



Collections Management Policy

Imperial Valley Desert Museum
Ocotillo, California
Imperial County



IMPERIAL VALLEY DESERT MUSEUM
COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Approved by IVDM Board of Directors
as part Core Documents Program on January 9, 2019

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INTRODUCTION

Local residents and visitors are touched by the ancient Imperial Valley landscape, as people have been for thousands of years. Continually, Imperial County residents cross and re-cross into Baja California, people from San Diego engage in desert recreation activities, and farmers till the fertile Colorado River soil. The Imperial Valley Desert Museum (IVDM) cares for artifacts, documents, and photographs that tell the natural and cultural story of our deserts.

These collections are held in trust for the public. The Museum cares for these collections under the standards and guidelines established by this Collections Management Policy. The intent of the Collections Management Policy is to ensure that the Museum fulfills its obligations to protect, manage, preserve, interpret, and provide access to the Museum collections.

The Museum fulfills its mission as an entity of the Imperial Valley Desert Museum Society, Inc. (IVDMS), a non-profit organization established to promote, expand, and maintain the Museum.

History: Legal Status, Bylaws, and Capabilities.

The Imperial Valley Desert Museum Society, Inc. was established as a corporation in the state of California by Articles of Incorporation dated January 18, 1974, with the expressed purpose to “work toward the maintenance, promotion, and expansion of the Imperial Valley Desert Museum.”

The corporation was recognized to be exempt from Federal Income tax in September 1974 as described in Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). The current Bylaws of the corporation are dated Revised May 17, 1994, with latest Additional Revisions dated September 6, 2012. On March 11, 1987, Congressional Act H.R. 990 transferred 22.98 acres of federal land to the Imperial Valley College Barker Museum for the “purpose of constructing and maintaining a public museum.”

On October 13, 1992, the Society entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Imperial Valley College to “construct a museum building and appurtenant structures for work and display purposes on said property.” On April 24, 2008, the Society received a Certificate of Occupancy on the construction of a new Museum facility. The Society entered into a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Imperial Valley College on October 20, 2010 with the expressed purpose of the “successful operation of the Museum and Property.” This partnership was renewed for an additional five-year period on May 24, 2018, through an amended Memorandum of Understanding.

MISSION AND LEGAL STATUS

By Memorandum of Understanding between the Imperial Community College District (College) and the Imperial Valley Desert Museum Society, Inc. (Society), 2010, the Society became the steward of the archaeological collection previously held by the College. The Society agrees to curate all of the Imperial Valley College's cultural material currently stored at the Museum and further, the Society agrees to comply with appropriate Museum level curation standards, as set out by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), in the curation of these items.

The Imperial Valley Desert Museum (Museum) is the facility constructed at 11 Frontage Road, Ocotillo, California by the Society with the expressed responsibility to curate, store, preserve, and interpret the collections housed at the Museum.

Mission Statement - July 5, 2011

The Imperial Valley Desert Museum preserves, interprets, and celebrates the desert through outstanding collections, research, and educational programs.

Society's Objectives:

1. To promote the maintenance and expansion of the Imperial Valley Desert Museum and Visitor Information Center.
2. To promote the public's interest in archaeology and the Museum.
3. To ensure the retention of Imperial Valley artifacts within the local of the Imperial Valley, for the public benefit of the people of the Imperial Valley
4. To promote the prevention of vandalism, pilfering of artifacts, and profiteering in any form from sites of archaeological importance.
5. To promote research pertaining to Human Adaptation to Arid Lands and to publish and make available the results of such research activities.

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

CATEGORIES OF COLLECTIONS

The Museum will pursue and acquire collections pursuant to its mission of interpreting the history and culture of the Imperial Valley and region.

Permanent Collection

Items that are highly relevant to the mission of the Museum and are to be retained and cared for at the highest level.

Education Collection

This comprises items that may be duplicates of items in the Permanent Collection, items that have no provenance, or are of little relevance to the Museum's mission, but are needed for programming or hands-on educational activities. Due to the nature of their use, it is not expected that these items will be retained permanently and they may be destroyed through continued use.

Comparative Collection

Associated items consisting mainly of archaeological collections that are from areas outside of the Imperial Valley and region. These pieces may also be accessioned as Permanent.

Federally-Owned Collections

The Museum actively works with Cultural Resource Management collections in its care. In the case of collections recovered by federal agencies, or collections removed from federally-owned property, the ownership of these collections remains with the federal government. The collections will receive the same benefits and care as artifacts, objects, or materials in the Permanent Collection.

SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS

The Museum collections represent, in order of priority, Imperial County Native American Archeological sites, the Imperial Valley Desert (geology), Regional Native American Archaeological sites, and other collections given to the College.

