

**Museum Collection Policy**



DISTRICT COUNCIL  
Te Kaunihera ā-Rohe  
o Te Tihi o Maru

**Approved by:**

Community Development Committee

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**1.0 Policy**

This policy provides guidance on what will be collected by the Museum and the procedures for acquisition, deaccessioning and loans.

**2.0 Background**

The South Canterbury Museum exists to benefit the people of our region and our visitors. It does this through carrying out the recognised functions of a heritage museum, delivering a public service and providing an important civic space for learning, enjoyment and participation. The provision of a museum service enables the Timaru District Council to meet a number of identified community outcomes, and generally contributes to the well-being of local communities.

The Museum was established in 1941 following the bequest of land by T.D. Burnett and the establishment of the South Canterbury Historical Society. The Society was responsible for developing the collections, with support from the Timaru City Council. In 1988 a deed was signed transferring ownership of the collections from the Society to the Council, with the Museum becoming a fully-funded unit of Council. The collections have continued to develop, primarily through direct donation, bequest or gift. Ownership of and responsibility for the collections is vested in the Timaru District Council.

The South Canterbury Museum holds irreplaceable collections of local heritage items that illustrate our region’s natural and human heritage. These collections are a unique resource that enables the Museum to research, exhibit and otherwise make available information and material that builds understanding of where we are and who we are.

The collections are central to everything that the Museum does and the services that it provides our region. In order to fulfil its mission, the Museum must continue to collect relevant material to build and maintain its heritage collections so that they remain a key resource that can be used for research, education, understanding and enjoyment.

**2.1 South Canterbury Museum Strategic Direction**

The Museum’s current and future activities are guided by its **Vision, Mission** and **Focus**.

**Vision**

*We enable people to explore our heritage: nature, history, culture.*

## **Mission**

**To preserve heritage:** The Museum builds and cares for well-organised collections of objects, images and information that relate to our focus. These collections are made available for research, exhibition, education and public programmes.

**To present heritage:** The Museum provides a facility and programmes for people to explore our heritage. This is done through exhibitions, formal education programmes, public programmes, publication, research access, collaborative ventures and other means.

**To promote heritage:** The Museum provides a focal point for local heritage, and collaborates with other organisations, groups and individuals that share similar goals. The Museum provides resources for promoting our region's heritage locally and further afield.

## **Focus**

The Museum has a geographical focus on the natural and human heritage of the South Canterbury region – from the Rangitata River in the north to the Waitaki River in the south, and from the sea to the Southern Alps. This provides a focus for the over-arching themes of *land, life and people*: the nature, history and culture of South Canterbury.

## **2.2 South Canterbury Museum Collections: Scope and Significance**

### **Role of collections at the South Canterbury Museum**

The Museum's collections are central to all that the Museum does. The items provide the raw materials for research, exhibition, education and understanding. The Museum's collections have been built up since the early 1940s, primarily through donations and bequests.

### **Overview of the main collections and objectives for future development**

The collections contain a wide variety of material that reflects our region's natural and cultural heritage. Collections include objects and specimens, archives, photographs and library materials. Much of this material is of great historic importance to the region, and thus to New Zealand as a whole.

**Natural history** This collection contains local geological specimens, land and marine invertebrates, remains of moa and other extinct creatures, and mounted specimens of New Zealand birds, including some now rare or extinct. In addition, the Museum contains the Edward Sealy collection of minerals, birds' eggs and butterflies from around the world, and the Bennett Marine Life Collection with a large amount of material from local sites, around New Zealand and from overseas. The Museum is actively acquiring and documenting local natural history material for use in exhibition, education programmes and research. Local material is periodically examined by visiting researchers and along with material from elsewhere is widely used in displays and education programmes.

**Future development:** The Museum will collect voucher specimens that document the natural history of South Canterbury, and specimens from elsewhere that complement our understanding of our region's natural history or contribute to the Museum's exhibition and education programmes.

### **Māori history**

The Museum's collection of local Māori artefacts consists mainly of bone and stone items recovered from several local archaeological excavations, as well as a few items donated or deposited in the Museum by local families. Some local Māori textile material is also in the collections. There are a small number of items from elsewhere in New Zealand. Some material is linked to local figures or families of historic importance, such as Te Maihāroa, a religious teacher and land rights activist in the 1870s. The collection provides an important regional component to an overall picture of South Island Māori history and culture. The collection is of great interest to local Māori who have taken a stronger interest in the storage and display of this material in recent years.

**Future development:** The Museum will collect taoka/artefacts that aid understanding of local Māori life and history, or that contribute to the Museum's exhibition and education programmes.

### **Social history**

The Museum contains a large and important collection of social history artefacts. This includes items from early European settlement, collections of late nineteenth and early twentieth century costume, domestic and personal artefacts, industrial and workplace artefacts, photographs and archival collections. These collections are a rich resource for the Museum's exhibition and educational programmes. Women's costume is particularly well represented and provides a focus for further development and specialisation. There are also a large number of "fine" domestic artefacts such as porcelain items. The Museum has begun to systematically collect objects and information from more recent times before useful material becomes more difficult to obtain. A number of individual items are likely to be of high monetary value or wider historic significance regionally or nationally.

