

Pearl River Community College Museum Collections Policy

(Approved by the Museum Advisory Board on April 26, 2007)

I. Statement of Mission and Purpose of the Museum: The Pearl River Community College Museum is a repository for historical artifacts that reflect the history and legacy of Mississippi's oldest public, two-year institution of higher education and the six-county area that provides financial support for its operation: Forrest, Hancock, Jefferson Davis, Lamar, Marion, and Pearl River counties. The Museum is dedicated to the discovery, preservation, and interpretation of materials and memorabilia related to the institution's history and the lower Pearl River valley, which it serves. The Museum seeks to provide the institution's students, employees, alumni, and the general public with factual information regarding the unique history of Pearl River Community College and the history of the supporting district.

The Pearl River Community College Museum is committed to:

- ❖ Providing a suitable environment for preservation and displaying of artifacts owned by or loaned to the museum.
- ❖ Recording responsibly all objects donated to or loaned to the museum.
- ❖ Exhibiting artifacts in such a manner as accurately to chronicle the history of Pearl River Community College and the six-county district the college serves.
- ❖ Educating the public through exhibits, the media, and any other means at its disposal.
- ❖ To conduct interviews, do research, and discover the history of Pearl River County Agricultural High School, Pearl River County Agricultural High School and Junior College, Pearl River Junior College, Pearl River Community College, and the six counties that make up the Pearl River Community College district.
- ❖ Working with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, state and local historical societies, and local governments to preserve the historical records and artifacts of Pearl River Community College and its six-county district.

II. Purpose of Collections Policy: The collections policy will set forth guidelines for the Museum's collections-related activities. The policy is a public statement of the Museum's commitment to care for and manage its collections properly to ensure their enduring historical and interpretive value.

III. Scope of the Collection: To fully and suitably fulfill its mission, the Pearl River Community College Museum chooses to restrict its collection to materials that relate to the history of the institution and its six-county district. The Museum serves a two-fold function as both a museum and an archive and, therefore, it will collect both artifacts and archival materials that work together to fulfill the Museum's mission to interpret the

history of the institution and the Lower Pearl River valley.

III. Definitions:

1. An **Artifact** is preserved and used for its evidential value, i.e., they are consciously created and, at times, altered for use by their creator.
2. **Archival Material** is preserved and used for its informational value, i.e. the content of the document, such as letters written, audio, visual material created to convey facts, stories, or other information to a person or persons.
 - a. **Paper Records** are any letters or documents that convey information in written form, including yearbooks, catalogues, press releases, newspapers and other institutional publications.
 - b. **Iconographic Records** are photographs, promotional posters, advertisements, or other material that contain images.
 - c. **Audio-Visual Material** is any form of record that contains moving images or sound, such as film reels, video, and sound recordings.
3. **Provenance** is a technical term used differently in a museum setting and an archival setting. In a museum, provenance is the documentation of the artifact's background and history of ownership. In an archival sense, provenance is background knowledge of the creator of the archival material and the original order in which it arrived at the institution.

IV. Authority: The Museum's twenty-five member Advisory Board and its director are responsible for ensuring proper implementation of the collections policy. Volunteers, workers and student workers will report directly to the Museum Director. When given tasks that involve the handling and use of artifacts and documents, volunteers, workers and student workers should always consult the Director about any questions they may have, and they should always follow the Museum's established rules for the handling and use of artifacts and archival materials.

V. Access: The public may have controlled access to letters, yearbooks, catalogues, and any other archival materials for research purposes. Photographs or scanned, high-resolution digital copies of photographs and other iconographic records (posters, advertisements, etc.) will be available for research purposes. All archival materials will be accessible only in the reading room of the museum. As a precaution, the Museum reserves the right to restrict the reproduction of iconographic records. Access to artifacts is restricted to the Director and, under proper supervision, volunteers, workers and student workers.

VI. Acquisitions: To fully and suitably fulfill its mission, the Pearl River Community College Museum has set criteria that guide its actions in the acquisitions process:

1. Artifacts and archival material must be relevant to the Museum's mission to collect, preserve, and exhibit artifacts and documents that reflect the history of Pearl River Community College and its supporting district.

2. The Museum reserves the right to accept or decline artifacts and archival material based on its assessment of the artifact or archival material.

Considerations that affect this decision may include, but are not limited to: available storage space, authenticity and uniqueness of the artifact or archival material, condition of the item or items at the time of assessment, and the potential for use of the item or items for research or interpretive purposes. The Museum will not accept artifacts or archival materials that it deems irrelevant to its mission, or those it deems as duplicates. Additionally, the Museum reserves the right to decline items that may require an unusually great amount of effort and money to preserve. Exceptions will be made at the discretion of the Director and the Board.

