

**William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences  
Collection Management Policy  
Adopted 2025**

**Introductory Sections:**

**Purpose Statement:** “To connect history and healthcare to foster healthier communities.”

**Vision Statement:** “To be a dynamic facilitator and space for campus, community, and lifelong learning about the past, present, and future of healthcare in West Virginia.”

**Mission Statement:** “To educate WVU students and the wider West Virginia community on the history of healthcare in West Virginia and the role of West Virginia University in that history.”

We fulfill our mission by:

- Producing exhibits that represent the history, culture, innovation, and diverse communities of West Virginia
- Producing digital content and traveling exhibits to educate and enrich the communities of West Virginia & West Virginia University
- Hosting programs that enhance the experience of WVU students and engage the community
- Providing educational opportunities to students.

**Institutional History:**

The WVU Museum of the Health Sciences is an interdisciplinary museum located on the Health Sciences Campus at West Virginia University. Dedicated in October 2022, the museum strives to preserve and display stories and artifacts of cultural, artistic, historical, and scientific importance to the medical history of West Virginia and its flagship university. Efforts to establish this museum began in 2017 under the direction of William Neal, M.D., a professor emeritus and retired pediatric cardiologist at WVU with a passion for history. With Dr. Neal’s vision, the collaboration of WVU Libraries, West Virginia & Regional History Center, and the WVU Health Sciences Center, as well as the support of WVU leadership, the museum grew from concept to reality—a million-dollar institution that will inspire and teach visitors, students, and faculty alike. Exhibitions range from historical medical equipment, such as Civil War surgical instruments, to modern healthcare technology like neurostimulation and telemedicine.

**Legal Organization:**

The William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences is part of WVU Libraries at West Virginia University. The Curator reports to the Associate Dean for Special Collections and Exhibition, who reports to the Dean of Libraries. The Dean of Libraries reports to the Provost Office who then reports to the President. West Virginia University is governed by a board of governors consisting of seventeen members that serve terms of one to four years.

**Commitment to collections stewardship:**

The collection of objects and documents held by the William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences is central to fulfilling the museum's mission. Thus, the museum strives to provide a stable storage and exhibition environment and maintain the collections in an organized format.

**Purpose for the collections management policy:**

The purpose of the collections management policy of the William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences is to guide the curator and their partners in the acquisition, care, and use of collections to fulfill the mission of the museum.

**Authority:**

**Governing Authority:**

The Dean of WVU Libraries or their appointed representative(s).

**Statement of Authority:**

*Curator.* The Curator handles the day-to-day management of the museum and collection, and is responsible for the proper implementation of all policies.

**Scope of Collections:**

**Brief history of the collection:**

The initial core of the collection consisted of donations, purchases, and loans to fill the exhibit cases of the new museum. These objects were collected between 2019 and 2022 prior to the museum's dedication in October 2022. These objects include those relevant to the history of medicine in West Virginia and the evolution of WVU Medicine/School of Medicine. This effort included soliciting loans and donations from each of the five schools under Health Sciences to represent the history of each school.

**Collection strengths and weaknesses:**

The strengths of the current collection are that the objects represent a broad coverage of both West Virginia and West Virginia University history from early America to the present, and that the current collection includes pieces from our health sciences departments and other institutions which lays the groundwork for collaboration and partnerships.

The collection's current weaknesses include its limited size and scope, as well as the lack of a teaching collection. The initial collection was meant to fill the museum cases for the first exhibits; there is a small collection of items in storage, but not enough to rotate items out of the main exhibit or supplement the main exhibit. Many of these initial items were acquired through online purchases with little provenance or research to tie the object to our specific mission on West Virginia and regional history. In addition, the current collection needs to be expanded to reflect the diverse populations within the state and Appalachia. As a museum connected to a university and medical school, a core part of our mission is interaction with and educational opportunities for students. The museum needs to develop a teaching collection for use in classes, programs, and outreach.

**Current uses of the collection and how they help the museum fulfill its mission:**

The initial acquisition and use of the collection has been for the museum exhibits, which supports the mission of student and public education.

**The museum's philosophy of collecting and direction for the collection's growth and development:**

The William A. Neal Museum can only accept objects that support the mission of educating students and the wider West Virginia community on the history of health care in West Virginia and the role of West Virginia University in that history. Objects that fit the museum scope include: items related to healthcare & health sciences related to West Virginia or West Virginia University; objects that represent the history of healthcare in West Virginia; items that represent the history of medical education and innovation at West Virginia University; and objects related to alumni and West Virginians who have made significant contributions in the field of health care.

Any acquisitions should adhere to ethics guidelines in that they were obtained ethically and do not create a conflict of interest for the Neal Museum, WVU Libraries, or West Virginia University.

**The museum does not collect:**

The William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences has limited exhibit and storage space, and thus cannot accept large items. Due to space, staff capacity, and preservation resources, the museum cannot responsibly accept every item offered as a donation. Unless particularly significant, objects in poor condition will not be considered for the collection. The Neal Museum will not accept any biological samples or medicines/substances that are hazardous, controlled, or illegal.

