



SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS STATEMENT

CALIFORNIA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM
OLD SACRAMENTO STATE HISTORIC PARK

APPROVED BY

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SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS STATEMENT

PURPOSE

Building on the California State Railroad Museum's (CSRM) founding collections, the Scope of Collections Statement sets a guided course of action for future donated and purchased acquisitions to effectively execute the Museum's mission and core values. The Scope informs decisions on care, preservation, access, and deaccession strategies while observing professional standards.

VISION

The California State Railroad Museum is a pre-eminent leader in railroad heritage preservation, engaging and enriching present and future generations about what railroads mean in our lives.

MISSION

The California State Railroad Museum preserves and interprets the artifacts and culture of Western railroads and railroading for present and future generations. We use iconic collections, innovative and immersive exhibits, engaging interpretation and programs, and memorable events to create enjoyable experiences, empower learning, and inspire appreciation for a diverse audience about the role and impact of the railroad and mobility in California, the West and the Nation.

INTERPRETIVE FOCUS

CSRM's collection policy is formed and guided by the following statements:

Our lives are made of railroad stories.

We tell the stories of the railroad through the stories of people.

This interpretive focus is critical when contemplating gifts and seeking future acquisitions. As a matter of policy and procedure, collections should be viewed as an integral and interconnected aspect of CSRM's core values: community service, museum excellence, diversity, relationships, participation, sustainability, and innovation.

STEWARDSHIP

The California State Railroad Museum stewards an active collection where full-size railroad equipment is operated, unique archival documents are digitized for researchers around the world, and objects that serve as tangible connections to lived experiences maintain a link from the past to the present. Stewardship at CSRM is a multi-generational commitment.

The Museum does not seek to memorialize the past through an event or person but rather to acknowledge the complexity of our shared history. It is proactive in maintaining relevance and connecting stories to people today. The Museum seeks to present authentic representation of the impacts of the railroad and its diverse experiences. It seeks to facilitate conversations among the collections it stewards, the community it represents, and the professionals who are responsible for the care of the collection.

COLLECTION HISTORY AND SUMMARY

The California State Railroad Museum's core collection was formed by a donation of historic locomotives and cars from the Pacific Coast Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Inc. in 1969. The Museum received a major transfer of existing railroad collections from the California Department of Parks and Recreation in 1977. Since then, CSRM has received significant collection donations from Bancroft Library, Smithsonian Institution, DeGolyer Library, City of Sacramento, Southern Pacific, Western Pacific, Union Pacific, Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, and various individuals.

The primary purpose of the California State Railroad Museum collection is to support the Museum's mission. Objects are primarily acquired for preservation and interpretation, although some may be designated for interpretive operation and hands-on use. Many of the Museum's locomotives and other rolling stock are the sole surviving and/or the best examples in North America. Supporting the full-size equipment collection are three-dimensional objects, including decorative art, original fine art and iconic toy trains and scale models. It is one of the most significant and comprehensive railroad history collections in North America. The collection connects the complex and diverse aspects of railroads to the culture of railroading and its impact on society. It illustrates the human experience surrounding railroad history and technology.

The California State Railroad Museum's Library & Archives' section not only supports the Museum's mission but also enables scholarly research that is integral to the Museum's interpretation, education, and exhibit preparation functions. The non-circulating collection is one of North America's foremost research collections on railroad history and technology as well as the California State Park System's only professionally staffed, public research library and archives.

Documentary collections include archival, published, graphic materials and media pertaining to railroad history and technology. The core collection comprises over 2.5 million photographic images. In addition, there are 10,000 cubic feet of corporate records; more than 250,000 maps and drawings; extensive manuscripts, diaries, letters, maps, engineers' and surveyors' notebooks; construction, business, equipment, personnel, financial, and land records covering more than 4,000 railroads throughout North America from the 1820s to the present; and more than 11,000 cataloged books. The Library & Archives also maintains sound recordings, original and archival motion picture films and video recordings on subjects pertinent to railroad history and technology.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

The California State Railroad Museum and its Library & Archives values provenance, historical significance, and relevance. This policy contributes to CSRM's leadership in railroad heritage preservation. CSRM prioritizes high research value and interpretive potential in its collection development framed by the stories of diverse individuals. It also emphasizes the value of connecting people with meaningful objects and materials in an accessible environment. CSRM acquires collections primarily through donations. Limited acquisition funds provided by the California State Railroad Museum Foundation enable the Museum to pursue valued collections.

Informed by the Core Values, CSRM builds across all collections adhering to themes and subjects centered on railroad history, technology, and its impact on history at large: community and relationships, experience and use, and construction and operation. These standards inform decisions regarding acquisitions, deaccessions, and the use of the collection.

COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIPS engage human stories and connections to the railroad as well as works about railroading.

EXPERIENCE AND USE relate to life and work on the railroad for all involved, focusing on groups of people underrepresented in the collection.

CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION demonstrate building railroads highlighting business, technology, industry standards, economics, environmental impact, social and political issues, government regulations, etc.

CSRM must be selective in its collection development. It is the responsibility of CSRM's leadership and collections managers to develop the collection on a case-by-case basis, making decisions based on thoughtful and well-researched justifications. Responsible stewardship and professional curatorial practices govern decisions by balancing needs and constraints such as

finite storage, staff processing time, resources, and the ability to facilitate access. Thorough consideration is given to the Museum's long-term investment in preservation, documentation, interpretation, exhibition and research, and whether there is a better suited institution to steward the collection.

CRITERIA

Before accepting an item or collection, CSRM investigates the provenance, condition, long-term collection care, potential for interpretation or research value, and relevance to existing collections. Acquisition decisions will examine the source of donation, chain of custody, rarity, geographical significance, subject matter addressed, historical significance, condition, and potential to illustrate a human story, especially of groups who are under-represented in the collection. Specifically for full-size equipment, decisions are made against criteria which include rarity, historical operation, other preserved examples, continued existence, location, condition, potential use, operability, and specific program needs.

GEOGRAPHY

CSRM collections are geographically centered on California and the West. The West is defined as Hawaii and Alaska and land west of the Rocky Mountain range extending in the north through Canada, United States and south through Mexico. Some collections may extend beyond these geographic borders for comparative research.

ORIGINALS

CSRM values authentic and well-documented original collections. The Museum seeks full and clear title to collections held by the institution. High-quality reproductions will be considered based on their research or interpretive value.

CONDITIONS

CSRM will not acquire collections with donor conditions. CSRM only accepts collections on long-term or permanent loans as rare exceptions.

PARTNERSHIPS

CSRM belongs to a network of heritage preservation institutions and strives to support other collecting institutions. CSRM will continue to meet the various needs of the larger community by maintaining existing and developing new partnerships.

REVIEW

The Scope of Collections Statement is a living document to be reviewed and revised as necessary every five years or in response to changes in the Museum's related policies. Revised statements to be approved by the Museum Director and District Superintendent.