The Society has been advocating for Imperial Valley archaeology for over 35 years. The new Imperial Valley Desert Museum is a direct result of the Society's efforts to raise awareness of the declining condition of Native American archaeological sites. Change in our desert environment is inevitable, but it is the goal of the Museum to preserve those aspects we are able to and celebrate and remember those we cannot. Effectively preserving cultural knowledge through detailed documentation of all objects and archaeological sites, whether through oral histories, written stories, or other accompanying data, drives the future collecting of the Museum. As one community member stated "without the story, it's just a rock".

SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS

I. Archaeological Collections

In the 1950's, there were approximately 1,000 documented archeology sites in Imperial County. Today there are over 10,000. The Museum's founder, Dr. Jay von Werlhof, among others, led efforts to document these sites and, as a result, approximately 80% of the current Museum collections reflect the cultures that inhabited the Yuman Basin. Roughly 30% of this work was completed through the Imperial Valley College's Archaeological Program, which was dissolved in 1992. Of the Museum's 5,400ft³ collection, 30% date from Archaic periods (early Holocene period 10,000 - 1,000 years ago) and 50% reflects the late Holocene period, with a concentration in the Yuman II cultural phase from 800 - 1580 A.D. These prehistoric artifacts reflect what is collectively known as the Yuman culture and include the Kumeyaay, San Dieguito, Kwaaymii, Queshan and Cahuilla cultures.

The Museum's collection includes a significant compilation of 214 whole and/or almost complete ceramic vessels, called ollas by early Spanish settlers. Twenty of these vessels from the turn of the 19th century are painted, which is extremely rare in this region. Not limited to ceramics, the Archaeology Collection includes over 9,000 flaked stone items including a wide variety of tools, along with grinding and other food processing items.

The Archaeology Collections, together with the Archives Collection, reflect the Museum's philosophy of promoting a sense of pride of place and the interconnectedness of people, past and present, in Imperial County. The primary role of these collections is to support the Museum's mission to "preserve, interpret and celebrate the desert." Following this intellectual framework, future acquisitions should continue to highlight the cultural groups of the Imperial County. Acquisition priorities will emphasize the cultural history of the region for educational purposes, exhibition, and advanced study and research purposes. These cultural objects should be well documented and contextualized.

- a. The Museum will be the repository for Imperial County ollas. These items were crucial to survival in the desert and were of interest to early collectors. Visitors interested in the Museum's collections often have in their personal possession ollas that were collected in the mid 1900's, or know of someone who does. The Museum's vision is to become the go-to organization for private donors interested in sharing this dispersed cultural heritage.
- b. Collections relating to the Imperial Valley archaeological sites will be opportunistically acquired under the guidelines specified in this Collections Management Policy.

II. Archives Collection

The Archives Collection documents regional archeological work and includes aerial photographs of geoglyphs, or large-scale earth drawings similar to the Nasca lines of Peru. The photographs and other documents account for 10% of the overall collection and date from the 1960s–1980s. The aerial photographs document archeology sites in various state of condition, as off-roading became a more popular pastime. Also in the archive collection are 400 minutes of tape of oral history interviews with Tom Lucas, the last Kwaaymii member to learn English as a second language.

- a. Jay von Werlhof worked closely with experts in the area in documenting local archaeological sites. These documents are described in a 1986 collection description:

The Museum has collected...musical tapes of aboriginal songs and oral history...[that] helps protect over forty-five earthen art [geoglyph] sites within Imperial County and has a complete set of records and over five thousand photographs of the three hundred known earth art sites in the North American deserts.

There was an early assumption that the items listed in the description were already in the collections. The 2012 Inventory Project revealed that these records are not in the Museum collections. It has become clear that the knowledge of the County's archeological heritage resides in the hands of a few individuals.

III. **Historical Collections**

Ten percent of the collections reflect historic items collected on archeology sites or donated to the Museum. Although not committed toward historic-period collections, the Museum does have treasured historic trade items from 1901–1945, such as Phoenix buttons and other evidence of early and late pioneers. An outstanding historic-period collection is the 763 glass negatives that document local natural features, archeology methods, urban environments, and mining operations from 1920–1950.

- a. The Museum will also collect items that help tell the history of Native American archaeological sites since European contact in the 1700's. In the 1800's, the desert was full of evidence of its residents. During the 1930's professional archaeologists and private collectors began documenting and collecting items for educational, analytical, and private uses. These practices continue today and affect the cultural heritage of our area, as well as the experience of visitors to our desert.
- b. The landscape of Imperial County is changing. Wind turbines and solar panels will change the face of our desert. The Museum will respond by meeting the new expectations of Museum visitors and promoting the appreciation and preservation of our natural resources.