Duplicate items will only be considered if they are in better condition than the object currently in the collection, have a documented history related to one of the points above, or are suitable for addition to the museum's teaching collection.

Collections that are largely archival (books and documents) will be referred to the West Virginia & Regional History Center.

**Accession Policy**

Accessions are made primarily through donations and gifts, and rarely through purchases. Planned or bequest donations will be accepted only through prior discussion with the curator and collection committee. Unannounced or drop-off donations will not be accepted. Donations should be made without any significant restrictions on their use, attribution, display, or future disposition; donations with significant restrictions may not be accepted.

Collections decisions such as accessions, loans, and deaccessions are made by the Curator with input from the collections committee, consisting of the Associate Dean for Special Collections and Exhibitions, the Director of the West Virginia & Regional History Center, Head of Archives & Manuscripts at the West Virginia & Regional History Center, and the Accessioning Archivist at the West Virginia & Regional History Center.

Accession of an object is the physical and legal transfer of ownership from the donor to the William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences. A deed of gift will be signed at the time of donation transferring ownership to the Neal Museum.

Objects offered for consideration for acquisition must have a provenance record that indicates the work is legal and ethical to obtain. All objects accepted for the collection must be suitable for use in fulfilling the museum's mission. Objects accepted for the collection must have a documented provenance that places the object within the museum's collecting scope, with possible exception for items considered for the educational collection.

The curator accepting the objects is responsible for accessioning, marking, labeling, and storing the objects in a manner aligning with professional disciplinary standards. The curator is responsible for keeping full and complete accession and registration records for collection objects in a permanent, archival system.

### **Deaccession Policy**

Reappraisal and deaccessioning may occur to improve access to materials, prioritize backlogs, correct faulty appraisal, comply with the law or institutional collecting policies, implement changes in the museum's mission, or balance research potential with allocation of resources. Reappraisal and deaccessioning will not be undertaken for purposes of generating operating income, satisfying personal interests, or pleasing donors or resource allocators. Deaccessioning decisions are made considering the benefit to the museum and collection object, in keeping with the museum's public trust responsibilities, and the expectations of our audience. All deaccession decisions will comply with ethical standards and all pertinent laws and regulations.

If deaccessioning is chosen, there are three options for disposition. Materials may be transferred to a more appropriate repository, returned to the donor, or discarded; donors can make specifications in their deeds of gift.

To avoid penalties under the Tax Reform Act of 1984, objects in the museum collection must be held by the museum for a minimum of five years before being considered for deaccession.

In the case that a collection object is found to be missing, it will not be deaccessioned as the object may be located. Instead, the collection records should be annotated to indicate that the object is missing.

### **Loan Policy**

Loans require a significant investment of time and resources, and as such each loan should be evaluated to determine if it is in alignment with the lending institution's mission, ethics and strategic goals. Lending institutions should consider a loan's contribution to the advancement of diversity, equity and inclusion in our field.

#### **Outgoing Loans**

The William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences will only loan objects from its collections to other WVU museums and galleries with approval from the curator. The borrowers must ensure the security and preservation of the item(s) during the period of the loan. Requests for loans must be sent in writing or email and include the date and period of the loan, name of the requested object(s), institution making the request and contact information, purpose of the loan, how the loan will be used, and how the object will be displayed and secured.

#### **Incoming Loans**

*The William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences is not currently taking loaned objects, with the exception of internal loans from other WVU museums for the purposes of exhibits.*

Objects may be requested on loan by the William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences for the purpose of exhibition at the discretion of the curator. All requests must align with the mission of the museum and will depend on the following considerations:

- a. The ability of the William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences to provide appropriate care and security of the object while on loan without endangering or neglecting its collection
- b. The suitability of the object for the requested purpose
- c. The cost of borrowing, storing, using, packing, returning, and insuring the loan is reasonable for the use intended by the William A. Neal of the Health Sciences

The William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences is not currently taking any objects on permanent loan.

### **Insurance**

All objects sent out on loan from the William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences or received on loan must be insured. It is the responsibility of the curator of the museum to negotiate insurance arrangements with all lenders and borrowers.

### **Object in Custody Policy**

Objects in custody refers to objects physically left in the William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences that the museum does not own or possess. These objects may include objects left accidentally or on purpose by museum visitors, objects left at the museum with the intent for review, unclaimed or abandoned loans, and objects found in the collections that are unmarked and for which no records exist.

To prevent objects from being abandoned, no object can be left at the museum without the completion of the accession process. In addition, objects cannot be accepted at the Health Sciences Library, West Virginia & Regional History Center, or other WVU Libraries locations without prior approval and acceptance for acquisition by the Curator.

The William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences will not accept, store, or hold custody of any object that is not an acquisition, accession, or loan. The museum will not provide evaluations or appraisals of objects.

