

Policy Number	MUC-COL-002	Category	Collections	Effective Date	Pending adoption
Review Cycle	Every 3 years	Supersedes		Approved by	Advisory Board and County Commission

1. Introduction

The Collections Management Policy establishes the policies, procedures, legal obligations, and ethical responsibilities of the Museum of Uintah County (MUC) regarding its collections, including the permanent collection, education collection, and support materials. It serves as a foundational governance document guiding all collecting activities, collections care, public access, and collections-related legal obligations.

MUC's collections are held in the public trust. This policy exists to hold the museum accountable for the future growth, development, preservation, and public access to those collections.

The Museum of Uintah County preserves, collects, and promotes the heritage of the Uinta Basin region from the time of the first peoples forward by presenting an educational museum experience to the community and its visitors, connecting the past, present, and future to the world around us.

2. Vision Statement

The Museum of Uintah County is an educational institution that curates and preserves a collection of historical objects from the time of the first people to the present. It offers an enjoyable family experience that chronicles the activities of the people of the Uinta Basin, teaching visitors about the values of a diverse and dynamic populace. The museum engages the community and promotes cultural heritage programs through tours, workshops, art shows, and exhibitions.

3. Scope of Collection

- 3.1. Acquisition priority shall be given to historic materials relating to the Uinta Basin region, including Uintah, Duchesne, and Daggett Counties in Utah, and Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties in Colorado. Acquisitions must be relevant to the history of the Uinta Basin, spanning prehistory to the present, and shall be appropriate for research, comparison, and exhibition.

MUC's collections comprise three parts:

3.2. Permanent Collection

- 3.2.1. Objects possessing significant historic value and relevance to MUC's mission. Objects are used for exhibition, research, loans to other institutions, and select programming.

3.3. Education Collection

- 3.3.1. Objects that may not meet permanent collection requirements but maintain educational value. Includes duplicates, objects rejected from the permanent collection, donated or purchased items specifically acquired for education, and reproductions. Items may be transferred from the permanent collection with the Museum Manager's approval. These objects are touchable with varying levels of supervision.

3.4. Support Collection / Materials

- 3.4.1. Objects that are not actual artifacts, but duplicates, reproductions, or new examples acquired or made to enhance programs. These are actively used in education or promotional activities and may be modified or disposed of at the Museum Manager's discretion.

4. Collecting Scope

4.1. Key Themes

- 4.1.1. Indigenous Peoples of the Uinta Basin
- 4.1.2. Pioneer Settlement and Early Contact
- 4.1.3. Frontier Life: Outlaws, Lawmen, and Local Legends
- 4.1.4. Industry and Economic Growth
- 4.1.5. Community

4.2. Physical Items Collected

- 4.2.1. Three-dimensional objects relevant to Uinta Basin history

4.3. Items Not Collected

- 4.3.1. Geological or paleontological objects, and Native American artifacts that violate NAGPRA laws for all requirements related to Native American materials.
- 4.3.2. MUC does not actively collect archival materials (photographs, papers, books, or digital assets). These materials are referred to, respectively, as the Uintah County Regional History Center (RHC) — which maintains specialized storage and access infrastructure for photographs, oral histories, audiovisual recordings, and born-digital materials. Natural history and paleontological specimens are to be

referred to the Utah Field House of Natural History, the designated federal repository for natural history collections.

- 4.3.3. MUC maintains a collaborative relationship with the RHC and may hold copies of digital materials for interpretive or exhibition purposes.

5. Acquisitions

5.1. Acquisition Methods

- 5.1.1. MUC shall acquire objects by gift, bequest, transfer, or purchase. All acquisitions must be relevant to the collecting scope defined in Section 5.