3. The donor of the item should have clear claim or ownership. Documentation for said title should support the clarity of claim, and the Museum should be provided with or allowed to copy documents that support the provenance of and title to the object. The item or items should arrive at the Museum with no restrictions on use. In the event that restrictions must accompany an item or items, the Museum will work with the donor to establish a sensible time frame for future access to the item.

4. The Director will work with the Advisory Board to actively acquire artifacts and archival materials. All available methods of acquisition must be approved by the Board. Due to budget constraints, the Advisory Board will review any potential purchase of artifacts or archival materials on a case-by-case basis. Other available methods of acquisition methods include:

- a. **Gifts-** Items donated to the Museum permanently

- b. **Bequest-** Items bequeathed to the Museum through a donor's will

VII. Deaccessioning and Disposal: From time to time, the Museum may wish to divest itself of artifacts and archival materials. In such a case, the Museum has set criteria it employs to determine the condition of the item and whether or not it wishes to dispose of said item:

1. The item has deteriorated beyond repair

2. Decomposition of the item over time may cause a health hazard to employees, volunteers, and museum visitors

3. The item no longer fits the Museum's purpose

4. Cost for the storage and preservation of the item is greater than the museum's resources
5. There exists a similar item of greater significance, quality, or condition
6. The item has failed to retain its identity
7. The item has been stolen or missing for ten years or more.
8. The item is subject to legal or ethical standards. In such a case, the Museum will release items by using several methods:
 - a. **Exchange-** The Museum may exchange items with neighboring museums who have a need for the item
 - b. **Sale-** Items may be placed on a list circulated to regional museums and repositories for purchase
 - c. **Repatriation-** The return of items to ethnic groups to whom the items may be of particular interest or sensitivity

VIII. Conservation and Preservation: The Museum will strive to preserve what it collects as best it can to ensure use for future generations. To this end, the Museum will conform to and practice currently accepted methods of conservation and preservation as outlined by the Society of American Archivists, the American Association of Museums, and widely accepted knowledge among archive and museum professionals.

IX. Loans: Due to constraints in storage space and limited funds for maintenance of artifacts, the Pearl River Community College Museum will not engage in large-scale loans. However, working partnerships with John C. Stennis Space Center, the Armed Forces Museum at Camp Shelby, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and possibly other area museums may at times require loans for the purpose of exhibition. In such a case, the Pearl River Community College Museum has set procedures for both incoming and outgoing loans:

1. **Incoming Loans:** The Museum may borrow items from institutions or individuals for specific purposes such as exhibition and/or research. Loans from either institutions or individuals will be restricted to a period of no more than one (1) year, with the option for renewal at the end of the year. The Museum Director will be directly responsible for the coordination and negotiation of all incoming loans. **NOTE: The Museum will comply with the state of Mississippi's Museum Unclaimed Property Act. Therefore, the Museum will not under any circumstances accept any indefinite or permanent loans.**

The Museum will provide the same level of care and protection to loaned items that it provides for its permanent collection. The Pearl River Community College Museum will not accept any artifact or archival material on loan whose condition will not

withstand travel to or from its destination and the Museum. Lenders to the Museum must have obtained the object or archival material legally and ethically, and the lender must have a clear title of ownership to the artifact or archival material. The Museum Director will maintain all proper documentation of the incoming loan.

All incoming loans must be agreed upon with an Incoming Loan Agreement. This agreement must be signed by the lender and the Museum Director upon approval from the Museum Advisory Board. The Incoming Loan Agreement specifies the terms of the agreement, including the loan purpose, length of time, insurance coverage, and the responsibilities of both the borrower and the lender. A copy of the Incoming Loan Agreement will be provided to the lender. Upon receipt of the loan, the Director will complete a condition report for the item. All loaned items will be photographed for record keeping purposes unless the lender objects. As the borrowing institution, the Pearl River Community College Museum will accept the cost of packing and shipping the item as well as its insurance while in custody of the Museum. The lender is responsible for the cost of any object appraisal or appraisals if needed for insurance purposes. The Museum will make all reasonable efforts to return borrowed objects to the lender in accordance with the terms outlined in the Incoming Loan Agreement.

2. Outgoing Loans: The Museum may lend items to institutions for specific purposes such as exhibition and/or research. **The Museum will not under any circumstances lend objects to individuals.** Loans to institutions will be restricted to a period of no more than one (1) year, with the option for renewal at the end of the year. The Museum Director will be directly responsible for the coordination and negotiation of all outgoing loans.

Institutions who seek to borrow an artifact or archival material must send a request in writing to the Museum Director stating the specific artifact or archival material, intended purpose, and assurance of payment of all costs associated with the loan including packing, shipping and/or transportation, and insurance.

Upon approval by the Museum Advisory Board, the Museum will proceed with the outgoing loan. To finalize the outgoing loan, a qualified representative of the borrowing institution must sign the Outgoing Loan Agreement, which allows for the same provisions as the Incoming Loan Agreement.

Drafted by William Denius, graduate student, Middle Tennessee State University, May 2006.