Deaccessions

The decision to deaccession items from the various collections of MCHS will be the result of careful research and deliberation. Any recommendations for deaccessioning will be made to the Collections Committee, who will examine the situation and make the final recommendation to the Executive Director. Each recommendation will then be reviewed by the Board to ensure that deaccessioning is justified, and that MCHS holds legal title to the item; the Board will then, with the assistance of the Executive Director and the Director of Collections, determine the means of disposal, and the use of any funds resulting from its deaccession. Any such proceeds will go into a dedicated fund for acquisitions.

The task of reviewing all relevant paperwork to determine the legal status, value, and any necessary notifications in each case will fall to the Director of Collections. The Collections Committee and the Director of Collections may recommend disposal methods and use of funds, but final authority in all deaccessioning decisions rests with the Board, by a simple majority of the quorum.

Throughout the deaccessioning process, the Director of Collections is responsible for documenting each step. In all cases, the Director of Collections must adequately define and document the reasoning behind the decision to deaccession, the estimated value of the object (including all professional appraisals), and the suggested methods of disposal. This documentation should be made available to any interested parties, including the public. Documentation should also include the demonstration of MCHS's clear and unrestricted title to each object. Objects found in the collection, with no corresponding paperwork, will be assumed to belong to MCHS (see Accession policy) and deaccessioned accordingly, with the understanding that the museum may need to make reparations in the case of any future, proven claim of outside ownership. All documentation, including the original paperwork (deed of gift, correspondence), is to be kept in perpetuity in MCHS's records.

Objects will not be considered for deaccessioning until at least three years have passed since donation, due to issues with the donor's taxes. (If the object is deaccessioned within three years, the donor must be notified so he/she can fill out the proper IRS forms.) Any objects accepted with restrictions must not be deaccessioned unless all reasonable attempts to comply with these restrictions have failed, and legal counsel has been sought. Although it is not legally necessary, in rare cases the Director of Collections may deem it advisable to contact the original donor and inform him or her of MCHS's decision to deaccession.

Justifications for deaccessioning include:
- the object is not, or is no longer relevant to MCHS's mission and collecting goals
- the object cannot be housed or conserved properly under MCHS's storage conditions or budget
- the object's condition has deteriorated beyond usefulness and repair
- the object is a duplicate of another item with more appropriate (i.e., Montgomery County) provenance

Often an object can be deaccessioned and simply transferred to the curatorial (non-accessioned) collection. Beyond this, first priority of disposal is donation to another museum or educational institution, in keeping with our mission of holding these collections in the public trust. The following disposal methods are acceptable:

- donation to another museum or educational institution
- trade/exchange with another museum or educational institution
- sale at public auction, or other publicly advertised open sale
- destruction, which must take place in front of at least one non-board witness, and paperwork signed to this effect

Objects deaccessioned will not be sold through the MCHS gift shop, nor will they be given or sold (except at public auction) to staff, board members or their relatives.

Any proceeds from sale or auction will go into a dedicated fund toward the purchase of new collections items, in accordance with the American Alliance of Museum's Code of Ethics.