IV. Education Collections

The Museum maintains an educational collection of hands-on educational materials in both kit form and as individual items. These items are used as part of both internal and external Museum programming and most items may be borrowed by local educators. Items may be duplicates of items in the Permanent Collection, have no recorded or identified provenance, or be of little relevance to the Society's mission, but are needed for programming or hands-on educational activities. Due to the nature of their use, it is not expected that these items will be retained permanently, and they may be destroyed through continued use.

a. Archaeological education items

These items are non-provenanced items that can safely be handled over the long term or purchased items or donated items that represent similar items in the collections, but are intended for educational use.

b. Earth Science education items

From the ancient ocean to Lake Cahuilla to our desert today, the Imperial Valley region exhibits the effects of dynamic geologic processes. Currently, items that represent these great movements are designated under the educational collections and are not accessioned into the permanent collections. They may be used for education or exhibit use.

V. Comparative Collections

Artifacts and records are maintained for comparison to document cultural and natural changes throughout the Southwest.

ACQUISITIONS AND ACCESSIONS

Curatorial Committee

The Curatorial Committee shall be a standing committee of the Society. The committee shall consist of the Museum Director, the Head Curator, and a minimum of one Board Member. All findings and decisions shall be reported through the Director to the Board of Directors.

Means of Acquisition

The Museum may add to its collections in a number of ways, but typically artifacts, objects, and materials may be acquired by excavation, field collection, transfer from another institution, transfer from a governmental body, donation, bequest, copy with permission of the owner, exchange, purchase, abandonment, or any other method which transfers title to the Museum from any institution, individual, government agency, or corporate body.

The Museum serves as a repository for Cultural Resource Management collections from the region and will actively take and hold collections under the Museum's Curatorial Procedures and Curatorial Agreement.

Acquisitions (accessioned or non-accessioned) by gift or bequest must be recommended by the Head Curator and approved by the Museum Director. When items are acquired, they will be placed into one of three collections: the Permanent Collection, the Education Collection, or the Comparative Collection (see Collections Categories).

Exchange

Exchange shall be conducted with non-profit organizations with similar educational missions by the Head Curator with prior written approval by the Museum Director.

Purchases

Purchases of collection items (accessioned and non-accessioned) up to \$500 may be made by a Museum staff person and/or a Curatorial Committee member with prior approval of the Museum Director. A purchase of collection items, between \$500 and the annual budget allocation, may be made by a Museum staff person and/or a Curatorial Committee member under the authorization from the Museum Director with the prior approval of a majority vote by the Curatorial Committee. Any purchase exceeding the annual budget allocation shall require a majority vote of the Board of Directors.

Non-Purchased Acquisitions

Non-purchased acquisitions will be accepted by the Head Curator with pre-approval from the Museum Director. Curatorial Committee pre-approval will be required for any non-purchased acquisitions with any of the following:

- a. An object value over \$1000;
- b. A volume over 5 cubic feet;
- c. A single accession exceeding 100 items;
- d. Questionable authenticity;
- e. Questionable conservation condition;
- f. Or uncertainty as to whether the item falls within the “Scope of Collection.”

Unrestricted gifts are preferred. Restricted gifts may not be accepted without written justification and approval from the Board of Directors. Restricted gifts should be rare.

Intake

All old documents, artifacts, and materials coming into the Museum must undergo freezing or an equivalent and appropriate preventative pest control measure. Items should be placed in sealed plastic Ziploc bags and stored in the freezer. After 3 days bags should be placed in IVDM Room 115 to thaw for 3 days, then be returned to the freezer for another 3 days, and then taken out to thaw for a final 3 days before being processed into archives or collections.

Accessioning

Accessioning is the formal process used to transfer ownership of artifacts, objects, and material into the Permanent Collection of the Museum, or in the case of federally-owned collections, it is the process of recording artifacts, objects, and material into the Permanent Collection of the Museum. Materials acquired for the Education Collection are not accessioned into the Permanent Collection.

Accessioning of artifacts, objects, or materials will be completed according to the Museum's Collections Management Plan, Curatorial Procedures, and Curatorial Agreement. These documents will be reviewed and updated as necessary to keep the Museum current with acceptable methods and standards.

Before an acquisition is accessioned the following issues must be considered:

- a. Interpretive value and exhibit potential;
- b. Rarity or typicality;
- c. Duplication in collection;
- d. Provenance

Adequate provenance must be accepted by the Head Curator. If adequate provenance is not established, the object may be accepted with a written indication of the element(s) in question.

- e. Object's condition;
- f. Museum's ability to store and maintain;
- g. Clear title must be established and able to be transferred;
- h. Donation conditions.

LOANS

Incoming Loans and Deposits

Occasionally, in order to present temporary exhibits or for other purposes, the Museum may accept the loan of a collection from another Museum, institution, individual, government agency, or corporate body. As such, these artifacts, objects, or materials will not be accessioned by the Museum. The loans, however, will receive the same benefits and care as artifacts, objects, or materials in the Permanent Collection. No alterations, such as cleaning or conservation work, will be conducted without written consent from the owner.

