characteristics, associations, principles, or processes. Many items in the collection may belong to both categories. In general, the museum should have collections, which illustrate the changes in our way of life from pioneer days to the present.

Dr. Wilson understood the academic nature of museums and he was the Besser Museum's earliest advocate for professional care and standards. In the same document, he included this paragraph from *So You Want a Good Museum* published by the AAM (American Alliance of Museums, formerly American Association of Museums).

The heart of the museum is its collections. It cannot be a museum without permanent collections, and the manner in which they are cared for and used by the museum determines its standing among other museums and its prestige in the community. The organization, the management and the activities of the museum exist solely to insure the continuous adequate care of the materials in the collections and their effective use for cultural and educational purposes. The first obligation of a museum is to recognize and assume the responsibilities inherent in the possession of its collections, which are held in trust for the benefit of the present and future citizens of the community.

The museum's Board of Directors formalized these ideas in the museum's first collections policy statement in September 1970. Excerpts pertaining to collections management read:

Policies for Operation of Besser Museum

I. Definition and Purpose.

- II. The Besser Museum is a museum of history, science, and art serving Alpena and the Thunder Bay Region. It is a living and learning museum for preserving, studying, enhancing by various means, and of exhibiting to the public for its enjoyment and instruction, historical scientific, artistic, and technological collections. In addition to usual museum functions, this museum has completely equipped rooms for college and community art classes, a planetarium, and a Foucault pendulum. Policies approved by Alpena Board of Education (9/28/65).
1. Collections shall come primarily for or be closely related to Alpena and the Thunder Bay Region. This does not preclude showing of temporary exhibits from outside the region; or occasional acquisitions of items of unusual value or of great state, national, or international significance; or acquisition of exhibits related to the planetarium and space science.
 2. The major emphasis, as far as collections are concerned, shall be historical including the political, industrial, agricultural, educational, social, and general economic development of the region. Fine arts illustrative of the aesthetic interests and accomplishments of citizens in the region shall be exhibited, and traveling art exhibits shall be encouraged. Natural history collections epitomizing the geology and geography, and natural environment and resources of the region shall be included.
 3. Use should be made of the area surrounding the museum building for items of historical interest which can be exhibited on the museum grounds.
 4. A gift shall constitute a complete change of ownership of materials, without restrictions, from the previous owner to the museum provided that a request not to sell or exchange any of the materials may be honored.
 5. No materials shall be accepted on a long-term or permanent loan basis.
 6. When gifts of materials are offered which for reasons of policy are of no use to the museum, they should be declined with an explanation as to why the proffered gifts are unacceptable.
 7. Museum objects may be accepted on a temporary basis. In such cases a record shall be made of the objects, and a receipt given to the owner.
 8. A record making it possible to identify every item in the collection quickly and accurately shall be maintained. The record system shall be as described on pages 3 through 7 of *So You Want A Good Museum* published by the American Association of Museums.
 9. A systematic policy of rotating exhibits shall be followed.
 10. The arrangements of objects in an exhibit shall be, as far as practicable, subordinated to a theme illustrating principles of association or growth. . .

III. Museum Director

The Board of Directors shall appoint a Museum Director who shall be the authority and chief administrative officer of Besser Museum, but shall not be a member of the Board. The Museum Director shall be in immediate charge of the practical and scientific administration and development of the Museum, and shall have full responsibility for operation and control of the building subject to general policies adopted by the Board of Directors. The museum director shall: . . . b) supervise the work of the several departments; assign exhibition, laboratory, and storage room; apportion such material as may come to the Museum through purchase or donation; have discretionary power over all gifts, loans, purchases, or exchanges of specimens, his actions in such matters to be submitted to the Board of Directors for approval; and, in the case of offers or gifts of unusual size or of questionable value, or of bequests or gift offers of a large collection of items on a "take what you want" basis, his actions shall be subject to prior approval by the Board of Directors; . . . d) keep, or cause to be kept, a complete list of all loans and gifts to the Museum, with the date and name of each owner or donor and, where pertinent, a description and history of the acquisition . . .

Archived documents written by museum staff in 1977 and 1978 reiterated the long-term commitment to this vision. In a memo dated December 1977, a summary of collecting areas was set forth:

Collections shall come primarily from or be closely related to Alpena and the Thunder Bay region. Major emphasis shall be historical, including political, industrial, agricultural, educational,

social and general economic development of the region. Natural History collections epitomizing the geology and geography and natural environment and resources of the region shall be included.

The original Collections Policy Manual, *Acquisition and Care of Museum Collections*, adopted in February 1978, included the sentence, “All items accepted or purchased for the collections are acquired because of their scientific, artistic, and/or historical importance to this and future generations of Northeastern Michigianians.”

In May 1988, the Museum’s Board of Directors created a new Mission Statement to reflect the evolving activities and goals of the museum at that time.

The Besser Museum is a regional museum of art, history, and science serving Alpena and a fifteen-county area of Northeast Michigan. It is a living and learning museum for the purpose of preserving, studying, teaching, and exhibiting artistic, historical, scientific, and technological collections or objects to the public. In addition, special educational programs and events and changing exhibits are developed and presented for the educational enrichment of adults and children of all ages.

This statement is notable primarily because it officially expanded the regional area to cover fifteen Northeast Michigan counties. Those counties are Alcona, Alpena, Arenac, Cheboygan, Chippewa, Crawford, Iosco, Luce, Mackinac, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle, and Roscommon. However, it de-emphasized Dr. Wilson’s earlier emphasis on the collections. The 15 counties were determined by their location on the Thunder Bay watershed, and to reflect the actual visitation pattern from schools and the public at that time.

On April 5, 2000, with new museum leadership in place, the Board of Trustees revised the **Mission Statement** to incorporate the importance of collections from the fifteen-county area and to add a research component:

The Besser Museum is an educational institution dedicated to serving the public of all ages and abilities in art, history and science. Through research, it collects, preserves and interprets artifacts, specimens and information concerning fifteen counties in Northeast Michigan. Through programs and exhibits, it promotes understanding and appreciation of the past and present.

Major Collections Acquired

Besser, Fred Trelfa, and Dr. Russell H. Wilson formed the Alpena Museum Association, which was incorporated in March 1962. These men led the effort to gather and interpret the social and physical history of the Thunder Bay region. The first collection received by the museum when it opened in 1966 was from Alpena Fire Chief Russell E. Wilson. He had been accepting local artifacts and memorabilia for years and had created a display at the city's Fire Station. The collection of 798 items includes archaeological stone tools and weapons, geology specimens, Native American beaded and quill decorative clothing, logging industry tools, agricultural implements, blacksmith tools, mechanical and carpentry tools, household and personal items, books, Alpena City records, photographs and City of Alpena Firemen memorabilia.

Other notable collections donated in the first few years included: the Arthur Linke photograph collection of nearly 600 images of early Alpena and the surrounding region; the Stanley Thomas collection of logging tools and brands; a collection of instruments, books and papers from early

Alpena physician, Dr. Campbell; the Arleigh Graham collection of cooper tools; Thomas Bakers' Blacksmith Shop; the Marston General Store; and the Carl and Charles Henry Law Office.