5.2. Acquisition Criteria

- 5.2.1. An object must meet all of the following criteria before being acquired by the MUC:

- 5.2.1.1. The acquisition conforms to MUC's collecting scope and mission
- 5.2.1.2. The present owner declares in writing that they hold a clear legal title
- 5.2.1.3. No staff member, board member, or volunteer knows or has reason to believe, or suspects that the donor illegally obtained the object
- 5.2.1.4. The acquisition is free from donor-imposed restrictions, except in rare instances approved in writing by the Museum Manager, Museum Curator, and Advisory Board
- 5.2.1.5. Ethical implications of the acquisition have been considered, including provenance, cultural sensitivity, and legal compliance
- 5.2.1.6. MUC has the physical space and resources to care for the object properly
- 5.2.1.7. For objects from archaeological or Native American sites, all NAGPRA requirements and applicable federal and state laws have been satisfied

5.3. Acquisitions Committee

An Acquisitions Committee consisting of the Museum Manager and relevant curatorial or program staff shall review all proposed additions to the permanent collection. The Committee shall determine within 14 business days. If an object is declined, the donor shall be notified in writing within 5 business days, with the reason stated. Donors have 30 days to retrieve declined objects; objects not retrieved after 30 days are considered abandoned property and may be disposed of in accordance with Utah's Abandoned Property Law.

5.4. Documentation

- 5.4.1. Every accession or loan shall be fully recorded in MUC's collection-management software.
- 5.4.2. Records shall include: name and address of donor/seller; manner of acquisition (gift, loan, purchase, transfer, exchange); detailed description; provenance; historical information; photographs; and condition at time of acquisition
- 5.4.3. A signed deed of gift document shall be obtained for all permanent acquisitions
- 5.4.4. No staff member shall appraise donated objects; staff may provide a list of qualified independent appraisers
- 5.4.5. Gifts shall be acknowledged in writing within 30 days

6. Deaccessioning

6.1. When Deaccessioning is Appropriate

- 6.1.1. Deaccessioning is the formal process of permanently removing an object from MUC's collection. It is a serious action that requires careful deliberation. Deaccessioning may be appropriate only if ONE of the following criteria is met:
 - 6.1.1.1. The object is no longer relevant to MUC's mission and collecting scope
 - 6.1.1.2. The object has deteriorated beyond functional or research value and cannot be properly preserved
 - 6.1.1.3. The object is a duplicate and not of significant independent importance
 - 6.1.1.4. The object poses a hazard to human health
 - 6.1.1.5. After careful research, the object is found to be inappropriate for MUC's collection in terms of origin, provenance, or quality.
 - 6.1.1.6. The object is subject to repatriation under NAGPRA or other applicable law
- 6.1.2. Objects accepted with specific or implied conditions may be deaccessioned only if subsequent research establishes that the origin, provenance, or quality differs materially from what was believed at acceptance.

6.2. Approval Process

- 6.2.1. The Museum Manager recommends deaccessioning to the Acquisitions Committee, with full written documentation: the object record, the reason, a recent appraisal (if applicable), and the proposed disposal method.
- 6.2.2. All objects are required to be approved by the Advisory Board.
- 6.2.3. Objects valued over \$1,000 are approved by the Uintah County Commission.

- 6.2.4. Deaccessioned objects may not be acquired by any staff member, volunteer, or board member unless offered at public sale or auction open to the general public on equal terms.

6.3. Disposal Methods

- 6.3.1. In priority order, MUC shall pursue disposal through:

- 6.3.1.1. Transfer to another museum or educational institution where the object will remain in the public trust
- 6.3.1.2. Public auction or sale
- 6.3.1.3. Donation to a suitable organization

- 6.3.2. Destruction — only as a last resort for objects with no further value and no suitable recipient

6.4. Donor Notification

As a courtesy, if a donor whose gift is being deaccessioned is still living, MUC shall make a reasonable effort to notify them before completing the deaccession. MUC is not legally required to seek donor approval for deaccessioning unrestricted gifts.

6.5. Use of Deaccession Proceeds

Any proceeds received from deaccessioning shall be handled strictly in accordance with MUC's Deaccession Proceeds Policy (MUC-FIN-006). Proceeds may be used only for new acquisitions or direct care of collections. They shall never be used for general operating expenses, salaries, or building costs.

