

Niagara Falls Public Library

Collections Management Policy Local History Department

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Niagara Falls Public Library, Local History Department
MISSION, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Part I-MISSION

The mission of the Local History Department of the Niagara Falls Public Library (hereafter referred to as “Local History Department”) is to save Niagara Falls, New York’s past. It does so by collecting and caring for books, published and unpublished documents, audio-visual media, and three-dimensional objects that document the history of what is now the City of Niagara Falls, New York from prehistoric times to the present, and making these resources accessible to the public. The library holds these materials in trust for future generations. Therefore, they can be examined in the local history room only.

Part II-COLLECTION OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVES

The Local History Department’s primary objectives are to:

1. *Maintain a Research Library with Special, Non-circulating Collections* comprised of published materials, manuscripts, photographs and other original sources related to the evolution of Niagara Falls, New York. The **primary** focus of the collection is published material, manuscripts and archival material, including photographs and other visual images pertaining to all aspects of the history of the area encompassed by the present city. The collection aims to document the social and economic activities of ordinary people as well as the community’s elites.

2. *Maintain a limited collection of artifacts* with the same **primary** geographic focus as above. The extent of the artifact collection will be determined by factors such as the availability of space to properly store and care for materials, the availability of staff to provide care and access. At present the Local History Department seeks to refine its existing collections to conform with the guidelines below. It is not actively seeking additions to the collection, but will accept appropriate items when they conform to the stated guidelines. Areas of interest and special emphasis are:

- *Fine and Decorative Arts*, with particular emphasis upon paintings, engravings, prints, and photographs, glass, ceramics that illustrate the scenic beauty of Niagara Falls, technological innovation in the city, the economic, industrial, and transportation development of the city, and urban life and institutions.
- *Every day Artifacts*, with particular emphasis on items that offer insight into Niagara Falls’ unique identity. Specific areas of interest are items indicative of:
 - a. Industrial products, processes and innovations
 - b. Tourism, including the hospitality industry
 - c. Daily life in the city’s diverse population
 - d. Life on the international border

- e. Social and political movements
- f. Community leaders
- g. Labor relations

The Local History Department's **secondary** objectives are to maintain collections necessary to illuminate the relationship of the City of Niagara Falls, New York to its region, to the State of New York, and the United States. To that end, it will *selectively* collect published, unpublished, graphic and artifactual materials related to:

1. *Niagara County history*. Such materials will have specific bearing on the economic and social development of the city and its people, *e.g.* material related to the War of 1812, the Robert Moses Power Plant, Bell Aircraft, etc.
2. *New York State and Southern Ontario history*. Materials in this category could relate to the regional development of hydroelectric power and related industries, the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837, binational economic development efforts, cross border transportation, etc.
3. *United States history*. This category includes materials necessary to provide the background to place the history of Niagara Falls in the context of the broader sweep of national history.

Note that collecting in these secondary areas will be very limited.

Part III-ACQUISITION and ACCESSION POLICY

A. ACQUISITION

1. Definition

For the purpose of this policy, *ACQUISITION* is defined as the administrative process of discovering, preliminary evaluation of, negotiating for, taking custody of, and documenting title to archival materials or objects.

2. Acquisition Methods

The Local History Department shall acquire published and archival material and collection objects by unrestricted donations and bequests, exchange, purchase, or abandonment. It shall also accept donations of reference materials, equipment and supplies, and monetary contributions to support and further its collections.

3. Acquisition Restrictions

No materials or objects shall be knowingly or willfully accepted which are known to have been illegally imported into or illegally collected contrary to state law, federal law, regulation, treaty and convention.

B. ACCESSION

1. Definition

For the purpose of this policy, *ACCESSION* is defined as taking permanent custody of, documenting title to, acknowledging receipt of materials and objects, and the process of

creating an immediate, brief, and permanent record of an object, assembly, or lot from the same source at the same time for which the Local History Department has custody, right or title, and assigning a unique control number to an object, assembly or lot.