The Museum Director has the sole authority to approve loans. The Museum retains the right to determine when, if, and, for how long objects borrowed will be exhibited. The Museum retains the right to cancel the loan upon reasonable notice to the lender

Permanent loans will not be accepted. Long-term loans will not be accepted from individuals. Long-term loans, without specific termination dates, will not be accepted from an institution with similar mission without written justification from the Head Curator and approval from the Board of Directors.

All loans and deposits are to be covered by written loan agreements and are to be based on mutually agreed terms, including a specified period of time and renewal options. All loans and deposits will be recorded in accordance with accepted Museum standards.

It is the responsibility of the lender or his agent, to notify the Museum of any changes in ownership of the objects, or if there is a change of identity or address of the lender. The Museum assumes no responsibility to search for the lender who cannot be reached at the address of record. If the Museum's efforts to return objects within a reasonable period following the termination of the loan are unsuccessful, then the objects will be maintained at the lender's risk and expense for a maximum of two years. If after two years the objects have not been claimed, then the lender/owner shall be deemed to have

made the objects an unrestricted gift to the Museum.

Upon termination of a loan, the lender is on notice that a return or renewal will be affected or else a gift of the objects will be inferred. Objects will be returned only to the lender of record. In case of uncertainty, the Museum reserves the right to require the lender/claimant to establish title by proof satisfactory to the Museum. (See also Unclaimed Loans.)

Outgoing Loans

With the approval of the Board, the Museum may lend collections artifacts, objects, or materials for specific exhibition or study. The Museum may lend items to other institutions and organizations which will use the loan for educational or scholarly purposes and which meet the Museum's requirements for care and safety of the loaned objects. The borrowing organization must provide adequate care for the loaned objects to prevent loss, damage, and deterioration. Outgoing loans are not to be provided to individuals or for-profit organizations. Loans may be arranged for conservation treatment or study purposes.

All loans are to be covered by written loan agreements, fully insured by the borrowing party with a copy of the certificate of insurance, and will have a specified loan period. All loans will be reviewed annually. Under special circumstances the Board may waive the insurance requirement.

Federally-owned collections are subject to the established federal procedures for short-term and long-term outgoing loans. At the request of and with the signed approval of the designated authority, the Museum may generate and process loans on behalf of the designated authority.

The Museum Director has the sole authority to approve and re-call loans. The Museum Director will seek the advice of the Curatorial Committee and Board of Directors on all outstanding loans.

No loaned object may be altered, cleaned, or repaired without written permission from the Museum Director.

Loan periods are restricted to a maximum of two years. Depending on the conditions listed below, shorter loan periods may be preferred. After review and with special justification from the Head Curator, the Museum Director may approve a renewal. No more than two renewals may be issued. Requests for more than two additional renewals will not be honored without justification by the Head Curator and approval by the Board of Directors. Special circumstances for renewal would include if the artifact was integral to the exhibit, an active educational program, or research.

Permanent outgoing loans will not be considered.

Before an outgoing loan is permitted the following considerations should be reviewed:

- a. Intended use,
- b. Condition of the object and potential deterioration on the object due to proposed use,
- c. Duration,
- d. Facilities' physical plant,
- e. Security,
- f. Level of professional handling,
- g. Insurance coverage by recipient,
- h. Transportation,
- i. Museum's need during proposed loan period.

Loans are subject to recall upon reasonable written request and will be subject to immediate recall in event that any of the Museum's conditions of the loan are not fulfilled.

Objects borrowed from the Museum must be insured when off premises, in transit, and while in custody of the borrowing institution. These artifacts may be insured under the borrower's policy if the Museum Director approves the borrower's insurance. Prior to shipment the borrower must show proof of insurance coverage or agree in writing to reimburse the Museum for insurance coverage. The Museum will provide the most recent appraisal value of objects requested for loan. If an appraised value is not available, the Museum will provide a documented value generally defined as "fair market value."

Property which belongs to others, but is in the custody of the Museum, such as federally owned collections, will not be lent without the owner's written permission.

Staff may remove objects from the Educational Collection off premises for educational purposes such as the "History on the Go" program, a lecture or other special program with the approval of the Museum Director.

Unclaimed Loans

Securing clear title to any of the Museum's permanent collections is imperative. In California, certain statutes allow a Museum to legally accession items left in their care. In Civil Code Section 1. Title 4, Sections 1899-1899.11, it states that a Museum may assume ownership of any unclaimed loans left in their possession after a period of seven years (1899b). If the Museum cannot establish a title to a collection or individual artifact when the initial inventory process had been completed, the Museum will execute a silent taking process.

Initially a notice is placed in the local newspaper listing collection details, origin (if known), donor or lender (if known) of the intent of the Museum to accession the collection or artifacts into the permanent collection. This must be published once a week

for three successive weeks (1899.2a). If the original owner or lender is known, then notice will be sent to them as well.

TEMPORARY CUSTODY

The Museum may also accept the loan or deposit of an artifact, object, or material on a temporary basis – not to exceed 90 days – for such purposes as: informal identification, examination, potential acquisition, exhibition, or loan.