7. Loans

7.1. Incoming Loans

- 7.1.1. MUC accepts objects on loan for specific educational, exhibition, research, or programming purposes. The following conditions apply:

- 7.1.1.1. All incoming loans require a signed Loan Agreement before the object arrives
- 7.1.1.2. Loans are accepted for periods not exceeding one year; renewals may be granted annually
- 7.1.1.3. Objects on loan shall receive the same care as the permanent collection
- 7.1.1.4. No alterations, conservation treatment, or modification of loaned objects may be performed without the written consent of the owner

7.1.1.5. If a loaned object is offered for donation, it must undergo formal accessioning procedures

7.1.2. *See Section 13 (Unclaimed Loans) for procedures applicable when a lender cannot be located or fails to reclaim objects.*

7.2. Outgoing Loans

7.2.1. MUC lends objects from the permanent collection to institutions for educational and exhibition purposes consistent with MUC's mission. The following conditions apply:

7.2.1.1. All outgoing loans require a signed Loan Agreement; the borrower must demonstrate adequate care, security, and insurance

7.2.1.2. Sub-loans are not permitted

7.2.1.3. The borrowing institution is responsible for all packing, shipping, and insurance costs unless otherwise specified

7.2.1.4. The borrower assumes full responsibility for any loss or damage to loaned objects

7.2.1.5. Exhibition labels must credit MUC as: "Museum of Uintah County, Vernal, Utah."

7.2.2. Loans may be granted for up to one year and reviewed annually

8. Collections Management

8.1. Records

MUC shall maintain permanent records of all acquisitions, inventory, conservation, deaccession, loan, and correspondence relating to the permanent collection. Physical records are stored off-site. Digital records are managed in collection-management software. Records include object-level documentation, provenance research, condition reports, and location tracking. All collection records are considered permanent. Research access records are maintained under Section 11.11.

8.2. Inventory

MUC shall conduct a systematic physical inventory of the permanent collection on a regular cycle, with priority given to objects in storage. Inventory discrepancies shall be investigated and documented. Any object that cannot be located after reasonable investigation shall be documented as missing and reported to the Museum Manager.

9. Conservation

9.1. Preventive Conservation

9.1.1. Preventive conservation is MUC's first line of defense against deterioration. All staff and volunteers who handle collection objects shall be trained in basic handling practices before doing so. As much as reasonably possible, key preventative standards include:

- 9.1.1.1. Maintain stable temperature and relative humidity in exhibition spaces and collections storage; avoid extreme fluctuations
- 9.1.1.2. Use appropriate lighting (low UV) in exhibitions and storage areas
- 9.1.1.3. Implement a regular housekeeping schedule for exhibit space, storage, and work areas
- 9.1.1.4. Handle all objects with clean hands or appropriate gloves; use pencils, not pens, near collections
- 9.1.1.5. Transport objects on padded carts; never stack objects
- 9.1.1.6. Complete condition reports for all objects at accession and update at least each time an object is moved or handled, or as needed
- 9.1.1.7. Use archival-quality storage materials, including acid-free boxes, shelving, tissue, and mounts

9.2. Conservation Treatment

Major conservation work shall be performed by contracted conservators selected for their specialty, professional standing, and adherence to the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC). Conservation proposals require written authorization from the Museum Manager. All conservation activities shall be fully documented before, during, and after treatment.

9.3. Pest Management

MUC follows an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach. Pest activity in collections or storage areas shall be reported immediately to the Museum Manager. Mitigation efforts should begin as soon as possible. Pesticide applications in or near collections storage shall be conducted only by a pest management professional experienced in museum collections.

10. Research Access

10.1. Purpose and Commitment

- 10.1.1. The Museum of Uintah County holds its collections for public use and to advance knowledge of the Uinta Basin region. Making those collections accessible to researchers, educators, students, and community members is a core component of MUC's mission, not an administrative afterthought. This section establishes how

MUC provides access to its collections, balancing openness to researchers with the responsibility to protect the physical integrity of objects in its care.

10.1.2. This section applies to all requests for access to MUC's permanent collection, stored collections, and collections documentation records for purposes of study, research, or education.

