

LIMERICK MUSEUM

1.6 DISPOSAL POLICY



Date Approved:

Date to be Discussed Annually:

Review Period: 5 Years

Review Date:

1.6 DISPOSAL POLICY (subject to formal approval)

Introduction

This document sets out the regulations governing the disposal of items from the collections of Limerick Museum. The policy shall be discussed internally on an annual basis and formally reviewed every five years to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, and any revision shall be submitted to Limerick City and County Council for its adoption.

General Principle

Limerick Museum hereby confirms its acceptance of the principle that its collections are held in trust for future generations, and that there is a strong presumption against the disposal of items in the Museum's collection. Limerick Museum also accepts that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in its collection. Disposal can only occur in exceptional circumstances. This policy covers the circumstances in which de-accessioning and disposal may take place and the procedures to be followed.

Definitions

De-accessioning is the formal removal of accessioned objects from the Museum's permanent collection, while remaining in the ownership of the Museum. De-accessioning should not imply that an object will be disposed of by the Museum but reflects a formal change in the recorded status of an object. This may, for example, occur if an object is transferred to the Museum's handling collections.

Disposal is the act of removal from museum ownership of an object or a collection of objects. Methods of disposal include transfer to another institution, return to the donor, or in the case of an object too badly damaged to be of use, destruction.

Criteria Governing De-accessioning and Disposal

To improve the standard of care afforded to the collections of Limerick Museum – through the deaccessioning of duplicate or un-provenanced material, considered to be of little or low relevance to the Museum's Collections Policy and Mission Statement.

To remove from the collections any item that is too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any further use to Limerick Museum.

When a museum is unable to continue to store and care for the object, to move an object to a facility better suited to its preservation and/or future use and development.

Where Limerick Museum does not hold 'legal title' to an object.

To remove from the collection any items that has been acquired by the previous owners through illegal means.

To transfer items which are more appropriate to other sections of Limerick City and County Council – including Limerick City and County Libraries and Archives.

Limerick Museum will not permit members of staff, members of our governing bodies and members of their families or close associates to acquire, by purchase or otherwise, objects that have been de-accessioned from the Museum's collections.

Authority For De-accessioning and Disposal

No museum object may be de-accessioned or disposed of without the specific authority of Limerick City and County Council. Such a decision must be the responsibility of Limerick City and County Council, acting on the advice of the Museum Curator who has delegated authority to select objects to be de-accessioned and/or disposed.

Where recommendations concerning the de-accessioning or disposal of museum objects are to be made, it is understood that there will need to be certain preliminary investigations before a report can usefully be brought before Limerick City and County Council. This may include seeking the views of donors, and contacts and other equivalent museums that may be interested in accepting transfer. Within the terms of this policy, it is understood that the Curator has authority to act in this way, without prejudice to Limerick City and County Council's eventual decisions.

De-Accessioning and Disposal of Purchases, Gifts and Bequests

Where it is the intention to de-accession and dispose of an item, which was acquired by purchase, the Curator will take all reasonable steps to discover whether the original purchase was assisted by a grant from any identifiable funding source. Where it is known or discovered that such a grant was made, the body concerned or its successors will be notified of the Museum's intentions so that any relevant conditions attached to the original may be fulfilled.

Objects donated or bequeathed will not normally be disposed of without prior consultation with the original donors or their immediate families - within the first generation - and wherever

possible their approval will be obtained to the course of action proposed. A period of one month should be allowed for a reply. This, however, is a matter of courtesy and not a legal requirement. The Museum Curator will be entitled to waive this requirement where all reasonable efforts to trace a donor have failed and additionally where no details of the donor exist.

In appropriate circumstances having taken into account the procedures set out in this policy, the Curator may recommend the return of an items to its original donor.

Procedure for De-accessioning and Disposal

Where a museum item is no longer required by the Museum and approval has been given by Limerick City and County Council to its de-accessioning/ disposal, it shall be offered first to other equivalent museums as a gift, exchange or sale.

In the first instance, the Curator shall seek to identify a specific equivalent museum with which an arrangement acceptable to both parties can be made. If this proves impossible, the intended disposal shall be made known to the museum community at large, by notifying members of the IMA. The notification must indicate the nature and number of the museum objects and the basis on which transfer would be made. A period of at least two months must be allowed between the notification and the implementation of any decision.

If more than one museum responds to this notification, care must be taken to avoid a situation where museums are competing with each other. In such cases, it will usually be appropriate for the parties concerned to be informed of each other's interest, and time allowed for open discussion before the transfer is finalised.

If, after two months, no suitable museum has declared an interest in acquiring the objects, they may be given to an appropriate organisation. Priority should be given to organisations in the public domain. This may also be done if a museum, which has previously expressed an intention to acquire the object, is unable to fulfil this undertaking within a reasonable period, normally six months. If there is no expression of interest from the public domain, Limerick Museum will attempt to offer the object(s) back to the original donor(s) or their descendants.

If the donor, their family or descendants do not declare an interest in receiving the object, Limerick Museum may consider the sale of the object as an option. In the event of a sale, any proceeds would be used to further develop the collections.

If the disposal of a museum object by all other means has proven impossible, and disposal is regarded as absolutely essential, in exceptional cases, Limerick Museum may authorise its destruction.

Disposal by Destruction

If the disposal of a museum object by all other means has proven unsuccessful and disposal is regarded as absolutely essential, Limerick City and County Council may be asked to authorise its destruction. The disposal by destruction of a museum object would only be acceptable if its retention in the collections would not be appropriate and no alternative public or private home can be found for it.

Destruction is acceptable if the material has decayed, been infested or is beyond conservation, and presents a threat to other collections. In some cases, where infestation may threaten the safety of other objects or specimens, it may be imperative to remove the infested object or specimen immediately, wherever possible placing the material in quarantine until formal approval or disposal is received. In such circumstances, the Council acting on the advice of the Curator may authorise the immediate de-accessioning and disposal by destruction of such an item. This must be carried out in a discrete, confidential and permanent fashion.

Procedure Following Disposal

Full object records including (a) the reason for de-accessioning and disposal, (b) that the object has been disposed of, (c) method of disposal and new location of object, if relevant, (d) date of disposal, (e) signature of staff responsible will be kept, along with photographs of all museum items that have been de-accessioned and disposed of from the Museum collection. The accessions register, object database and all relevant documentation must be annotated to record the disposal.

Where a museum object is transferred to another suitable museum, all associated documentation will accompany the object or follow within a period of one month. Limerick Museum will retain on file copies of documentation for future reference.