2. Accession Criteria

Archival materials, collection objects, and library materials must meet all of the following tests before being accepted by any means:

- The acquisition must conform to the Department's collecting objectives as detailed above. Duplicates should not be accepted unless the item fulfills a collecting objective of the Department.
- The present owner(s) must declare in writing that he/she has clear title to the material or object(s).
- The significance of the material to the Department's collection must be determined.
- The materials or objects must, if possible, be documented as to provenance.
- No acquisition shall be encumbered by donor-imposed restrictions. All right, title and interest shall be obtained by the Niagara Falls Public Library for all acquisitions, without restrictions or limiting conditions, or shall have the potential of being converted to free and clear title under appropriate law. Any exceptions must be approved by the Library Board of Trustees.
- All acquisitions shall include full literary rights, copyrights, patents or trademarks and be free of physically hazardous attributes. Any exceptions must be approved by the Library Board of Trustees.
- All moral, legal and ethical implications of the acquisition must be considered. The Department shall refuse to accept materials and objects where there is cause to believe that the circumstances of the collection involve the destruction of historic sites, buildings, structures, habitats, districts and objects.
- If an item is to be purchased, acquisition funds must be allocated by Library Board of Trustees before the purchase is made. The Department must be in a position to properly care for the proposed acquisition. If the object is in need of a major conservation work, the Library must make a commitment to perform the necessary work. Deviations from this policy must be approved by the Library Board of Trustees and a written justification for such deviations placed in the permanent records of the Library.

3. Accession Procedures.

- Authority to acquire objects and collections for the Local History Department is delegated to the Library Director and Department Head except in cases where acquisition would require unbudgeted purchase funds, conservation expense, or the purchase of extraordinary storage or display equipment. The Library Board must first approve such acquisitions.
- No staff member or individual Trustee may obligate the Department to the acceptance of any item not consonant with the intent or spirit of the Acquisition Policy.
- Appraisals: No staff member or Trustee shall offer appraisals of the monetary value of materials or objects to donors for the purpose of establishing a fair market value of gifts

offered to the Department. Donors desiring to take an income tax deduction must obtain an independent appraisal at their cost. Staff members will not appraise or otherwise place a monetary value on objects casually brought to the Library.

- Authentication: As a public service, qualified staff members may attempt to attribute, identify, or authenticate items brought to the Department by the public. In no instance shall the Library, individual staff members, or Trustees be held liable or responsible for errors in judgement pertaining to this service. The Library will not accept temporary custody of any items brought in for such authentication.

PART IV-DEACCESSION POLICY

The Local History Department recognizes that it has a responsibility to preserve its collections so that these materials are publicly available both now and in the future. Storage, exhibition space, staff time and conservation funds are limited. Therefore, objects which do not meet the stated collections policy will not be added to the collection. Further, items which are already in the collection will be subject to evaluation in light of the best contemporary research. This process may result in the removal of particular materials, objects or group of objects from the collections in accordance with the Department's Deaccession Policy.

A. DEFINITION

DEACCESSION is the process of removing permanently from the collections specific archival materials or object(s). The deaccession process shall be cautious, deliberate, scrupulous and shall be thoroughly recorded in writing.

B. DEACCESSION CRITERIA

Materials and objects to be considered for deaccession must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- The materials or object is outside the Department's Mission Statement, and its Acquisition Policy.
- The material or object lacks physical integrity.
- The material or object has failed to retain its identity or authenticity.
- The material or object is a duplicate of another item in the collection.
- The Department is unable to preserve or store it properly.
- The material or object has deteriorated beyond usefulness, is infested beyond control of an exterminator, or poses a threat of physical harm to other objects in the collection, the staff or the public.

C. DEACCESSION PROCEDURE

1. Authority

The Department Director, or qualified designees are authorized to apply jointly or singly the above deaccession criteria, and may recommend deaccessioning material if at least one criterion for deaccession has been met. The Department Director may deaccession materials whose estimated value is \$150.00 or less on his/her own authority. For materials valued as

\$150.00 or more, the Department Director shall submit a deaccession recommendation in writing to the Library Director. The Library Director shall submit the recommendation to the Library Board of Trustees for its approval. The written recommendation for deaccessioning will specify:

- The fullest possible documentation for the material including the source and/or provenance of the item.
- A statement of the reasons for deaccessioning, citing specific criteria.
- A copy of a recent appraisal or estimated market value.
- A list of restrictions imposed by the donor, if any.
- Recommended means of disposal which may include exchange, sale (negotiated, private, public auction, sealed bid, or open bid), destruction, or transfer to another library or museum.