10.1.3. *Access to NAGPRA-covered collections (Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony) is governed by additional requirements in the NAGPRA Compliance Policy (MUC-COL-001) and may require tribal consultation and consent before access is granted.*

10.2. Who May Access the Collection

10.2.1. MUC welcomes research access requests from:

10.2.1.1. Academic researchers (faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students)

10.2.1.2. Professional researchers in history, archaeology, anthropology, art history, and related fields

10.2.1.3. Museum professionals at other institutions

10.2.1.4. Journalists and documentarians working on projects of public educational value

10.2.1.5. Community members researching family, local, or regional history

10.2.1.6. Students at any level with appropriate adult supervision

10.2.2. MUC does not provide access for purposes that would damage, endanger, or compromise the collections; violate donor restrictions or privacy requirements; or be incompatible with MUC's mission.

10.3. Types of Access

10.3.1. **Study Access:** Examination of objects in a supervised study space at MUC. Available by appointment only and subject to staff availability.

10.3.2. **Collections Database Access:** Review of MUC's collections records in collection-management software. Basic collection information (object description, accession number, general provenance) may be shared with researchers. Restricted records (NAGPRA records, donor contact information, and certain provenance research) are not publicly accessible.

10.3.3. **Photography and Reproduction:** Photography of collection objects for research, publication, or educational use. Subject to the additional requirements in Section 11.7.

- 10.3.4. **Sampling and Analysis:** Scientific analysis of collection objects requiring physical sampling (e.g., carbon dating, materials analysis), which requires a higher level of review and approval due to its potentially destructive nature (see Section 11.6).

10.4. **Application Process**

- 10.4.1. Request for Research Access: All requests for research access must be submitted to the Museum Manager via the Museum's Request for Research Access Form, available from the Museum. The form shall include:
- 10.4.1.1. Researcher's full name, institutional affiliation (if applicable), and contact information
 - 10.4.1.2. A description of the research project or purpose
 - 10.4.1.3. A list of specific objects or collection areas the researcher wishes to access (or a description of the scope)
 - 10.4.1.4. The proposed research dates and the number of visits are estimated
 - 10.4.1.5. Any photography or reproduction needs
 - 10.4.1.6. For academic researchers: a letter of support or supervisor contact information
- 10.4.2. Review and Decision
- 10.4.2.1. The Museum Manager shall review all access requests and respond within 10 business days
 - 10.4.2.2. Access may be approved, conditionally approved (with modifications to scope or conditions), or denied
 - 10.4.2.3. Denial of access shall be communicated in writing, accompanied by an explanation. Denial is appropriate when: the object's condition makes access inadvisable; the purpose is inconsistent with MUC's mission; the visit cannot be adequately supervised; or there are donor, NAGPRA, or other legal restrictions on access
 - 10.4.2.4. Researchers with questions about a denial may request reconsideration from the Museum Manager

10.5. **Conditions of Access**

- 10.5.1. All researchers granted access shall agree in writing to the following conditions before the visit:
- 10.5.1.1. The researcher shall follow all handling instructions provided by MUC staff. Objects shall not be handled without permission; staff shall demonstrate handling procedures

- 10.5.1.2. No food, drink, or smoking is permitted in any area where collection objects are present
- 10.5.1.3. Only pencils may be used for note-taking while working directly with objects
- 10.5.1.4. Objects shall not be moved, stacked, or rearranged without staff instruction
- 10.5.1.5. All accession tags shall remain affixed to objects — do not remove any identification
- 10.5.1.6. The researcher shall not conduct any testing, cleaning, or treatment of objects without written authorization (see Section 11.6)
- 10.5.1.7. The researcher shall report any observed damage, instability, or condition concern to the supervising staff member immediately
- 10.5.1.8. Photography is subject to the permissions granted in the access approval — see Section 10.7
- 10.5.1.9. Access shall be limited to the objects and scope approved in the research request
- 10.5.1.10. All researchers shall sign in and out of MUC's visitor research log

10.6. Destructive or Invasive Analysis

- 10.6.1. Any research involving physical sampling, material removal, or potentially irreversible analysis of a collection object requires a separate written proposal and the following approvals:
 - 10.6.1.1. Detailed description of the proposed analysis method, the amount of material required, and whether the analysis is reversible
 - 10.6.1.2. Written recommendation from the Museum Manager and Collections Curator that the scientific value justifies the potential loss
 - 10.6.1.3. Written approval from the Advisory Board
 - 10.6.1.4. For objects with Indigenous cultural affiliation: prior consultation with and consent from affiliated tribal nations
- 10.6.2. MUC may deny requests for destructive analysis if the scientific value does not justify the risk to the object or if tribal consultation indicates that the analysis is culturally inappropriate.