Since 1970, the museum has purchased and received through donations significant artifacts, specimens and information about Northeast Michigan. Briefly, a few of the most significant include: the Gerald Haltiner archaeology collection; the Sagonakato Fire Pumper used by the City of Alpena to fight the fire of 1872; a Clewell Art pottery collection; the personal papers and memorabilia of founding namesake, Besser; the business and personal papers of the Fletcher-Gilchrist family, early Alpena land and lumber barons; the Dale Chihuly art glass sculpture; the Van Nocker photograph collection; the Alvina Cracknell doll collection; a collection of Native American art and basketry; and a collection of nearly 1,000 pieces of fine art paintings and prints from Michigan art dealer Albert Scaglione. The museum also has seven historic structures that have been relocated to the grounds of the museum. These include a homesteader's line cabin from the mid-1860s; the Maltz Exchange Bank of 1872; the McKay Cabin; two outhouses; the Green School of 1895; and the Spratt Church. The 1928 *Katherine V* Fish Tug was accepted in May 2001.

II. Delegation of Authority and Staff Positions

The Besser Museum is governed by a **Board of Trustees** drawn from the community for their expertise, interest and service. The Trustees are responsible for establishing the museum's mission and goals; approve policies presented by the Executive Director; overseeing museum operations; and ensuring the overall financial health of the museum. The Board of Trustees holds ultimate responsibility for collections care and safety.

The **Collections Committee** advises the Trustees on general policy relevant to collections development and goals. The Committee members include Trustees, the Executive Director, community drawn experts, and the Collections Manager. The Committee chairperson reports regularly to the full Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees designates day-to-day responsibility for the Besser Museum to the **Executive Director**, including exhibition, development, maintenance, and security of the collection, loan and preservation of works in the collection, and recommending accessions or deaccessions. The **Executive Director** ensures that all curatorial and collections-related activities are performed consistent with the ethics, standards and best practices of museums accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

The **Curator** is an academic specialist proficient in a discipline relevant to one or more of the Museum's collecting areas. The Curator is responsible for recommending artifacts and specimens for acquisition or deaccession, and authenticating or obtaining authentication for artifacts and specimens owned by or on loan to the museum. Curatorial duties include research based on the museum's collections with the intent to publish at both scholarly and lay levels. In addition, the curator has administrative, exhibit and teaching responsibilities. In the case of the Curator's position being empty all Curatorial duties are passed to the **Collections Manager**.

The **Collections Manager** organizes, manages, and conserves the Museum's accessioned and educational collections by implementing the Museum's Collections Management Policy and Procedures Manual. The primary duties of the Collections Manager are to create and maintain

records for all incoming and outgoing materials in the museum; and to accession, catalog, photograph, number and store all museum artifacts and specimens. A significant area of responsibility is to design and maintain a safe and clean storage area, monitor environmental conditions and work with security personnel to protect collections in storage and on exhibit.

Other positions are utilized as funding permits to assist with curatorial duties. **Curatorial Assistants** and **Student Interns** are utilized for research, collections care, exhibit preparation and installation. The Collections Manager supervises these positions.

Volunteers

The Besser Museum encourages the spirit of volunteerism and recognizes the value of volunteers. Volunteers contribute their time, skills, and knowledge to further the objectives of the museum and they provide an important link to the community and assist staff in fostering greater cultural awareness. In the collections management area of the museum, volunteers are utilized to help catalog, research and store artifacts and specimens.

A collections management volunteer is interviewed and evaluated by the Curator and the Collections Manager, and trained and supervised by one of these two positions. Ideally, a regular collections volunteer commits a minimum of four hours per week to the museum for one year. The volunteer and supervisor sign an agreement, which includes a job description and time commitment. A volunteer employment file is created that includes pertinent home and telephone numbers, emergency information, and timesheets to track volunteer hours. Another type of volunteer commitment is to a special project, a single task, or a limited time frame. These types of activities require only a record of volunteer names, hours given, and length of service.

A training program incorporating institutional policies, standard handling of objects, and ethics consideration is provided for each volunteer. Then, depending on the area of service, the volunteer may be trained in cataloging, research, conservation techniques, and storage room protocols and considerations. Special volunteers, working on a single task, require training only in the area that allows them to complete the job at hand.

Collection Management volunteers are subject to a code of ethics in conduct and attitude similar to that binding professional staff (see *BM Code of Ethics*). Like professional staff, volunteers have responsibilities and are expected to be aware of collections safety issues. Volunteers must keep confidential matters confidential, adhere to the standards set by supervisors, share personal knowledge to accomplish the tasks at hand, and be open to and seek knowledge beyond the training provided to ensure a positive work experience.

Supervisors are expected to provide clear instructions and continuing direction to volunteers to ensure object safety and a positive volunteer experience. Volunteers are encouraged to ask questions. A regular schedule of volunteer assessment by their immediate supervisor provides a chance to reflect on accomplishments, analyze performance strengths and weaknesses, and think about volunteer satisfaction and level of commitment.

III. Code of Ethics

The Besser Museum adheres to the Code of Ethics for Museums adopted by the American Association of Museums in 1994. Essentially, where conflicts arise—actual, potential, or perceived—

-no individual associated with the museum, paid or volunteer, may use his/her position for personal gain, or for the benefit of another, at the expense of the museum, its mission, its reputation, or the public it serves. Staff, trustees or volunteers may not take advantage of privileged information to compete with the museum for acquisitions or to secretly acquire items discarded by the museum. According to Federal and State tax laws, museum staff and volunteers may not appraise or otherwise offer valuations of collections for donors. Staff maintain valuations on objects for the sole purpose of insurance coverage and this information is confidential.

IV. Scope of Collections

Statement of purpose

The Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan shall be a community resource that serves to inspire curiosity, foster community pride, and cultivate personal legacy. The Museum shall through discovery, preservation, education and stewardship be an institution dedicated to serving the public of all ages and abilities in the art, history, and science of Northeast Michigan.

As a regional museum, we possess a unique opportunity by exhibiting materials from the collections to demonstrate the individuality of the community the museum serves in an intimate, authentic manner which cannot possibly be achieved by a museum, no matter how large, in another community. This distinctive feature will stimulate the interest of citizens in the museum and will aid visitors to understand the community. In other words, the collections should be related to the Northeast Michigan area. As an institution that serves as a repository for objects which must be preserved because of their aesthetic, historic, or scientific importance. Such objects must be fully documented, recording in the greatest possible detail information pertaining to an object, otherwise their value for scholars and students is lost.

The first obligation of the museum is to recognize and assume the responsibilities inherent in the possession of its collections, which are held in trust for the benefit of the present and future citizens of the community. In terms of acquisitions for the museum's collections the material needs to relate to any of the three divisions of the museum; art, history, and science. The collections should illustrate the aesthetic interests and accomplishments of the citizens. The major interest will be the historical collections, which should reflect the story of the development and achievements of the community. The natural history collections should epitomize the geology and geography, and the natural environment and resources of the region.

Specific focus areas of the collection are:

Art

Art works by regional artists such as Robert Adomeit, Erv Lewandowski, and Mayme Allison. Midwestern artists such as Charles Clewell, Percival Ives, George Adomiet, and Frederick Church. Nationally renowned artists include Thomas Hart Benton, Philip Evergood, Robert Motherwell, Andy Warhol, Richard Estes and one Dale Chihuly glass sculpture. The collection also extends to an international level with artists like Renoir, Cezanne, Diego Rivera, and even M.C. Escher represented.