POLICY REGARDING HUMAN REMAINS AND CULTURAL ITEMS

It is the policy of the Museum to assure the respectful and dignified treatment of human remains and cultural items found within the collections, and to show consideration to the living descendants of those deceased. The Museum recognizes that individuals and communities have cultural and religious concerns that must be considered when determining the treatment and disposition of these objects in the collections, and to this end recognizes the right of all native peoples, including non-federally recognized tribes, to make inquiries about possible cultural relationships to the human remains and cultural items in the collections, to visit the collections, and to study them under normal Museum procedures.

The Museum, in accordance with Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) will seek to implement the requirements regarding treatment and disposition of Native American remains and cultural items to lineal descendants, Native American tribes and Native American organizations such as the Kumeyaay Cultural Repatriation Committee, under specified conditions, in accordance with federal and state law. Associated items will be identified and documented. Those in federally-owned collections will not be addressed by the Museum. This is the responsibility of the federal body concerned.

If evidence is sufficient to establish cultural affiliation under NAGPRA, in conjunction with the Native American tribal liaison, final determinations for disposition, including de-accession and repatriation of human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony will be made expeditiously. If the remains and/or cultural items cannot be identified with a particular lineal descendant or federally-recognized Indian tribe or organization, they are to be classed as culturally unidentifiable.

Cultural items covered by this policy shall normally remain accessible for research by qualified investigators, subject to the Director's approval. However, once a repatriation request has been granted and is pending, the cultural items covered by the request shall be no longer accessible, unless expressly permitted by the tribal authority that has been granted jurisdiction over the materials, subject to federal exceptions. In any instance where the cultural affiliation has been established, but the affiliated tribe has chosen not to request repatriation, that tribe may request that the remains or cultural items be made inaccessible for teaching or research purposes. This decision shall be final, subject to federal exceptions.

DE-ACCESSION AND DISPOSAL

De-accessioning is the process where an artifact, object, or material is permanently removed from the collection. In order for an accessioned artifact to be de-accessioned, justification must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- a. The object falls outside the scope of the mission statement or the “Scope of Collections.”
- b. The object has been missing (lost or stolen) for longer than two years.
- c. The object is inappropriately duplicative or deemed to be surplus.
- d. The Museum can no longer properly take care of or preserve the object according to American Association of Museums or American Institute of Conservation standards.
- e. The object has deteriorated beyond usefulness or its ability to be conserved.
- f. The object lacks physical integrity or has an unreliable provenance.

Justification for the disposal of non-accessioned collections is the same as the criteria for de-accessioning.

****No federally-owned collection may be de-accessioned by this policy unless requested or required by the federal agency.***

De-accessioning and Disposal Approval

The Curatorial Committee, through the Museum Director, will recommend artifacts for de-accessioning to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will approve de-accessioning and the method of disposal.

Non-accessioned objects from the Educational, Comparative or Archive Collections do not require de-accessioning. Disposal of objects from the Educational, Comparative or Archival Collections shall be approved by the Museum Director after staff consultation.

Method of Disposal

Disposal for de-accessioned and non-accessioned objects will be conducted in one of the following methods listed in priority order:

1. Exchange: Provided that the value of the object received is comparable with the value of the object disposed of, or provided that the object received fulfills a particular need in the collection or educational programs, and that the exchange is with other non-profit organization with a similar mission. The Museum will not trade or exchange with individuals.
2. Donation to another similar educational organization: Preference will be given to placing de-accessioned artifacts with other museums, cultural, historical or educational institutions.
3. Sale through public auction in accordance with ethical standards of the American Alliance of Museums.
4. Transfer to the Educational Collection;
5. Destruction when the object is so worn or infested that display is appropriate and educational potential is minimal.

If the value of the artifact does not make it a candidate for singular and immediate sale or trade, at the discretion of the Museum Director, it may be held until a quantity of such objects can be accrued for sale or trade collectively.

The Museum will not sell donations made to the Museum within three years of the date of the donation.

Neither de-accessioned nor non-accessioned objects may be traded or given to Museum staff, volunteers, members, Directors or their representatives. No person associated with the Museum or his/her representative may directly or indirectly acquire any Museum collection object (see Code of Ethics).

Abandoned property (e.g. unclaimed loans) under consideration for de-accession will be dealt with as dictated by California statutes.

Use of Funds

Funds raised by the sale of Museum objects will be placed into a specially designated account. These funds are restricted to acquisitions of collections or conservation of specific pieces in the collections.

Documentation

To de-accession or dispose of an item, clear and unrestricted title must be held by the Museum, or court authority must be sought to permit further action. Proper documentation of de-accessioned items must be kept and retained as part of the Museum's collections record.

Notifying Original Owner

Although the original donor no longer holds any legal control over objects in the Museum's collection, the Museum reserves the right to notify the donor or heirs when an artifact is de-accessioned within seven years of the donation.