10.7. Photography and Reproduction

- 10.7.1. Research Photography

10.7.1.1. Researchers may photograph objects for personal research use (not for publication) with Museum Manager approval. Research photography is subject to:

10.7.1.2. No flash photography — natural light or museum-provided lighting only

10.7.1.3. No photography of NAGPRA-covered objects without prior tribal consultation and consent

10.7.1.4. No photography of objects with donor-imposed photography restrictions

10.7.1.5. MUC retains all intellectual property rights in its collections; researcher photography for personal use does not convey any publication rights

10.7.2. Publication and Commercial Use:

Researchers who wish to publish images of MUC collection objects — in print, online, in films, or in any other medium — must complete MUC's Image Reproduction Request and obtain written permission before publishing. Publication permissions are granted on a case-by-case basis and may require payment of a reproduction fee. MUC shall acknowledge researchers' publications, and the researcher will notify MUC when its collections are cited in the researcher's work.

10.7.3. Restricted Photography

10.7.3.1. Photography shall not be permitted for objects where:

10.7.3.1.1. Affiliated tribal nations have indicated that photographs should not be made or shared

10.7.3.1.2. The donor has requested that no photographs be taken or published

10.7.3.1.3. The object is on an incoming loan, and the lender has restricted photography

10.8. **Citation Requirements**

10.8.1. Researchers who publish work based on MUC collections are asked (and, for professional researchers, expected) to:

10.8.1.1. Cite MUC correctly in all publications: "Museum of Uintah County, Vernal, Utah, [accession number]."

10.8.1.2. Provide MUC with a copy or citation of any published work using MUC collections. Citations help MUC track how its collections contribute to scholarship and are also used in grant reporting.

10.9. **Group and Educational Visits**

Schools, student groups, and community groups may request supervised access to portions of the collection for educational purposes. Group research visits require advance scheduling and at least one adult supervisor per eight students. Group visits are designed by MUC staff in coordination with the group leader.

10.10. NAGPRA and Sensitive Collections Access

Access to collections containing NAGPRA-covered materials is subject to additional requirements, including potential tribal consultation and consent before access. Researchers requesting access to collections with potential Indigenous cultural affiliation shall be notified at the time of application that additional review may be required.

10.11. Recordkeeping

The Museum Manager shall maintain a log of all research access visits, including the researcher's name, date, objects accessed, and any conditions or restrictions. Research access records shall be retained in accordance with the Utah General Retention schedule.

11. Found-in-Collection Objects

11.1. Purpose

11.1.1.A "found in collection" (FIC) object is a physical object in MUC's possession that lacks accession documentation, cannot be linked to an existing accession record, or has been discovered in storage or display without accompanying ownership documentation. FIC objects present a special challenge: MUC cannot exercise full control over objects whose legal ownership is uncertain, and their ambiguous status can create both legal and ethical risks.

11.1.2.This section establishes procedures for identifying, documenting, and resolving the status of found-in-collection objects, consistent with MUC's obligations under Utah's Preserve Our Heritage Act (Utah Code § 9-8-801 et seq.) and professional museum standards.

11.2. Definition

11.2.1.An object is treated as a found-in-collection item when:

11.2.1.1. It is physically present in MUC's facilities but has no corresponding accession or loan record, and no donor information. It bears a number that cannot be matched to any existing accession record despite thorough research.

11.2.1.2. It was previously recorded as a loan, but the lender could not be identified or located despite reasonable research.

11.2.2. Objects that are clearly education collection items, support collection materials, or exhibit props — which are documented as non-accessioned — are not FIC objects.