History

Significant artifacts held by the museum include: The Gerald Haltiner archaeology collection; the Sagonakato Fire Pumper used by the City of Alpena to fight many fires starting in 1872; the personal papers and memorabilia of founder and namesake, Jesse Besser; the business and personal papers of the Fletcher-Gilchrist family, early Alpena land and lumber barons; a collection of Midwestern Native American art and basketry. The museum also has seven historic structures that have been relocated to the grounds of the museum. These include a homesteader's line cabin from the mid-1860's; the Maltz Exchange Bank of 1872; the McKay Cabin; two outhouses; the Green School of 1895; the Spratt Church; and the 1928 Katherine V Fish Tug used to fish the waters of Lake Huron.

Science

The museum contains a thirty-foot dome planetarium to present the night sky to visitors. With an upgrade to a digital dome in the planetarium we can now take visitors beyond just the night sky into the cosmos. In addition, the museum hosts a large natural history collection containing native animal mounts to the region such as; bobcats, black bears, racoons and many more. Aside from the native species in the collection there are also other animals from around the world presented such as; warthogs, ostrich, and even caracals. The natural history collection delves beyond just the terrestrial species of the region and contains mounted native fish species and invasive species. Local species include grayling, perch, and trout while the invasive species included in the collections are salmon, Asian carp, and even zebra mussels. There is also the Richard Springer leaf collection which contains example of over two hundred different leaf types collected in the United States. The Foucault Pendulum is always a favorite amongst visitors to the museum.

Types of Collections

The Permanent Collection:

Documented artifacts of the museum are acquired and preserved because of their potential value as examples, as reference material, as objects of aesthetic, or educational importance. All artifacts relating to the museum's mission and accessioned collections policy will be protected, preserved and held to the highest standards in the collection. These objects have the most restrictive level of access. Public access to these pieces is through exhibitions and programing. These collections exist for research by present and future generations with supervision by the Collections Manager.

The Education Collection:

The education collection, on the other hand, is intended for the present. These objects, both original and reproduced, are undocumented artifacts or specimens that parallel the accessioned collection. The purpose of this collection is to provide visitors with a tactile educational experience without impacting the accessioned collection artifacts and specimens. Educational collection items will be handled, repaired when necessary, and eventually discarded—essentially "studied to death." These pieces are inventoried and are actively and regularly used in the educational programs of the museum. Ancillary programs for education include exhibits, teaching kits, etc.

V. Acquisitions

Acquisition of artifacts and specimens for the collections by the Besser Museum obligates the director, staff, and Board of Trustees to long-term care and storage of a diverse group of objects. The inherent financial burden involved in this process necessitates critical thinking and

justification of action and expense. The museum collects objects to fulfill its mission to preserve, research, present and interpret Northeast Michigan's cultural and scientific heritage. The mission statement and related policy documents guide staff and trustees when acquiring collections to ensure the wise use of museum resources.

Objects and collections being considered for acquisitions are subject to the following criteria:

Applicability to the mission. Is the object consistent with the collections goals and scope of the collection? Does the object provide information about activities or experiences that were once typical, common, plentiful or popular? Will the object help improve the understanding of past social values and lifestyles and demonstrate how social and cultural traits changed over time?

What is the foreseeable use of the object(s)?

Is there duplication existing in the present collection?

Can proper care be given to the object? What is the object's present condition? Is it structurally sound?

Is appropriate storage space available? What is the size of the object (physical space requirements) in relation to its importance to the collections and use?

Has provenance been satisfactorily documented or explored?

Are there questions regarding legal title?

Are there restrictions or provisions regarding the use, care or display of the object(s)?

Is use of the object(s) restricted by copyright, patent, trademark, or trade name, or encumbered by its being obscene, defamatory, potentially an invasion of privacy, considered to be a ritual object, physically hazardous, etc?

Means of Acquisition

Objects may be added to the collections by means of donations, gifts, purchase, transfer, exchange, bequest, fieldwork acquisition, or by any other means by which title to the objects passes to the Besser Museum.

Human Remains and Sacred Objects

The Besser Museum is an actively collecting institution that owns and potentially will acquire collections comprised of human remains, funerary objects, and artifacts sacred to American cultural groups. Museum staff, volunteers, and sponsored researchers will conduct activities associated with the recovery, curation, and exhibition of human remains and sacred objects in an ethical manner pursuant to modern cultural sensitivities. Policies concerning the treatment of this class of artifacts in the United States arose from the issues that led to the federal statute titled *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA)*. While NAGPRA was a response to the concerns of North American Native Americans and indigenous Hawaiians, the Besser Museum's policy applies equally to Native American and non-native groups who have inhabited, or continue to inhabit, Northeastern Michigan.

The Besser Museum treats human remains and sacred objects as a culturally evolving concept with an open dialog among museum staff, board members and the cultural community represented by the artifacts. Beyond this, it is the Besser Museum's intent to treat human remains and sacred objects with cultural sensitivity based upon the following guidelines:

- We fully support and comply with Federal Acts concerning the protection of human remains and sacred objects. This includes the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (**Appendix K**).
- We will not exhibit human remains as curiosity objects. An exhibit with human remains will only be given consideration in the event such a display makes a clear scientific point not demonstrable in any other fashion.
- We will strive to exhibit sacred and culturally sensitive objects as accurately and inoffensively as possible. We will consider removing an artifact from any exhibit if the display is offensive to recognized leader(s) of the culture with which the objects are associated.
- We will conduct all sponsored fieldwork and studies of cultural materials in a manner that reflects sensitivity to the cultural group involved. This includes incorporating legitimate concerns and practices of respect advocated by recognized leader(s) of the culture with which the objects are associated.
- We recognize that the collection may contain objects considered sacred by American cultural groups. A sacred object is one that is essential to the proper practice of a religion and presently is of continuing religious importance to a group. That group imbues it with special meaning and power.
- We will not purchase human remains or sacred objects. Donations of human remains and sacred objects will only be accepted when the alternatives would clearly result in such objects receiving inappropriate treatment.
- Human remains and sacred objects will not be loaned for exhibit by another institution.
- We will make collections containing human remains and sacred objects available for study by serious students and researchers.
- We will consider requests for loans of sacred objects for religious purposes by authorized practitioners of the religion to which the object is affiliated.
- We will consider requests for the repatriation of Native American human remains and certain cultural objects may be made by lineal descendants of named individuals, federally recognized Native American tribes, federally recognized Native Alaskan Villages, and Native American tribal museums.
- We will store and handle sacred objects with care and sensitivity.

Acquisition Procedures

The Collections Manager evaluates all proposed collection purchases and objects offered as donations, and recommends the path of acquisition to the Executive Director.

If the object(s) merits acquisition to either the permanent or education collections, the Collections Manager presents the object(s) to the Collections Committee for approval. The Collections Manager prepares for the Collections Committee a written statement outlining how the objects fit into the Museum's collection and meet the collections criteria, the cost to house them, and the purchase price, if applicable. The Collections Manager may consult staff, trustees and/or outside experts to help with the decision. Following approval by the Collections Committee, the object(s) is then presented to the Board of Directors for the final approval. If the items are accepted into the permanent collections, this written statement is filed with the Deed of Gift. If an object(s) is rejected at any part of the acquisition process, it is promptly returned to the owner.