COLLECTIONS CARE

Artifacts, objects, and materials under the Museum's stewardship will be cared for in a professional and sound manner according to accepted Museum standards. They will be properly stored in a climate-controlled environment and will be actively supported and protected using archival supplies. When on display, the safety and preservation of collections artifacts and objects will be of primary concern.

Exhibits will be designed so that collections artifacts and objects will be protected and secure. Artifacts and objects from the Permanent Collection will be placed in Museum quality display cases or in exhibits specifically designed to be secure from theft or damage.

Whether on display or in storage, collections will be continually monitored so that they remain in stable condition.

When needed and when specific expertise is not available by the staff, the advice and service of trained curators and/or conservators, either in the role of volunteers or as a paid consultant as funds allow, will be sought and implemented.

General Curatorial Standards

1. Each acquisition entering the Museum will be properly documented. This process includes both the completion of a paper acquisition record and its immediate digitization in the Museum's electronic archival database (PastPerfect).
2. Collections will be stabilized for long-term preservation and housed in a proper storage environment. These environments will be in keeping with AAM storage standards, and subject to regular monitoring – via active and passive tools and procedures – to ensure their compliance.
3. Each individual collection element will be put in its specific place within a collection-specific organizational format.

4. The collections will be regularly inventoried and monitored. An annual review will be conducted of one of the five collection types stewarded by the Museum (Archaeological, Archives, Historical, Education, and Comparative). The annual review will operate on a revolving basis, providing for a completed review of all Museum collections every five years.
5. The collections storage area will be regularly monitored. Observation and fulfillment of environmental and pest control standards will be performed through a combination of weekly on-site examination and preventative electronic monitoring.
6. All activities related to monitoring the collection will be documented.

Region-Specific Curatorial Standards

1. The Museum will recognize the dangers unique to its geographic setting (e.g. seismic activity, high temperatures), and will take preventative care to ensure the safety of its collections.
2. Location-specific policies regarding Relative Humidity (RH) standards will be implemented in deference to the difference between non-desert and desert environments in nationally-accepted RH standards.

Cleaning

No alterations to collections materials, such as cleaning or conservation work, will be conducted without written consent from the owner. Cleaning of the exhibit and storage space will be limited to the use of a static and chemical-free microfiber cloth, and **ONLY** following consultation and approval by the Head Curator or Executive Director. No other cleaners or tools will be used in proximity to the collections. A conservation specialist may be employed in the case of delicate or imperiled artifacts.

Documentation and Recording Practices

All items acquired and retained by the Museum will be documented with both a written paper record and a digital one in the Museum's archival database (PastPerfect).

In the case of material culture, this documentation is inclusive to the current state of preservation of the item, its physical dimensions and attributes, evidence of previous wear, repair, and/or storage, and any diagnostic qualities (including but not limited to fabric coloration or composition, ware group, material construction, fabrication marks, culture or cultural period, and applied decoration). With respect to recording measurements, the Museum adheres to Metric system standards, specifically cm and g.

In the case of archival materials, documentation will include both digitally scanning or photographing the original, as well as transcribing its contents in a word processor.

The Museum will photodocument or scan all acquired items, applying sound methodology in compliance with AAM standards throughout. In the case of material culture, all photographs will include a visible set of scales. As many photos will be taken as might prove necessary to properly document all diagnostic and physical features of an item. These records may be referenced, as needed, to later assess any changes in the condition of an item within the collection.

Any accompanying documentation must be retained and associated with the item, with the details of that documentation present in both the paper and digital records.

Upon documentation, all items will be provided a physical tag or label. **This marker is to be kept with the item at all times.** It provides a direct correspondence between the item and its respective record. Reference guides on applying inventory numbers directly onto collection materials may be found here:

1. [Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences, *A Simple Guide to Labelling Museum Objects*](#)
2. [National Parks Service, *Museum Handbook \(2000\)*](#)

Facilities and Utilities

The Museum will provide a stable climate for its collections via isolated relative humidity and temperature systems and monitors.

Currently, the Museum employs a MCG 8 climate control unit for its display cases. LED lighting is utilized within display boxes across the exhibit space in order to restrict UV exposure of collection materials. HOBO ZW-003 data nodes are strategically placed throughout the collections storage area to observe and report any changes or trends in its temperature and relative humidity on a weekly basis. Independent HVAC systems monitor both the lab and exhibit spaces. The data for each system will be collected, printed, and stored on a weekly basis, with the machines thereafter reset.

Among the storage areas, temperature and humidity will be controlled and kept at an average level of between 72-77° F and 40-50% RH. Daily fluctuations within this range should not exceed 5 degrees for temperature and 10% for RH; variations beyond this point will require immediate review and, if necessary, resolution. Seasonal fluctuations, based on a 2012 review of the IVDM, should not exceed 15%; variations beyond this point will require an immediate review and, if necessary, resolution.