**Future development:** The Museum will collect objects that reflect the social history and everyday life people in South Canterbury up to recent times. Emphasis is placed upon acquiring material that is representative of everyday local life, or has local provenance or significance.

### **Documentary history**

The documentary history collections include over 26,000 local photographic catalogue records representing several hundred thousand individual items, and a larger collection of photographic negatives, an important library of local publications, and a large and ever-expanding collection of archival material, including maps, plans, organisational and community records. The collections also include a growing number of information sources, either transcribed or in electronic form, which provide an important research tool for Museum staff and visitors.

**Future development:** The Museum will collect documentary history items and digital files that record all aspects of local heritage and provide resources for the Museum's exhibitions and programmes.

### **Documenting and housing the collections**

Information about the collections is stored on computer database, using PastPerfect Museum software. At present the database contains over 75,000 catalogue records, many with digital images attached. The collection records are a significant resource with staff and volunteers augmenting and updating records by adding images, associated information, detailed descriptions and condition and location data. The database allows the Museum to link objects to donors, manage exhibitions and carry out research.

The majority of social history and documentary history items have been catalogued over the last thirty years. Continuing effort has been put into improving catalogue records and adding digital images of items to their records. A significant proportion of natural history items have now been catalogued to specimen level.

The Museum's collection database is a major resource and is backed up daily with backups being stored both on the Museum premises and offsite at the Timaru District Council office. Access to the collection information is now facilitated through the Collections Online module that provides online access to over 25,000 collection records through the Museum's web pages.

### **3.0 Key Definitions**

- **Item** - any specimen, artefact, document or other item that is added to the Museum's collections. This includes photographs, books, digital files and other media, artworks, specimens from nature and man-made artefacts.
- **Acquisition** – any item or group of items received by appropriate means by the Museum for addition to the collections
- **Accession** – The process whereby an acquired item is added to the collection. The accessioned item may be part of a larger group of items from a single acquisition.
- **Deaccession** – the selection, approval and disposal of items from the collections.
- **Catalogue Record** – a database record for an item or collection of items. Usually only one discrete item, but can sometimes represent some hundreds of discrete items.
- **Voucher Specimen** – a natural history specimen or series of specimens that are collected from specific sites of interest or significance and held in a collection for further study.

### **4.0 Collection Policy**

#### **4.1 Museum Collection Subcommittee**

- 4.1.1** The Museum Collection Subcommittee has overall responsibility for acquisitions and deaccessions in accordance with this policy.
- 4.1.2** The Subcommittee comprises an equal number of South Canterbury Historical Society members and Timaru District Councillors, including a Councillor as Chairperson. The Museum Director advises the Subcommittee but has no voting power at Subcommittee meetings.

**4.1.3** The responsibilities of the Subcommittee are as follows:

1. To ensure items accepted into the Museum's collections reflect the criteria stated in the Museum Collection Policy.
2. To evaluate items recommended for deaccession by the Museum Director, vote for either retention or deaccession of such items and approve appropriate disposal methods for deaccessioned objects.
3. The Subcommittee may delegate to the Museum Director the administration of accessioning items into the collections where such items are within the scope of this policy.
4. The Subcommittee meets on an 'as-needed' basis.

## **4.2 Acquisitions**

### **4.2.1 Acquisition Criteria**

Items must meet all of the following criteria before being accepted by the Museum:

1. The present owner must have a clear title or ownership of the items being acquired.
2. All items offered to the Museum must be without any restrictions unless expressly agreed and documented by the Museum and the donor.
3. Copyright of material collected must pass to the Museum unless expressly agreed and documented by the Museum and the donor.
4. All Museum acquisitions must meet all ethical and legal requirements of the Museums Aotearoa Code of Ethics and New Zealand and International law.
5. Items offered or collected must belong to or be complementary to the Museum's areas of interest and activities.
6. No items are to be accepted that would constitute an unpreventable threat to human life, safety or the preservation of other items in the collection.

### **4.2.2 Acquisition Procedures**

- 1 The Museum acquires items for its collection through donations, field collection or purchase.
- 2 All items donated to the Museum will be considered as unconditional gifts and become the property of the Museum. Such items must be documented on an appropriate acquisition form that the donor and a Museum staff member shall sign.
- 3 Material shall only be obtained on loan by the Museum for the following reasons:
  - Use in temporary exhibitions or programmes with a fixed period agreed to by both Museum and lending party. Any items accepted for loan shall be recorded, along with the loan period on a Loan Agreement form signed by the lender and the Museum Director.
  - For temporary study, identification, copying for a purpose approved by the Museum Director.
  - The temporary housing of items on behalf of the Crown under the Protected Objects Act (1975).

- For long-term deposition in the Museum's collections where the Museum Director and Museum Collection Subcommittee are satisfied that there is a demonstrable benefit to the Museum, its users and the people of the Timaru District in housing the loaned material. Any loan will be subject to conditions outlined in an agreement to be signed by the Museum Director and the loaning party.
- 4 All items acquired by the Museum will be documented using appropriate forms and recorded on the Museum's collection management system as soon as practicable.