The Library Director will inform the Department Director in writing of the Board's decision regarding deaccession and, if approved, the suggested means of disposal.

2. Disposition

In the interest of maintaining the total body of historical resources of the region, when materials are deaccessioned from the Local History Department, the Library will give other not-for-profit collecting institutions in the area the right of first refusal.

3. Restrictions

Before any material is recommended for deaccessioning or is deaccessioned, reasonable efforts shall be made to ascertain that the Library is legally free to do so. Where restrictions are found, the following procedure shall be utilized.

- Mandatory conditions of accession will be strictly observed unless deviation from their terms is authorized by a court of competent jurisdiction.
- In the event of a question concerning intent or force of restriction, the staff shall seek advice of legal counsel.

4. Ethics of Sale

Materials and objects shall not be given, sold or otherwise transferred publicly or privately to Library employees, Trustees, or their immediate families or representatives.

5. Proceeds

All proceeds resulting from the deaccession of objects from the Local History collections shall be restricted, and shall be utilized exclusively for the acquisition and/or professional conservation of Local History collections. Expenditures for conservation treatment shall be only such expenses as meet the New York State Board of Regents standards for such expenses.

The specific expenditure of these monies for amounts up to \$500 will be recommended by the Department Director for approved by the Library Director. The Library Board shall approve all conservation expenditures above \$500.

6. Records

The Local History Department shall maintain in perpetuity all records documenting a deaccession.

PART V-INCOMING AND OUTGOING LOANS

Loans are a means of forwarding specific goals of the Local History Department. Incoming loans may enhance particular exhibits or programs. Outgoing loans may gain greater exposure for the Local History Collection and make the collection more accessible to the public. Loans are undertaken *only* for specific purposes, and *only* for specified periods of time, usually one year or less.

A. INCOMING LOANS

Incoming loans shall be accepted from individuals or institutions for purposes of exhibition or current research. The Department Director shall have the authority to authorize incoming loans. No indefinite or long-term (1 year or longer) loans shall be routinely accepted. The Library cannot bear the expense of storing and maintaining items belonging to others, or accept liability for them, unless they are required for exhibition or ongoing research. Incoming loans are governed by the following criteria:

1. Incoming Loan Criteria

- The object or material to be borrowed is to be included in a specified exhibit and illustrates a narrative objective.
- The object or material to be borrowed is for study purposes, to be used on site by either the Library staff, or a Local History Department patron.
- The object or material to be borrowed is for duplication, the duplicate to be incorporated into the Local History Department's study material. In this case, duplicate material shall be clearly identified, and the location of the original marked.
- Borrowed material on exhibit shall be credited per lender's specifications.
- The Department shall not accept any loan materials unless it can ensure that the conservation and security needs of the object are met during exhibition, while in temporary storage, or for the duration of the loan.
- The Lender must be willing to declare in writing that he or she is the legal owner or the owner's legally designated representative.
- The Lender is responsible for notifying the Department of any change in his or her address.
- Loans may be terminated early by either party on thirty days' written notice via Certified Mail.
- All loans shall receive the same care as collections belonging to the Local History Department. No cleaning, repair or alteration, including re-matting or re-mounting, will be undertaken by the Local History Department unless specifically authorized in writing by the lender. No conservation work shall be done on a borrowed item unless there is an emergency, and the item requires immediate treatment to prevent further damage

or destruction. In that event the Department Director shall make reasonable effort to obtain verbal permission before treatment is begun, and shall request a written confirmation.

- Incoming loan periods for exhibit materials shall not exceed a twelve month period, but may contain an option for renewal. Before a loan is renewed, the Department Director must render written justification for the extension of the loan period, and submit a condition report to the Library Director and lender. Materials borrowed for study use will be limited to a period of three months. Materials borrowed for duplication shall be for a period of one month.
- The Department shall not provide insurance coverage for items left on loan to the Department unless such insurance is negotiated as part of the Loan Agreement. Such coverage shall be based on appraisal figures supplied by the Lender and must be approved by the Department Director in advance of the receipt of the borrowed material or object.
- It is understood that incoming loans may be photographed for documentation and for publicity purposes unless specified in writing by the lender.
- Borrowed property shall be returned in the same or same quality materials in which it was received. The method of transportation shall be mutually agreed upon by both parties.