Smoke detectors and fire extinguisher systems will be maintained throughout the museum space. The former will be checked on a weekly basis as part of environmental and pest control monitoring efforts.

Storage

The Museum will adhere to AAM standards in the care and storage of its collections. Metal shelving will be used throughout the collections storage areas, with small and medium-sized items stored in acid-proof boxes. Proper support and padding will be provided for all applicable items.

All shelving will be fully secured to the walls and floor, with railing systems in place for those with loose artifacts. These measures are in deference to the local environment (seismic activity).

Archival material will be kept in fireproof cabinets, with digital records backed up to a portable, external hard drive. A second, external hard drive will be backed up once monthly, and stored in an off-site location (Director's trailer on-property).

Training

All individuals working with the collections, including staff and volunteers, will receive training in the proper handling of artifacts.

Museum staff will attend and participate in professional conferences and/or workshops concerning the maintenance and management of Museum resources.

All policies relating to the care and curation of the Museum's collections are expanded upon in the IVDM **“Preventative Conservation Plan”** and **“Curatorial Procedures.”**

CONSERVATION

- **Preventive Conservation** is the mitigation of deterioration and damage to cultural property through the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures for the following: appropriate environmental conditions; handling and maintenance procedures for storage, exhibition, packing, transport, and use; integrated pest management; emergency preparedness and response; and reformatting/duplication.
- **Documentation** is the recording in a permanent format of information derived from conservation activities.
- **Treatment** is the deliberate alteration of the chemical and/or physical aspects of cultural property, aimed primarily at prolonging its existence. Treatment may consist of stabilization and/or restoration.
- **Stabilization** is a procedure intended to maintain the integrity of cultural property and to minimize deterioration.
- **Restoration** is a procedure intended to return cultural property to a known or assumed state, often through the addition of non-original material.

The Museum will produce and follow a written preventive conservation policy. Preventive conservation stabilizes artifacts, objects, and materials within the collections by maintaining appropriate storage conditions. The Director shall oversee the enforcement of the policy and will advise the Board concerning the condition of the collections periodically.

Individual artifacts or objects, or types of collections, requiring a specific conservation treatment will have condition reports written when concerns are noted through regular inspection. As soon as noted, stabilization efforts will be initiated for individual artifacts or objects, or types of collections requiring treatment. After treatment, conservation reports will be written and permanently filed. Treatment will be completed only by professionally trained conservators.

See attachment A for housekeeping schedule overseen by the Head Curator. Stabilization can be completed by Museum staff or trained volunteers.

ACCESS TO THE COLLECTION

The collections are an educational resource and will be made available to the public through exhibits, publication, behind-the-scenes tours, and other means of display. The collections can be made available to qualified researchers by appointment for close inspection, photography, or research under special permission and with proper controls.

No food, drink, tobacco, large handbags, or other non-essential items will be permitted in the collections storage area.

Access to and Pulling of Collection Items

Access to storage and conservation areas will be limited to personnel directly supervised by the Head Curator or Executive Director.

Only as many items as can fit on a single handcart will be pulled at any one time from the storage and conservation area for review. Prior to the retrieval of new materials for review or study, those already pulled will first be returned to their assigned location. Prior to re-homing, collection items on the handcart will be subject to a spot check by the Head Curator or Executive Director, or personnel directly supervised by him/her.

Handling Practices

Museum staff, visiting researchers and scholars, visitors, and special guests will adhere to a single policy governing the handling of the collection.

Upon retrieval of collection materials from the storage or conservation area, the item(s) will be made available on a rolling cart in the conservation lab. The item(s) will not be permitted to leave the lab space, barring special permission by the Executive Director.

Retrieved items must be kept on the rolling cart or an adjacent, cleared table at all times. NO beverages, food, or other non-curation materials are permitted on or near the table, cart, or artifact. Any surface in use for curation must first be cleared and thereafter cleaned with an inert disinfectant spray and dried with static and chemical-free microfiber cloth.

Should an item be removed from its storage or handling devices and placed directly onto a table, the two will be kept in close proximity to one another. The two are not to be disassociated. All staff, researchers, and guests will respect the label associated with an item and will leave any/all tags in place, taking particular care to ensure their continued association. Should a staff member, researcher, or guest need to remove or shift a tag for photography or documentation purposes, they will first obtain permission from the Head Curator, Executive Director, or a senior member of staff.

In handling collection materials, two hands will be kept on the item at all times. Cotton or polyester gloves, which will be supplied by the Museum, will be worn at all times when handling items from the collection. The Museum collection constitutes an irreplaceable assemblage of culture and history, and proper care will be used to ensure its continued preservation.

Pencils will be the only variety of writing tool permitted around collection items. Pens and other ink-based markers will be prohibited. Photography of collection items (with the exception of restricted materials) will be permitted; the use of flash photography will be subject to a separate conversation with the Director or senior staff prior to its commencement, with permissions and restrictions awarded on a case-by-case basis.