Objects left behind by visitors will be examined for contact information to locate the owner. If no contact information is found or no contact with the owner is made, the object will be held for six months as “lost and found.” At the end of that time, if no claim has been made on the object, it shall be disposed of or donated to a suitable nonprofit organization. Abandoned property, unclaimed old loans, and found-in-collection items will be evaluated by the curator and collections committee and then either disposed of or accessioned in accordance with any relevant state laws.

### **Documentation Policy**

All collection-related activities of the William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences must be documented in accordance with best practices and the requirements of WVU Libraries and West Virginia University. These documents will be retained in both physical and digital formats. Required documents include:

- Accession Records
- Catalog Records
- Condition Reports

- Deaccession Records
- Loan Records
- Location of Objects

### **Collections Care Policy**

The William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences recognizes its responsibility to care for its collections and implement good stewardship of the objects entrusted to the museum. The collections are managed to maintain objects in the best possible condition while balancing their use in the educational mission of the museum. The museum curator, and all students, volunteers, and others handling the collection, are responsible for the correct handling and preservation of the collection objects.

Preventative care will include: the monitoring of the exhibit and storage spaces to ensure a safe and stable environment, completing a full inventory and condition assessment every two years, monitoring the security of exhibit and storage spaces, using safe handling procedures, and retaining all accession and care documentation. Any use or loan of collection items will be in accordance with preventative care standards.

### **Collections and Collection Information Access and Use Policy**

The collections of the William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences are generally available for research or study by qualified researchers, scholars, and interested members of the public by prior arrangement. Unscheduled walk-in use of the collections is not permitted. Specimens on exhibit, unprocessed collections, and objects deemed too fragile to be handled may not be accessed by researchers, scholars, or visitors. Objects or documents considered “restricted” due to sensitive private information are not available to the public.

Use fees will be applied for usage requests of materials for commercial purposes if the Neal Museum holds unambiguous copyright to those materials or the Neal Museum has generated digital versions of public domain materials. Usage of materials will require signing the Reproduction Agreement Form. Usage of materials for private study, scholarship, or research will never require use fees. In the cases where the Neal Museum does not have these rights or the rights are not in the public domain, the Neal Museum can only furnish reproductions for private study, scholarship, or research use, in which case use fees will not apply.

Commercial publication or exhibition: \$100 per item

Non-profit publication, exhibition, or educational use: free of charge

WVU students, faculty, and staff do not have to pay use fees but must still complete the Reproduction Agreement Form. West Virginia nonprofit organizations receive 50% off all orders.

### **Photography in the Museum**

Unless otherwise stated by signage in the exhibit, photography is permitted in the museum provided that (a) no flash and (b) no supplementary light sources are used, and (c) if images are posted on social media credit is given to the William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences, West Virginia University Libraries.

### **Risk Management and Insurance**

Risk management and insurance for all WVU, including WVU Libraries and its units, is centralized with the WVU Risk Management Office (<https://riskmanagement.wvu.edu>). The museum curator will work with the WVU Libraries Dean's office for compliance.

### **Intellectual Property Policy**

The Neal Museum does not require permission to publish. However, we are not the copyright holder for many of our collections and it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that they have the proper permissions required prior to publication. The Neal Museum cannot grant permission for, nor can we facilitate gaining permission, for materials where we are not the rights holder. The researcher assumes all responsibility when using our collections.

We do ask that researchers credit any of our collections used. We do not have a suggested citation, but our basic credit line is "William A. Neal Museum of the Health Sciences, West Virginia University Libraries."

### **Appraisals, Identifications, and Research Services**

In compliance with the Tax Reform Act of 1984 the Curator and museum staff will not make an appraisal of objects, arrange to pay for an appraisal for a donor, or recommend an appraiser. In the case that the museum requires an internal appraisal of an object, the WVU Risk Management Office will be consulted for guidance, and this information will not be shared with donors.

### **Policy Review & Revision**

Unless there is an urgent need due to inadequate policies, changes in professional best practices, or a change to the museum's mission and collection plan, the Collections Management Policy will be reviewed every five years to ensure that the policies herein remain effective and current to the museum's use of objects. If any issues or needed changes are identified, the museum curator in consultation with members of the West Virginia & Regional History Center & WVU Dean of Libraries will recommend and approve changes to the collections management policy.

### **Code of Ethics**

Museum staff who collect objects similar to the museum collection must avoid any conflict of interest or appearance of a conflict of interest with the museum. If a staff member has an opportunity to collect any object that may reasonably be of interest to the Neal Museum, the staff member must inform the museum in order to give the museum first option on the object. The Neal Museum will endeavor to make an acquisition decision quickly to allow the staff member to acquire the object if not wanted by the museum. Staff members who are found to be directly competing with the Neal Museum or are using insider museum knowledge to enrich their personal collections will face disciplinary action.

In compliance with the Tax Reform Act of 1984 the Curator and museum staff will not make an appraisal of objects, arrange to pay for an appraisal for a donor, or recommend an appraiser. In the case that the museum must complete an internal appraisal of an object, this information will not be shared with donors.