11.3. Identification and Initial Documentation

11.3.1. Reporting

11.3.1.1. Any staff member or volunteer who encounters an object that appears to lack documentation shall report it to the Collections Curator immediately. Objects shall not be moved, used, loaned, or disposed of until their FIC status is formally evaluated.

11.3.2. Preliminary Record

11.3.2.1. The Collections Curator shall create a preliminary FIC record in collection-management software documenting: physical description; current location within MUC; condition; any markings, labels, or numbers on the object; circumstances of discovery; and the date the object was identified as FIC.

11.3.3. Physical Control

11.3.3.1. FIC objects shall be physically stabilized and stored pending resolution of their status. They shall be segregated from accessioned objects and clearly labeled with an FIC tag to avoid confusion. FIC objects shall receive care appropriate to their condition, regardless of their unresolved ownership status.

11.4. Research and Investigation

11.4.1. Research Steps

11.4.1.1. The Museum Manager and Collections Curator shall conduct a systematic investigation to determine the origin and ownership of each FIC object, including:

11.4.1.1.1. Search all collection-management software records (accession records, loan records, education collection records) for any matching entry

11.4.1.1.2. Search physical accession files, historic ledgers, paper records, and any other collections documentation available

11.4.1.1.3. Review correspondence files, donor files, and any other records that might document the object's origin

11.4.1.1.4. Consult with long-tenured staff, volunteers, or board members who may have institutional memory of the object

11.4.1.1.5. Review photographs of past exhibits or storage areas for visual evidence

- 11.4.1.1.6. If the object bears physical marks or numbers, research whether those correspond to a known collection or institution

11.4.2. Research Timeframe

- 11.4.2.1. Initial research should be completed within 60 days of FIC identification. The Collections Curator shall document all research steps taken and their outcomes, regardless of whether the research is conclusive.

11.5. Resolution Pathways

11.5.1. Match Found — Object Linked to Existing Record

- 11.5.1.1. If research links the FIC object to an existing accession or loan record, the collection-management software record shall be corrected, and a notation added explaining the reconciliation. No further FIC process is required.

11.5.2. Match Found — Object Identified as Loan with Known Lender

- 11.5.2.1. If the object is identified as an unclaimed loan with a known lender, MUC shall contact the lender and proceed in accordance with the Unclaimed Loans procedures in Section 13.

11.5.3. No Match Found — Object Meets Collecting Scope

- 11.5.3.1. If no ownership documentation can be found and the object meets MUC's collecting scope:

- 11.5.3.1.1. The Museum Manager shall initiate the title perfection process under Utah Code § 9-8-805 (Collecting institutions - Perfecting title - Notice)

- 11.5.3.1.2. MUC shall send notice by registered mail to the last-known owner, if known

- 11.5.3.1.3. If the owner is unknown or mail is returned, MUC shall publish notice for two weeks in a Uintah County newspaper as a Class A notice (Utah Code § 63G-30-102) and as required by § 45-1-101

- 11.5.3.1.4. If no valid claim is made within 90 days of publication, the object becomes the property of MUC under § 9-8-805(3) and may be formally accessioned

- 11.5.3.1.5. MUC shall document the complete notice process and retain records permanently

11.5.4. No Match Found — Object Does Not Meet Collecting Scope

- 11.5.4.1. If no ownership documentation is found and the object does not fall within MUC's collecting scope, MUC shall follow the same Preserve Our Heritage Act notice process. After the title is perfected, the object shall be

deaccessioned and disposed of following the deaccession procedures in Section 7.

11.5.5.NAGPRA-Eligible FIC Objects

- 11.5.5.1. If a FIC object may be Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony, MUC shall initiate the NAGPRA inventory and consultation process immediately. Such objects shall not be formally accessioned or deaccessioned through the FIC process; NAGPRA procedures take precedence.