Collections or objects offered as donations, or sought through purchase, must meet standard legal conditions of ownership and ethical conventions. The museum demands proof of clear title from an owner (or seller). Scientific collections obtained by individuals and/or institutions offered to the museum must have the necessary permits from established governing authorities, and/or written agreements with the vested parties. The Besser Museum adheres to the ethical restrictions governing the acquisition of cultural and scientific patrimony. These restrictions include those

adopted by international, federal, state, and local governments and societies of museum, history, and science professionals.

Donations are to be presented as outright and unconditional gifts to be used at the museum's discretion. Normally the museum will not accept restricted donations. If a collection is offered with restrictions, the Collections Manager may present a case for acquisition to the Executive Director if it is deemed of such importance to the museum's mission to warrant the restriction. The Executive Director is responsible, upon consultation with the Collections Manager, trustees, and appropriate outside experts, to decide upon acceptance or rejection of the restricted collection.

The Collections Manager makes a monthly report of accessioned collection acquisitions for the Executive Director and the Board of Directors.

Following the decision to accept an object or collection, the item(s) may be (1) accessioned into the museum's permanent research collection or (2) recorded as part of the consumable hands-on education collection. It is the responsibility of the Collections Manager to identify/recommend the appropriate collection designation for incoming collections as part of the report presented to the Collections Committee and trustees during the acquisition consideration process.

Museum employees shall not offer appraisals of the monetary value of material or objects to the donor for establishing a fair market value of an offered gift. It is the responsibility of the donors desiring to take an income tax deduction for charitable gifts to obtain and bear the costs of an appraisal from an independent certified appraiser. Staff may suggest a list of qualified appraisers or how to locate one.

Acquisitions for the Education/Exhibit Collection

Items utilized for educational purposes provide an essential component in achieving the education goals of the mission. Relevant educational artifacts and specimens are actively sought and gratefully accepted by the museum. These items are transitory, as they tend to be consumed in educational projects. The administrative paperwork and oversight required is significantly less than that for the permanent accession collection, but equally as important. When an education object is accepted, the donor is sent a Donation Receipt that describes the item and indicates the general capacity in which it will be used in the museum (exhibits, programs, etc.) Annually, the information is archived using a donor database. The donated objects are dispersed to the exhibits or programs where they will best further the museum's educational goals.

VI. Accessioning Objects into the Permanent Collections

The decision to accept or purchase a collection or object begins the process known as accessioning, the permanent recording of a collection or object owned by the museum. It entails assigning a unique control number, obtaining a legal transfer of ownership, and documenting the provenance (history) of the collection and the reason for its acquisition.

The Collections Manager maintains an **Accession Record Book (Appendix B)**. This document is the indelible, permanent accounting of each collection or object as it is accepted by the museum.

A collection number is generated in numerical order as collections are listed in the Accession Record Book. Each listing includes the collection number, receipt identification number, date of acquisition, a brief description of content, donor information, and applicable related links or restrictions. The Accession Record Book is duplicated on a digital platform, Google Drive and a flash drive, semi-annually and the duplicates are stored off-site.

Accessioned collections are assigned unique **collection numbers**, in addition to the RID, to permanently link them with the necessary paperwork to facilitate research and storage. The Besser Museum uses a three-part numerical system based on an annual cycle. The first number is the year of accession, the second number is the numerical order in which the collection arrived, and the third number designates individual objects within the collection. For example, 2000.46.23 identifies the 23rd item in the 46th collection that arrived in the year 2000.

Deeds of Gift are forms that document ownership and provenance (**Appendix C**). They also list the agreement terms that apply to all unrestricted gifts accepted by the museum. The legal transfer of ownership can be accomplished by a dated and signed Deed of Gift that identifies the donor(s) and lists the object(s). In lieu of a Deed of Gift, a **Letter of Intent** signed and dated by the donor is acceptable. Purchases require a dated receipt with a full description of the item(s). Objects abandoned by their donors, without either a Deed of Gift or Letter of Intent, will be added to the Orphan Objects listing or will follow the guidelines laid out in Michigan Public Act 24, passed in 1992 (**Appendix E**).

Orphan Objects

Many museums have objects that have either been given at some time, without any clear, recorded transfer of title, or loaned, sometimes for many decades, by someone who they no longer have contact with and may even have passed away. The legal term for this situation is a **bailment**, where the museum (bailee) has an obligation to care for an object until the lender (bailor) returns to reclaim the object(s). This obligation has no time limit. Even if the lender is deceased, the ownership interest passes to heirs to which the bailee is then responsible. Michigan State law provides a remedy for **unclaimed loans** (Michigan Comp. Laws Ann. 399.611 *Et. Seq.*, **Appendix E**). This process is time consuming but worthwhile. Space, proper storage and time spent tracking special conditions on objects is, over the long term, more expensive. The Besser Museum's Collections Manager pursues legal relief whenever this situation is discovered.

To track these items within the museum the orphan objects are assigned an **orphan object number** based on the order they are found. This list has been created to locate, track, and ideally reunite an object with donor information. When an orphan object is found, it is added to the orphan listing along with the current location, condition, and any other details that can be provided. The object is then tagged with an acid free label containing the orphan object listing. The orphan object number appears as NN 302 or N#302. When additional information is found, it will be added to the orphan object listing. In the event an orphan object has all the donor information found and attached to it, the orphan number still stays attached to the object. The orphan object list is maintained as a physical listing within a 3-ring binder titled "**Orphan Listings**" and is backed up digitally.

The **provenance**, or history, of a collection is a required component of the accession process. An accessioned object is most useful to the museum when it furthers the museum's mission. A documented link to Northeast Michigan's geography, culture or people must be demonstrated to make a collection or object eligible for accessioning. Provenance may be gathered through written history from the donor, oral history from the donor or other identified sources, and/or by research and gathering of documentation and photographs. When applicable, the Collections Manager may also include a memorandum that accounts for the decision-making process that was followed.

The Collections Manager maintains the documentation and information generated by the accessioning process in **the collection files** that are organized numerically. Each file contains the transfer of ownership document, a letter of acknowledgement for gifts, insurance valuation, photographs of objects, and provenance information. Information and the RID number generated during the period of deposit at the museum are also included. Subsequently, the Collections Manager adds cataloging information, condition and treatment documentation, and location and use information. These files are also duplicated semi-annually and the duplicates stored off-site.

VII. Deaccessioning Objects from the Permanent Collections

Deaccessioning is the legal process of removing an object from the permanent collection. As an institution of public trust, the museum is obligated to undertake decisions to remove accessioned items in full view of public scrutiny. Since this act of removal is a reversal of considered prior judgement, it is not to be undertaken lightly.

The following criteria inform the decision to deaccession an object or collection:

- It no longer conforms to the mission and/or collections scope of the museum.
- Its authenticity, attribution or genuineness is determined to be false or fraudulent, and the object lacks sufficient aesthetic merit or importance to warrant retention.
- It is in such poor condition and/or of such little merit that repair or conservation is impractical and/or cost prohibitive.
- It is a duplicate of another object in the collection and the redundancy is deemed without merit.
- The museum is unable to adequately care for or store the object.
- It more appropriately meets the acquisition criteria of another collection and/or institution.