2. Incoming Loan Procedure

- The Department Director may request a loan for an authorized purpose from a library, museum, historical society, private individual, or corporation.
- The Department Director shall regularly in writing notify the Library Director of Trustees of all incoming loans.
- Loans must be contracted for by written agreements between the Local History Department and the lender. The Department Director shall have final approval for all incoming loans.
- The Department Director shall make a written condition report upon receiving the loan, and before returning loaned items to the lender.
- The Department Director shall be responsible for the loan transaction, including arranging for transportation and insurance, and shall maintain all records.
- The lender will immediately receive a signed Loan. It is the responsibility of the Department Director to monitor the loaned item on a scheduled basis.

B. OUTGOING LOANS

Outgoing loans shall be granted to other libraries, museums, historical societies, institutions or similar not-for-profit entities for purposes of public exhibition or programming. The Department Director shall have the authority to authorize outgoing loans. No indefinite or long-term (1 year or longer) loans shall be granted. Outgoing loans are governed by the following criteria:

1. Outgoing Loan Criteria:

- Only stable objects and archival material in good condition will be considered for loan to a library, museum, or historical society.
- Borrowing institutions must be able to provide proper care, environment, security, and insurance for loaned objects for the duration of the loan period.
- Loans shall be for exhibit, research or authorized duplication purposes only.
- No loan shall be made to private individuals or for non-public uses.
- No materials or objects may be removed from the Department's custody until a properly executed Loan Agreement form has been signed by an authorized representative of the borrowing institution and proof of insurance has been received.
- The borrowing institution must provide a certificate of insurance showing Fine Arts or Inland Marine coverage for all borrowed items. The coverage must be in effect for the duration of the loan, including transit to and from the borrowing institution and while on the Borrower's premises.
- Outgoing loan periods for exhibit materials shall not exceed a twelve month period, but will contain an option for renewal. Before a loan is renewed, the borrower must submit a written explanation for why the extension is needed, and submit a current condition report. Materials borrowed for study will be limited to a period of three (3) months. Material borrowed for duplication shall be for a period of one month.
- Any damage, breakage, or loss shall be reported immediately to the Department Director.
- No cleaning, repair, or alteration shall be done on any borrowed item without the express written permission of the Local History Department. The only exception is if, in an emergency, an item requires immediate conservation treatment to prevent further damage or complete destruction. In that event, the Borrower shall make reasonable effort to obtain verbal permission from the Department Director prior to beginning treatment. Written confirmation will be provided.
- Borrowed items placed on exhibit shall be credited "Courtesy of Niagara Falls, New York, Public Library Local History Department" in all appropriate labels and press releases./Transportation shall be by carriers qualified to handle fine arts and archival materials and shall be agreed to by both parties to the loan. Packing and transportation costs shall be borne by the Borrower.
- The borrowed items shall not be photographed or reproduced in any form without the express written permission of the Department.
- The Department reserves the right to terminate a loan on thirty days written notification by certified mail.
- Borrowed items shall not be used for any commercial purpose without specific advance approval of the Department.
- Packing for return shipping must be in the same manner and in material of the same quality as the original shipping.
- The Department reserves the right to inspect loaned items on the premises of the borrower during regular gallery hours.
- Even if the above conditions are met, loan requests may be denied if in the opinion of the Department Director the requested items are of such rarity, value, significance, or

fragility, or is important enough to ongoing needs of the Department that the loan would not be in the Department's best interest.

2. Outgoing Loan Procedure

- Written requests for the loan of any archival material or artifacts must be received at least two months prior to the proposed date of the loan. Requests shall be addressed to the Department Director.
- The Department Director shall initiate dialogue with the borrowing institution to determine if the institution will be able to meet the loan criteria.
- The Department Director shall examine the items requested and recommend in writing to the Library Director whether they are suitable for loan. The items shall be evaluated as to composition, condition, ability to withstand the stresses incurred during a loan and the needs of the Local History Department.
- The Library Director shall grant the final approval for all loans after notifying the Library Board of Trustees. The Department Director shall make a written condition report before any loan leaves the Department.
- The Department Director shall be responsible for the loan transaction including specifications for packing and transportation, and shall maintain all records.

Source: Policy adopted by NFPL Board of Trustees, 7-27-2011