11.6. Claims by Outside Parties

- 11.6.1.If a person or institution claims ownership of a FIC object before MUC has completed the title perfection process, the Museum Manager shall:

- 11.6.1.1. Document the claim in writing, including the claimant's contact information and the basis for the claim
- 11.6.1.2. Refer the matter to the LAM Director and, if necessary, Uintah County legal counsel
- 11.6.1.3. Do not transfer the object to the claimant without documented verification of title per Utah Code § 9-8-806
- 11.6.1.4. Note that under § 9-8-803, there is a rebuttable presumption that repositied materials held by a collecting institution are its property; the burden of proof is on the claimant

11.7. Documentation and Recordkeeping

All FIC objects and their resolution shall be permanently documented. The FIC record shall include: initial discovery documentation; all research steps and their outcomes; the resolution pathway taken; copies of any notices published or mailed; and the final disposition. Accession records for objects added through the FIC process shall note that they were found in the collection and their resolution pathway.

11.8. Proactive Collection Review

MUC shall conduct periodic systematic reviews of collection storage to identify any FIC objects that have not yet been documented. The Museum Manager shall report annually to the Advisory Board on the number of open FIC cases, the number of cases resolved during the year, and any significant findings from the FIC process.

12.Unclaimed Loans

12.1. Purpose

- 12.1.1. Unclaimed loans — objects in MUC's possession on loan from a private lender who can no longer be located, who has failed to reclaim objects at the end

of a loan period, or who has died without their heirs claiming the property — create significant legal and practical challenges for collections management. These objects occupy storage space, cannot be loaned or deaccessioned, and carry ongoing care obligations without clear authority over their future.

12.1.2. This section establishes MUC's procedures for managing unclaimed loans and perfecting title to abandoned loan objects pursuant to Utah's Preserve Our Heritage Act (Utah Code § 9-8-801 et seq.). All procedures in this section shall be conducted in compliance with current Utah law; MUC shall consult Uintah County legal counsel if legal questions arise.

12.1.3. *Utah Code § 9-8-804 provides that repositied materials not accompanied by a transfer of title are considered a gift to the collecting institution when more than 25 years have passed since the last written contact between the depositor and the institution. For loans initiated before this provision took effect, the 25-year clock runs from the date of the last written contact.*

12.2. Prevention: Loan Agreement Standards

12.2.1. The best way to avoid problems with unclaimed loans is rigorous loan administration from the start. All new incoming loans shall comply with Section 8 (Loans) and shall include:

12.2.1.1. A signed written loan agreement specifying: lender's full name, address, and alternate contact; specific objects on loan; loan purpose and term (maximum one year); provisions for annual renewal; and a clear statement that objects not claimed within 30 days of loan expiration will be treated as abandoned per MUC's policy

12.2.1.2. Contact information for a designated heir or successor contact who should be notified if MUC cannot reach the lender

12.2.1.3. Annual written review of all outstanding loans; lenders shall be contacted in writing at each annual renewal point to confirm continuation or arrange return

12.2.1.4. Documentation that lenders have been informed of Utah Code § 9-8-804 and its implications

12.3. Identifying Unclaimed Loans

12.3.1. Systematic Review

12.3.1.1. The Collections Curator shall review all outstanding loan records at least annually to identify:

12.3.1.1.1. Loans that have expired without renewal and lenders who have not responded to contact attempts

12.3.1.1.2. Loans for which MUC has lost contact with the lender

12.3.1.1.3. Loans in storage for an extended period with no documented lender contact

12.3.1.1.4. Objects in MUC's possession that are identified through research as probable loans rather than donated objects

12.3.2. Documentation of Contact Attempts

12.3.2.1. Before treating a loan as unclaimed, MUC must make diligent and documented good-faith efforts to contact the lender:

12.3.2.1.1. Attempt contact by phone and email using the most recent contact information on file

12.3.2.1.2. Send a certified letter to the lender's last-known address, requesting a response within 60 days

12.3.2.1.3. If no response, attempt to locate updated contact information through public records, directory searches, or contact with known associates

12.3.2.1.4. Document all contact attempts, dates, methods used, and outcomes.

12.4. Utah Preserve Our Heritage Act Process for Unclaimed Loans

12.4.1. Once MUC has made diligent documented contact attempts without success, and a loan has been outstanding for more than the loan term with no contact, MUC may initiate the title perfection process under Utah Code § 9-8-805:

12.4.1.1. Notice Process

12.4.1.1.1. If the lender's last known address is available, send notice by registered mail to that address. The notice must include: lender's name and last-known address; a description of the loaned objects; MUC's name and contact person; and a statement that if the objects are not claimed within 90 days of the mailing date, they may be considered abandoned

12.4.1.1.2. If the mailed notice is returned without a forwarding address, the lender's address is unknown, or no response is received within 90 days of mailing, publish a Class A notice for two weeks in the Uintah County newspaper, as required by Utah Code § 63G-30-102 and § 45-1-101

12.4.1.1.3. If no person claims the objects within 90 days after publication, the objects are considered abandoned and become MUC's property under Utah Code § 9-8-805(3)

12.4.2. Post-Notice Procedures

12.4.2.1. Following successful title perfection, the Collections Curator shall formally accession any objects that meet MUC's collecting scope, noting their

loan history and the § 9-8-805 process in the collection-management software record

12.4.2.2. Objects that do not meet MUC's collecting scope shall be deaccessioned and disposed of following Section 7 (Deaccessioning)

12.4.2.3. Complete documentation of the notice process shall be retained permanently

12.5. Claims Following Notice

12.5.1. If a valid claimant comes forward during the 90-day notice period, the Museum Manager shall:

12.5.1.1. Document the claim in writing

12.5.1.2. Verify the claimant's right to the objects under Utah Code § 9-8-806 (requiring demonstration of all right, title, and interest)

12.5.1.3. If the claim is valid, arrange the return of the objects with a signed release and final condition report

12.5.1.4. If the claim is disputed or unclear, refer to Uintah County legal counsel before releasing any objects

12.6. The 25-Year Gift Provision

Under Utah Code § 9-8-804 (as amended in 2025), any repositied materials not accompanied by a transfer of title become a gift to MUC when more than 25 years have passed since the last written contact between the depositor and MUC, without any claim action being brought. MUC may use this provision as an alternative to the § 9-8-805 notice process for loans with very long histories of no contact. This provision should be applied with care and with legal counsel review for high-value or sensitive objects.

12.7. NAGPRA Objects

If an unclaimed loan object may be Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony covered by NAGPRA. NAGPRA procedures take precedence over this section; MUC shall not accession or deaccession NAGPRA-covered unclaimed loan objects through this section's process.

12.8. Recordkeeping

All unclaimed loan records shall be maintained permanently, including: original loan agreement; all contact attempt documentation; copies of notices mailed and published; claimant information (if any); resolution documentation; and final accession or deaccession record.

13. NAGPRA

All activities involving Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony are governed by NAGPRA, which is incorporated by reference and takes precedence over any conflicting provision in this policy.

14. Review and Adoption

This policy shall be reviewed every three years by the Advisory Board following a review of the strategic plan. The Advisory Board shall approve changes. The LAM Director is responsible for initiating the review process and for ensuring staff and volunteers are informed of any revisions. At each review, the LAM Director shall also verify the currency of Utah Code § 9-8-801 et seq. (Preserve Our Heritage Act) and update Section 13 accordingly.

15. Related Policies and Legal References

15.1. Legal References

- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), 25 U.S.C. § 3001 et seq., and 43 C.F.R. Part 10 (as amended January 2024)
- Utah Code § 9-8-801 et seq. — Preserve Our Heritage Act (as amended through 2025)
- Utah Code § 9-8-804 — 25-year gift provision for repositied materials
- Utah Code § 9-8-805 — Title perfection for found/unclaimed objects
- Utah Code § 9-8-806 — Claims process
- Utah Code § 63G-30-102 — Class A notice publication requirements
- Utah Code § 45-1-101 — Newspaper notice requirements
- American Alliance of Museums (AAM) Standards and Best Practices
- American Alliance of Museums Code of Ethics for Museums
- American Institute for Conservation (AIC) Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice

Chair, Historic Preservation and Museum Advisory Board <i>[Signature]</i> 7/6/26 Signature / Date	LAM Director, Uintah County <i>[Signature]</i> 7/6/2026 Signature / Date
Commissioner, Uintah County <i>[Signature]</i> 7/21/2026 Signature / Date	