Disposal of deaccessioned objects or collections is a sensitive issue. Items once accepted in the public trust do not lose cultural value simply because they no longer conform to the policies and needs of the Besser Museum. Whenever possible, therefore, a deaccessioned object will continue to be used by the museum in its educational collection, or transferred to another museum. Sale of deaccessioned objects is to be approached very carefully. **The museum does not sell deaccessioned objects to further its financial goals.** Any funds acquired as the result of a deaccession must be utilized to directly benefit the accessioned collection per the American

Association of Museum ethical guidelines. The collections are not to be thought of as financial assets, and may not be used as collateral for loans or sold to secure fund for operations, buildings or expansions of the museum.

The Collections Manager may identify an object to deaccession and then present a written proposal that meets the above criteria to the Executive Director along with a recommendation for method of disposal (Appendix D). The Director and the Collections Manager must then agree with the recommendation to deaccession and disposal priorities. The Collections Manager then presents the case to the Board of Trustees' Collections Committee, which, upon agreement with the recommendation, presents the case to the Board of Trustees. A simple majority vote is required by the Board of Trustees to deaccession an item or collection.

When disposing of objects from the collections, the museum must first determine if that it has the legal right to do so. The museum must not allow objects from its collections to be acquired privately by any museum officer, volunteer, member of the board or his/her representative, unless the objects are sold publicly and with complete disclosure of their history. **Staff who are part of the deaccessioning procedure may not acquire deaccessioned objects by sale or any other means.**

The Collections Manager adds the deaccession documentation to the collection's file and records the decision in the Accession Record Book. Implementing appropriate disposal of deaccessioned items is the responsibility of the Collections Manager with the knowledge and approval of the Executive Director.

VII. LOANS

Museums borrow and lend artifacts and specimens for many reasons in accordance with their mission of research, education and exhibition. The Besser Museum of Northeast Michigan, herein known as the Besser Museum, as part of the larger museum community, participates in a collegial environment that encourages exchange of information created when institutions share collection objects. Sharing objects with other institutions can only occur when trust exists between the parties. The Besser Museum acquires and curates artifacts and specimens held in the public trust. Lending accessioned objects to another institution or researcher requires an element of surety by staff that the objects will be professionally cared for while out of museum custody. Loans will be made to and from other museums, historical groups, agencies and educational institutions, as well as from individuals, in the interest of fulfilling the mission of the Besser Museum. All loans will follow established procedure. All objects entering or leaving the Museum, regardless of purpose, will have their movement documented on appropriate Museum forms clearly detailing the loan contract.

To this end, the Besser Museum follows the ethical guidelines of collections management stated in the 2000 *AAM Code of Ethics for Museums*. The Besser Museum adheres to the following guidelines.

The museum will not normally accept long term or permanent loans. The Executive Director with

the Collections Manager may authorize limited loans to fulfill special needs for an exhibition or research program, but all loans are subject to annual renewal (see Loan Policy below).

INCOMING LOANS

The Besser Museum occasionally borrows objects from individuals or other institutions to enhance an exhibit. The museum also assists individuals by extending and hosting research loans under specific conditions. Some artifacts and/or specimens are considered under loan policy because of a special condition inherent in their custody.

Incoming loans will be taken on a case-by-case basis, with a specific exhibit or program in mind. Museum staff will utilize standard forms and follow established procedures in all exchanges of objects. Documentation will be recorded with and monitored by the Collections Manager. Any loans that involve the collections belonging to staff will follow standard policies and procedures of the museum regarding documentation, value, condition, renewal or potential hazard. Incoming loans which exceed \$5,000.00 in value will not be accepted without the approval of the Museum's Executive Director and the Board of Trustees. The Besser Museum will insure incoming loans unless the lender waives the requirement. The Collections Manager will provide the Museum's Executive Director with a list of loaned exhibits and/or artifacts, and their value, within a week of their arrival in the Museum. Art exhibits require a detailed listing prior to approval of any loan, allowing for consideration of adequate insurance coverage.

Custodial collections, those deposited by local, state or federal government agencies, that the museum agrees to curate and store are a class of incoming loans. Agreed upon procedures are negotiated between the museum and owner agency before the collection arrives. Generally, the ability to exhibit and research is an integral part of agreeing to house another agency's objects. Loans of objects from this type of collection to other institutions must be stipulated in the initial agreement.

Borrowing Objects:

1. The museum must determine that there is a clear connection between the object(s) exhibited and the museum's mission, and that the inclusion of the object(s) is consistent with the intellectual integrity of the exhibition.
2. The museum must examine the lender's relationship to the institution to determine if there is a potential for or appearance of conflict of interest. This is particularly important in cases where the lender has a formal or informal connection to museum decision-making (for example, as a board member, staff member, donor or volunteer).
3. The museum must develop guidelines and procedures to address real, potential, or the appearance of conflicts of interest. These may require withdrawal from the decision-making process of those with a real or perceived conflict, extra vigilance by decision-makers, disclosure of the conflict, or declining the loan.
4. The museum may not accept any commission or fee from the sale of objects borrowed for exhibition.

Loans solicited by the Besser Museum are processed and monitored by the Collections Manager. There are two types of solicited loans: (1) those brought in to augment an exhibit and (2) those

brought in for research by staff or museum-hosted researchers. **An Incoming Loan Form (Appendix F)** lists lending institution information including a contact name, telephone number, physical description of the item(s) including accession numbers, the value assigned by the lending institution, and the time limits and conditions of the loan. Most institutions have loan forms and the Collections Manager is authorized to sign any Incoming or Outgoing Loan Forms. Unsolicited loans and/or deposits for museum consideration, or research, are also processed and monitored by the Collections Manager.

All incoming loans have time parameters. No loan can be accepted for more than one year. Loans needed for more than one year can be extended on an annual basis with the approval of the Executive Director. Two specific examples of annually renewed loans are the Pewabic Anchor and Naval Antiaircraft Deck Gun.

Temporary Custody

To meet the goal of complete accountability for objects in the Museum's custody, the Museum must also register objects left for review, identification, or examination. This category applies to objects that are not a transfer of legal title (Deed of Gift, Purchase Order), or loan for exhibit. These transactions are to be of a temporary nature and not to exceed 120 (one hundred and twenty) days. All objects coming into the custody of the Museum must be directed to the Collections Manager within a timely manner of their arrival. The Collections Manager will monitor these objects.

Objects deposited at the museum for donation, evaluation, or identification are recorded on a Temporary Custody Receipt (TCR) sheet which then is stored in the Temporary Custody Receipt Binder. The TCR Binder is stored in the Collections Manager's office. Each object or collection group is assigned a unique control number to track its path in the museum. This Receipt Identification (RID) number corresponds to the date of the deposit and by the donor's last name. For example, RID 03062016 Smith means that it is the deposited object or collection brought to the museum on March 6th, 2016 by the Smiths. The TCR binder creates a control number, date of deposit, owner information, description of the item(s) and the purpose of deposit. The object(s) being deposited at the museum is tagged with an acid-free tag containing the RID information. Two copies of the TCR are made; one copy of the TCR is made for the donor and one to stay with the object. The original copy of the TCR is placed in chronological order in the TCR Binder. If the object is returned to the owner, the date and who handled the request is noted on the original in the TCR Binder. If an object is accepted by the museum, it and a copy of the receipt are processed for either the accessioned or education collection. If a question arises as to what occurred with a deposited object(s) the original receipt will document its disposition.