Exceptions to these handling procedures exist only for the Educational Collections, Archival materials, and non-accessioned materials. These do not require gloves for handling, and may be opened to the public for regular use and interaction. In such instances, a member of the museum staff must still be present at all times.

These policies are expanded upon in the IVDM **“Preventative Conservation Plan.”**

Operating Hours

The Museum will be open for general operating hours when visitors can view collections as part of exhibits. During these regular hours there will be specific staff in the Museum to oversee visitor operations. The staff will be trained to monitor exhibits and artifacts on display.

Collections pulled for review will be returned to their assigned location in the storage or conservation area at the end of each day.

REVIEW AND REVISION OF THE POLICY

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that the policy meets the goals of the Museum. If changes to the policy are necessary, these changes will be reviewed by staff and proposed for draft revisions.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

The Director of the Imperial Valley Desert Museum will have authority and responsibility to carry out the Museum's Collection Management Policy. Specific annotated responsibilities of the Policy can be carried out by staff members or volunteers as appropriate.

The decision-making authority to carry out the Policy may be delegated to the Head Curator, at the discretion of the Director.

Exemptions to the Policy can only be made by the Director, with approval of the Board.

Any staff member, volunteer, or trustee involved in any way with the management, use, or stewardship of the collections at the Museum will comply with the Code of Ethics.

CODE OF ETHICS

To ensure that directors and staff of the Museum know and recognize the importance of establishing the highest ethical standards while charged with the stewardship of the collections of the Museum:

1. All Museum directors, staff, and trustees shall acknowledge that the preservation, conservation, proper storage and/or proper display of the collection are the highest priorities when considering the affairs of the Museum.
2. All Museum directors, staff, and trustees are prohibited from using any collections object or their special access to collections objects for purposes other than for official business of the Museum.
3. Neither the Museum director, nor staff, or trustees may use their Museum affiliation to promote personal collecting activities.
4. Neither the Museum director, nor staff, or Directors may compete with the Museum in any personal collecting activities.
5. Responsibility for the appraisal of any artifact or acquisition shall rest with the donor. No Museum director, staff, or trustee may serve as an appraiser of a gift to the Museum.
6. Neither the Museum director, nor staff, or Directors will assert any personal privilege over the acquisition or use of any collections object.
7. The Museum's mission and goals take precedence over the desires and directives of any donor of cash or collections item.

This Code of Ethics is complimentary and does not supersede the Imperial Valley Desert Museum Institutional Code of Ethics.

COMPLIANCE

The Museum will comply with legislation affecting the acquisition of collections including, but not limited to, the following:

The Antiquities Act of 1906

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979

The Native American Graves Protection & Repatriation Act

Department of the Interior Policies and Standards for Managing Museum Collections, 1997 (411DM) and 36 C.F.R. part 79--Curation of Federally-owned and Administered Archaeological Collections

ATTACHMENT A: Curatorial Housekeeping Procedures

The following housekeeping procedures will be followed by curation staff outside of regular weekly cleaning of the facility:

- Daily visual monitoring of conservation lab, exhibit areas, entry ways, and passageways of facility
- Weekly visual inspection and completion of Weekly Facility Monitoring Checklist
- Sweeping of the staff breakroom daily
- Sweeping entry vestibule monitoring walls for webs every Thursday
- Dust mopping the collections storage hallway every Thursday
- Dust mopping the Conservation lab every Tuesday
- Dust mopping the collections storage areas; inspecting and cleaning once per month; including floor areas under shelving
- Calibration of Temperature and Relative Humidity monitoring equipment as recommended by the manufacturer.

If pests are observed during routine inspection or cleaning, immediate steps should be taken to remove pests or observed pest debris. Any removal of pests is to be noted and dated on the Weekly Facility Monitoring Checklist, which will be subsequently filed on the next Thursday. When pests are observed, staff will follow these procedures:

If a pest infestation is found:

- Inspect and remove all infested material
- Inspect neighboring material
- Vacuum clean the area and infested material
- If and where necessary apply pesticides
- Carry out subsequent inspections

DOCUMENTATION AND REPORTING

The monitoring of pests, whenever possible, will be integrated into the regular activities of staff and will be documented on the following documents:

Weekly Facility Monitoring Checklist: This document is to be completed every Tuesday. Any evidence of pests is to be included in the notes associated with the inspection of collection storage areas. Visual evidence of pests in other areas is to be numbered and written in the Additional Notes section with a corresponding number noted on the plan/drawing of the Museum located in the lower right hand corner of the report.

Trap Monitoring Documentation: This document is to be used to record the sticky traps, which are currently used to monitor pest intrusion at doors. Traps are to be collected and documented every four months.

Bi-annual Pest Management Report: A bi-annual pest management report will be written to document and evaluate the pest management and pest control programs.