#### **4.2.3 Constraints on acquisition**

1. The Museum can refuse to accept items for which it cannot adequately care for, make reasonable use of or which do not fit within the acquisition criteria.
2. All gifts to the Museum must be documented on a Certificate of Gift with signature of donor or their authorised agent.
3. Any large collection offered to the Museum will be assessed for its significance to the Museum's collection areas, programmes and activities, the significance of the collector or associated entity, and for the Museum's capacity to house and care for the items offered. The Museum will not be obliged to accept all items in a collection offered, but will assess and retain only those items that meet the acquisition criteria.

#### **4.2.4 Acquisition of Māori artefacts**

The South Canterbury Museum recognises the mana whenua of local iwi in the rohe (district) of South Canterbury, and represented by Te Runanaga o Arowhenua and Te Runanga o Waihao.

When new acquisitions that relate to Māori history and culture and are not covered by the Protected Objects Act are received, the Museum will contact the appropriate Marae office and arrange for a representative to visit the Museum to review the items and carry out a formal welcome and blessing before they are accessioned by the Museum. Museum staff will also discuss any protocols and issues regarding storage, handling and future use of the items with the representative.

#### **4.3 Deaccessions**

It is recognised that the Museum's collections may contain material that has no local heritage value, or that will be of no foreseeable use to the Museum in any way. While there is a reluctance to remove items, the Museum cannot retain material that does not contribute to its mission and benefit those who the Museum serves. Museum staff may from time to time identify and recommend specific items for deaccession from the Museum's collections.

#### **4.3.1 Deaccession Criteria**

Items must meet one of the following criteria to be considered for deaccession:

1. Be outside of the Museum's area of interest and unlikely to ever be of use in programmes and activities.
2. Not be in an exhibitable condition and unworthy of conservation or so badly deteriorated so as to not merit inclusion as objects of study.
3. Be a duplication of or inferior to related objects already in the collection.
4. Items that have been stolen or were considered irretrievably lost from the collection

In all cases the heritage significance of the object must be considered before deaccession is recommended.

#### **4.3.2 Deaccession Procedure**

- 1 The Museum Director will present the Museum Collection Subcommittee with a report detailing items to be considered for deaccession and the reasons for the deaccession of each item. If feasible, the Subcommittee shall examine the objects concerned.
- 2 Items approved for deaccession by the Subcommittee shall be marked as deaccessioned on their record on the Museum's collection management database. Any entries in earlier accessions files or books shall be marked as deaccessioned.
- 3 Items that have been deaccessioned from the collection shall first be offered back to the donor, or in the case of the donor's absence or death, to their family or personal representative if they can be located in a reasonable time. Where the South Canterbury Historical Society was the donor, such objects shall be offered back to the Society.
- 4 Items removed from the collection and not repatriated with the donor or their family or personal representative shall be disposed of in such a way that is considered appropriate by the Museum Director and the Museum Collection Subcommittee.
- 5 Where possible preference should be given to giving deaccessioned items to other public Museums, through exchange or gift.
- 6 No deaccessioned item can be obtained by any person or their family in any way associated with the Museum except by the return of documented donations or through public auction.

#### **4.4 Loans from the Museum's collections**

Some items held by the Museum may be loaned to individuals and organisations for study or display purposes. All loans must meet the following criteria:

1. The Museum Director is satisfied that all items loaned will meet standards of care required by the Museum. This includes handling, duration, environmental conditions, security and insurance if applicable.
2. The purpose of the loan is regarded as appropriate by the Museum Director.

3. The Museum Director is satisfied as to the suitability of the party requesting a loan to meet all requirements in a responsible manner.
4. All loans must be documented and recorded on the Museum's collection management system. This will include full details of loaning party, dates of loan and all conditions that must be met.
5. The Museum reserves the right to refuse any loan if it so chooses, or to end a loan prior to the agreed date. This decision will be the responsibility of the Museum Director.

## 5.0 Delegations, References and Revision History

**5.1 Delegations** - Identify here any delegations related to the policy for it to be operative or required as a result of the policy

**5.2 Related Documents** - Include here reference to any documents related to the policy (e.g. operating guidelines, procedures)

**5.3 Revision History** – Summary of the development and review of the policy

### 5.1 Delegations

Delegation	Delegations Register Reference
Museum Director – accept or decline Museum donations and other delegations as listed in the policy. Museum Curators - accept or decline Museum donations and other delegations as listed in the policy, with agreement of and direct reporting to Museum Director	#1240539

### 5.2 References

Title	Document Reference
Original Museum Collection policy adopted Council meeting 25/9/01	#962090 p 246

### 5.3 Revision History

Revision #	Policy Owner	Date Approved	Approval by	Date of next Review	Document Reference
1	Museum Director	14 June 2016	Community Development Committee	June 2018	#998903 (this document)
2	Museum Director	29 January 2019	Community Development Committee	January 2022	#1161435 (report to committee)