Outgoing Loans

All loans will be for specified periods of time, preferably for one year or less. After one year, the loan may be renewed. Loans will be monitored per established procedures. All outgoing loans must be reviewed by the Collections Manager, with the final decision by the Museum's Executive Director. As a part of the requirement for a loan, borrowing institutions must maintain insurance on Besser Museum artifacts at the value specified on the loan form. Prior to the release of an object, a certificate of insurance may be required from the borrowing institution.

A written request initiates the process for an outgoing loan from the museum. The letter must stipulate the object requested, purpose of the loan, and length of time needed. Upon receipt of a loan request, the Collections Manager, Curator and Executive Director are all notified. The Curator determines if the object(s) is scheduled for exhibit or currently on exhibit in a manner that would make the loan impossible. Artifact(s) and specimen(s) currently on exhibit are not removed for loan requests. If approved by the Curator, the Collections Manager examines the object(s) requested to determine its condition and any special conditions that would need to be met by the borrowing institution. If the Collections Manager agrees, the request is then reviewed by the Executive Director for approval or denial of loan.

The Collections Manager negotiates with the borrowing institution to ensure that the loan site meets necessary security and environmental standards. The borrowing institution must provide a completed **Facility Report** (published by the Registrars Committee of the American Alliance of Museums, see appendix). If the borrowing institution meets acceptable standards, and agrees to any conditions required for the object(s) requested, then an **Outgoing Loan Form (Appendix G)** will be filled out by the Collections Manager and mailed for signatures. The Collections Manager is authorized to sign an Incoming Loan Form from the other institution.

Travel arrangements are negotiated between institutions. It is customary for the borrower to pay costs involved in transport, including courier service if required. A **certificate of insurance** will be obtained before the object(s) is transported. The Collections Manager completes an exit condition report and a photograph taken if deemed prudent. The Collections Manager will continue to monitor the loan throughout the specified period and ensure the return or facilitate negotiations for an extension. Upon return, the object(s) receives another condition report to ensure no damage has resulted.

Insurance on Loans:

Insurance on loans is maintained by the borrowing institution on a "wall to wall" basis. The borrower is responsible for insuring an item through shipping, custody, and return shipping. The insurance coverage is "all risk", which covers any damage or loss, excepting any standard exclusions listed in the insurance policy. On receipt of an incoming loan, it is critical that the Collections Manager complete a condition report for the object(s). Determining when and how any damage occurs is important for insurance documentation and the reputation of the museum. An updated condition assessment is performed before the items are packaged for return shipping. Incoming Loan paperwork maintained by the Collections Manager is archived semiannually. In the event damage occurs to a borrowed object, the museum must contact the lender within two business days: the lender must direct any remedy.

IX. Collections Management

Collections Management is the responsibility of staff and trustees to preserve and protect the collections. The Collections Manager enforces policies and procedures developed by professional staff and approved by the Board of Trustees to document, conserve, and safeguard objects against natural and manmade hazards. This employee also records and controls object movement and exposure to environmental risks.

CATALOGING

The **Collection Files** created during accessioning contain information known and generated about every object in the accessioned collection. Researching and documenting artifacts and specimens are primary tasks for the Collections Manager. Once the legal transfer of ownership and the accessioning is complete, a **Catalog Form** is prepared for every object. It includes descriptive physical information, provenance, location and use information (**Appendix H**).

The basics of what, when, material, size, creator or source are recorded and the object is photographed. A visual representation serves a dual purpose: as a research tool, it helps to narrow choices so that objects are not physically disturbed for the sole purpose of a quick look and it is an excellent proof for insurance records. The physical description on the catalog form reinforces the visual image. The core of a catalog form is the verbal description of an artifact or specimen sufficiently detailed to differentiate between seemingly identical objects. All of these categories assembled together complete the information required to physically document an object.

The essential part of object research is determining how an artifact or specimen relates to its human or natural environment; where it was found, who acquired, owned or used it, etc. The information supplied by the donor or researcher about the object is included in this category and then augmented by research. Known as the **provenance**, this information supplies the relational structure that infuses a static object with life. Object research occurs at every other level of documentation as well. Usually, when a cataloger is completing the physical information description, research about manufacturing or geological facts pertaining to processes and materials are included. When a Curator drafts an exhibit narrative, information is generated that relates to individual objects. Researchers who investigate collection objects are obligated to share what they have learned with others. Research is only limited by time.

Recording object location and movement in the museum is a fundamental necessity. The Collections Manager maps the building to the smallest storage unit capable of housing an object. Once accessioned and cataloged, an object's physical location is tracked by listing date, location and use of every object, inside the museum or out on loan. More than just a function of inventory, tracking the use history of an object allows the Collections Manager to monitor the environmental impacts resulting from movement and exhibition. Because the mission of the museum is to preserve objects for many generations, critical decisions must be made to limit harmful physical and environmental risks. A record of how much light exposure or travel an object has endured is an important component in the decision to protect and preserve rather than exhibit or use to death. A perfect example is a Victorian Crazy Quilt. These quilts were constructed of fragile silks and ribbons, materials vulnerable to light fading and splitting. Our mission is to ensure that people 500 years from now still can see this quilt in all its colorful glory. To accomplish this, the decision is made now to limit its exposure to light and handling.

Assigning a **monetary value for insurance purposes** is part of the cataloging process. Donations often arrive with an evaluation attached since the donor may claim it for income tax purposes. Purchased items also arrive with an established value. The Collections Manager with sufficient acquired knowledge may put a value on the object, or s(he) will seek appraisal from a qualified source. If an object is scheduled to go out on loan, be sent to a conservator, or be deaccessioned and sold, it is customary to seek a true market value, and an appraiser is contracted to perform this

service. It is a good idea to engage an appraiser to survey a small percent of the collection yearly to ensure that insurance coverage accurately reflects market reality. Staff, Trustees and volunteers of the Besser Museum ethically may not assign monetary values to artifacts or specimens owned by anyone. Inherent conflicts of interest, perceived and actual, can result from this activity. If an evaluation is requested, the staff member or volunteer may refer the patron to the Collections Manager who maintains a list of appraisers.

MARKING

Objects are linked to collection file and location by their **accession number**. Marking this number on artifacts and specimens is the most routine invasive action performed by a Collections Manager. The goal is to attach the number without damaging the object or interfering with its aesthetic integrity. The diversity of museum objects often makes this a challenge!

A few general rules apply:

- When possible the number will not be visible when the object is displayed
- The chosen surface cannot be naturally abraded by the object's own weight or incidental contact with other surfaces
- The surface must be stable enough that the marking medium does not do irreparable damage
- The location of the mark must be predictable and, therefore, locatable by others

Over time, professionals in charge of collections have developed location patterns to mark every known type of object (**Appendix I**). Unnecessary handling of objects is the single largest damage risk factor. Knowing where a number is likely to be found reduces this risk. In the event an object does not conform to current location logic, where the number is placed on the object is recorded on the catalog form. Also, to reduce handling, numbers of objects in a storage container are listed on the outside: similarly, items on exhibit are listed by scene.

The following procedure is used to mark most artifacts in the collection:

1. Examine the object to determine a suitable location
2. Clean the area to be marked
3. Apply a base coat of clear varnish
4. Apply a coat of white paint if the object surface is dark
5. Write the number with permanent black ink, *e.g.* BM 2000.23.62
6. Apply a cover coat of clear varnish

Exceptions include objects constructed of materials either not capable of supporting varnish or which lack a suitable location for a mark. Objects made of paper, leather and fabric do not support this form of marking. Neither do animal skins and herbarium plants in the natural history collection. Alternative marking methods include using pencil (paper), sewn in labels (textiles, some leather), and attached acid-free tags.

CONDITION REPORTS

The Besser Museum prepares **Condition Reports** on its accessioned artifacts and specimens to document prior, current, and potential damage and repairs (**Appendix J**). Monitoring the condition of collection artifacts and specimens can also reveal problems for storage or exhibit environments so that they can be addressed before widespread damage occurs. Two levels of

condition reporting exist. (1) A conservator documents damage and suggests remedies in an intensive report. This is costly and seldom is undertaken unless an object requires conservation treatment. (2) The Collections Manager routinely benchmarks an object's condition when it arrives and prior to and just after any substantive move or use. For instance, a condition report is performed prior to loaning an object and once again when the object returns. The same is true if the object is used for an exhibit.

Condition Reports include:

Accession number

- Object composition
- Types of damage
- Extent of damage
- Location of damage
- Previous repairs (historic and modern)
- Dates of and/or reason for damage (if known)
- Examiner's name and date of examination
- Photograph

There are four basic types of damage:

1. Inherent Fault--weakness in the construction or incompatibility of materials
2. Biological--pest or mold infestation that weakened the structural integrity or marred the surface
3. Chemical--reaction caused by light, heat, or caustic substance that weakened the structural integrity or marred the surface
4. Physical--surface scars, tears or losses created by physical stress

Another important function of the Condition Reports is to document needed cleaning or repair. The Collections Manager facilitates decisions concerning object treatment, including everything from dusting to invasive repairs. **No museum staff member or volunteer will treat an object beyond his/her capabilities**--an obvious rule that warrants repetition. Cleaning and minor repairs are routinely performed or monitored by the Collections Manager. Technical cleaning and repairs must be contracted out to a highly-trained Conservator, a decision made in consultation with the Collections Manager and Executive Director. An ancillary benefit of Condition Reporting is utilizing the reports to identify conservation treatment priorities.

OBJECT HANDLING AND TRANSPORT

Collections objects are handled during intake and then whenever it is moved or used for research purposes. Object Handling Guidelines minimize the potential damage. The Collections Manager instructs all personnel in implementing the Guidelines and supervises use of objects by researchers to ensure object safety. Packing and unpacking of collection objects is done by or monitored by the Collections Manager. In the event an object requires transport the Collections Manager is responsible for selecting an agent that meets museum care and security concerns.

STORAGE OF OBJECTS

The goal of storage is to protect and preserve collection objects. Good storage environments and materials are essential to long term object preservation. **Materials** needed for proper storage represent a significant capital investment for the museum. **Security** is a special concern for storage

areas: at this museum, access keys are restricted to the Collections Manager, Executive Director and Maintenance Manager. All work conducted in the storage areas by interns, volunteers, contract laborers, etc. is closely monitored by the Collections Manager.

Storage incorporates three separate and distinct areas:

1. The Receiving Room holds objects entering or reentering the museum that must be isolated pending examination to ensure against unwanted pests, dirt and caustic substances. Close to the dock on the Lower Level, this space is spatially segregated from both the primary collection and the exhibit areas.

2. Temporary Storage Area(s) are designed to process and clean artifacts and specimens in transit. They contain office and cleaning supplies and are adjacent to the primary storage areas.

3. Primary Storage Area(s) are segregated by material type (e.g., wood, metal, glass, bone, skins, etc.) This method enables the Collections Manager to better control environmental factors, pests and specific risks associated with certain materials.

Closed shelving and cabinets are the museum's preferred methods of storage. Minimizing collection objects' light and air pollutant exposure levels increases their life expectancy dramatically.

Recommended and tested storage materials:

- Acid-free paper products; tissue paper, file folders, archival boxes
- Cotton fabric and threads; labels, wrapping
- Plastic paper clips; manuscript collections
- Polyester batting; padding, wrapping
- Polyester film (Mylar); vapor barrier, protective enclosure
- Polyethylene microfoam (Ethafom); padding
- Polypropylene bags; enclosures
- Special adhesives; methyl cellulose or starch based
- Special Envelopes and Mounts; specialty mounts constructed with inert materials for specific objects

Specific Collection Relative Humidity requirements:

Baskets: 60-65% RH

Bone/Ivory: 50-55% RH

Ceramics: 55% RH

Composites: 50% RH

Glass: 40-50% RH

Leather/Skin/Fur: 45-55% RH

Metals: 40% RH

Paintings: 40-55% RH

Paper: 45-50% RH

Photographs: 30-35% RH

Plaster: 50% RH

Stone: 50% RH

Textiles: 40-50% RH

Wood/Bark: 50-55% RH

Maintaining storage and exhibit areas within recommended humidity and temperature ranges is crucial to achieve optimal environmental conditions. Relative Humidity levels between 40% and 50% protect most collection objects, but it is critical that the set point be maintained within a

narrow range of plus or minus 5% over a 24-hr period. A wider or faster fluctuation produces unacceptable environmental stresses on collections objects. Similarly, the ambient temperature must be kept constant with only a plus or minus 5-degree variation over a 24-hr period. Recommended temperature ranges for collection objects vary from 60-70 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Collections Manager or trained interns or volunteers under the direct supervision of the Collections Manager routinely clean storage areas. This includes dusting/washing shelving, sweeping/mopping floors, and removal of trash associated with cleaning. No trash cans or overnight accumulation of trash is allowed in the storage areas. The Maintenance Supervisor schedules routine maintenance duties with the Collections Manager. These include painting, structural repairs, building systems access, etc. All lights in the collection storage and exhibition areas are covered with UV filters.

STORAGE OF RECORDS

The collection held in trust by the Besser Museum is valuable because of the information it represents about life in Northeast Michigan. Safeguarding records about these objects is therefore just as important as caring for the objects themselves. Key records, e.g. accession records, deeds of gift, catalog forms, etc., are kept on acid-free paper and are duplicated on a regular schedule. The duplicate sets of accession records, deeds of gift and photographs of each object are kept offsite in a safe deposit box at the museum's bank. The information contained in the Collection Files, e.g. catalog, condition, etc., is entered into a computer database. The database is updated on a regular schedule and a duplicate copy is also stored at the museum's bank.

Collection Insurance

The Museum's collections and temporary holdings (loans and works for acquisition consideration) are insured with a commercial property coverage policy under the business personal property section. Some items in the Museum's collection, the Pewabic anchor, the fountain, and all outside sculptures fall under an inland marine policy. The items under the inland marine policy are listed under a Fine Arts Floater policy.

Reporting Loss

In the interest of good risk management, the Besser Museum staff must report all damage or loss of any object to the Collections Manager as soon as it is discovered. The Collections Manager will maintain related records and provide appropriate information to the county police, the Board of Trustees, and the insuring agent. The Collections Manager will maintain copies of all records directly relating to the condition and disposal of damaged objects as well as those related to the investigation, procedures, and findings gathered on missing/stolen objects.

The Besser Museum will not accept an object that is illegally imported into or illegally collected in the U.S., or support or encourage irresponsible damages to collecting rights of natural monuments of human burial places.

X. Inventory

A collections inventory is undertaken for two basic purposes: to ensure that location records are accurate, and to certify that objects have not been stolen. Several types of inventory methodology

are employed to meet these goals:

1. **Wall to Wall inventory** of the entire collection. This method ensures total accountability. It locates objects by their location paperwork, certifying they are present where listed. This method consumes the time and attention of everyone in a collection department.
2. **Section by Section inventory** accounts for a collection category or discrete area. For example, the furniture collection or the objects on x-y-z shelving units. Inventorying a portion of the collection annually with this system maintains reliable order.
3. **Spot inventory** is limited in scope and designed more as a record accuracy check than an object-oriented location inventory. Also, performed annually, this method ensures location records are reliably maintained.

Considering the time involved in any inventory, it is beneficial to couple an inventory with another intensive collection investigation. For example, if grant funds are available for a specific project, such as furniture conservation, an inventory of the furniture collection could include completing condition reports as each object is located. Other collection goals that can be addressed during an inventory include:

- Identifying objects that need preservation or conservation treatment
- Identifying poorly documented objects to schedule documentation
- Updating insurance valuations
- Establishing a basis for planning and budgeting a collection-related project or special need
- Establishing a database for collections development or deaccession
- Retrieving information after a catastrophic information loss

The Besser Museum practices a ten-year inventory cycle. The collection is divided into nine distinct units. Each of these units is inventoried annually applying the section by section method. In addition, one hundred object numbers acquired randomly are spot checked each year for location record veracity. Every tenth year, the collection as a whole is inventoried applying the wall to wall method.

XI. Pest Management

A significant danger to the collection is unwanted pests and exposure to harmful chemical agents. Once an insect or rodent capable of harming the collection is discovered, the damage has likely already occurred. Many insects damage collections objects while in the larval stage, so killing the adults does not solve the problem. Compounding the difficulty is our reluctance to use chemicals to treat the infestation once discovered. Pesticide chemicals can harm collections objects and, of course, the staff and volunteers who work with them. The Besser Museum deals with this dilemma through **Integrated Pest Management**. This low-chemical approach emphasizes preventing pests from entering the facility and eliminating food and attractive breeding environments in case they do gain access.

Integrated Pest Management follows a six-step protocol that, once established, protects the perimeter of the building and monitors the possible activity inside the building. We:

1. Inspect the building and collection areas

2. Deploy non-chemical controls, i.e. barriers, sticky traps
3. Evaluate the results of the controls and re-inspect
4. Treat localized areas with chemical agents only if other methods are ineffective
5. Evaluate the system as a whole
6. Continue to monitor non-chemical controls and sensitive areas

The **primary task here is inspection**. Every room in the facility is treated as a potential access or home for insects and rodents. Traps are deployed throughout the building and monitored monthly. The results are recorded in a logbook. The Besser Museum hosts many insects and arachnids, especially in the basement area, that recently have not posed concerns for the collection. But knowing what is in the building is as important as any attempt to control their access.

The Collections Manager and Maintenance Manager perform a semi-annual checklist inspection of exterior and interior spaces. Plumbing pipes, doors, windows and the receiving area are of special concern to monitor access and mobility. Spaces around plumbing pipes and electrical conduits are sealed to prevent "bug highways" throughout the building. Doors are weather-stripped and windows sealed to retard access. All doors are closed when not in immediate use.

The Collections Manager monitors the collections areas monthly, checking traps and maintaining visual checks. Certain areas of the collection that are sensitive to infestation are monitored closely, such as the natural history specimens, basketry, and textiles.

No food or drink is ever permitted in the collections storage rooms. The Collections Manager monitors liquid of any kind, for any purpose, in the collections rooms.

Historic buildings. Integrated pest management extends to the historic structures on the museum's grounds. Exterior perimeters are checked semi-annually and barrier measures to seal the structures are applied while maintaining historic integrity. Monitoring and sticky traps are placed inside each structure in unobtrusive locations and regularly checked. **No food or drink is allowed in any of the historic structures.** Cleaning and repair may be undertaken only under the direction of the Collections Manager.

If a major infestation of pests or rodents is discovered, the Collections Manager will call in a professional exterminator who will act under the supervision and direction of museum curatorial staff.

Food and drink in the museum building can be a sensitive issue since museum receptions generally include refreshments. Currently, kitchen facilities in the building are located on the upper level of the museum. During daily operation, visitors are not allowed food or drink when they are viewing the exhibits. During receptions when food and drink are served, guests are encouraged not to consume refreshments in the exhibit areas. This point is made to ensure sensitivity in staff and volunteers to watch guest behavior to protect the specimens and artifacts on display. After a reception, complete clean up must be done immediately. This includes removing the trash from the building and sweeping and/or mopping spilled debris.

Staff members and volunteers have access to the upper floor kitchen for lunch and snacks. Drinks

may be consumed in offices but must be transported back and forth from kitchen areas in covered containers. The reasoning behind careful food control is two-fold: it protects the artifacts and specimens from accidental damage through spills, and it denies insects and rodents a food source.

Integrated Pest Management relies on the cooperation of staff and volunteers. The vigilance required denying access points and maintaining the facility unattractive to insects and rodents requires everyone's understanding and sensitivity. Staff and volunteers are asked to immediately report any insect or rodent seen in the building to the Collections Manager; to keep doors closed, food in the kitchen; and to be aware of the surrounding museum environment.

The museum's board-approved space reallocation plan of November 2000 closed the kitchen downstairs and confined all food and receptions to the upper level well away from the collections on the lower level.

XII. Reproduction and Copyright

The Besser Museum may obtain ownership of, or control of copyright to, materials it "authors" either as a work for hire or work performed by an employee within the scope of the job responsibilities. This extends to materials acquired by transfer through assignment, and/or by transfer through licensing. It is important to determine if an object considered for acquisition has copyright restrictions and who holds the copyright interest. If copyright interests exist, every effort will be made to acquire them with the object. If the copyright holder does not wish to relinquish rights, then appropriate provisions must be made in the Deed of Gift or another transfer instrument to outline the legal obligations of the museum to uphold copyright regulations.

XIII. Public Disclosure

A copy of the Collection Management Policy of the Besser Museum shall be made available to any member of the general public upon request.

XIV. Provisions for Review and Change

Periodic review of the Collections Management Policy and Procedures is necessary to maintain its validity and usefulness. The Executive Director will initiate a review of the procedures and policies with curatorial staff and the Collections Management Committee every 5 years or sooner if circumstances warrant. Changes will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval.

Appendices

