Collections Development Plan

# aim and Scope

The Springfield Art Association’s (SAA) mission is as a community based, non-profit organization that promotes and supports the visual arts, provides art education opportunities for the greater Springfield area, and preserves and interprets historic Edwards Place and the collections of the SAA. This plan reflects that mission by developing collections that best reflect that goal of preservation and interpretation. This document’s aim is to achieve a plan for developing the SAA collections.

This document should reflect the Collections Policy of the SAA, primarily where it concerns accessions and deaccessions. The Collections Policy takes precedence over this document.

**Analysis of Current Collections**

*Space Assessment*

In 2020, we received a grant for the Conservation Assessment Program (CAP). Our final report highlighted the areas in which we were on par with best practices, and the areas in which we need to improve. We have since followed through on many priorities, but still have more priorities to accomplish.

1. Architecturally, we have completed structural repairs, such as repair of windows and tuckpointing of the building. In addition, we have recently purchased and installed storm windows.

2. For collections, it was recommended that we build a new, state-of-the-art storage facility, as the space that we have will never be truly fit for collections, as it’s in an historic building, and the space constraints are a prevailing issue. We purchased data loggers that monitor the conditions of temperature and relative humidity, to see if there are any particular problems. We began locking the collections storage doors for better security. We drafted an emergency preparedness plan and building maintenance plan. Other things that we still have to do include considering a coded system for entry, purchase of a light meter, and considering an environmental consultant.

Currently, in our collection, we have just over 1,400 objects, 240 photos, and 230 books. Our objects range from decorative arts, to fine art, to archaeology.

Currently, our storage is in two places on the SAA campus. Our main storage location is in Edwards Place, both in the house on exhibit, and in collections storage on the second floor of Edwards Place (this is the locked location). Collections storage consists of two small rooms and a closet. Our other storage location is underneath the M. G. Nelson Family Gallery in the curator’s office. This is meant as a temporary holding area, but some newer accessions are held in that office because they do not fit in the collections storage area.

*Collections*

Our collections are divided into nine categories: the Archaeology Collection, Beaux Arts Ball Collection, Clothing and Textiles, Condell Collection, Decorative Arts and Furniture, The Pearson Antique Toy Collection, Fine Art Collection, Education Collection, and Library Collection.

*Strengths and Gaps*

Archaeology: Our strengths in this collection is that we have items from many different home areas that are included in the find, including items that may have belonged to the servants of Edwards Place. The gaps in this collection stem from any site that may have been on the property that is now paved over (not likely), and the collection from the 1990s that was illegally dug up by bottle hunters.

Beaux Arts Ball Collection: Our strength in this collection is from the number of ball crowns that we have; however, we do not have all of the crowns. We have a few dresses from this collection, but not many. Finally, we have almost every scrapbook, but there are some that are missing, particularly from the past 10 years.

Clothing and textiles is not a collection that we are particularly looking to grow.

Condell collection contains items donated by Thomas Condell. It is a self-contained collection, and much of it has been deaccessioned over the past decade. We are not actively collecting for this collection.

Decorative Arts and Furniture is our largest collection, and the one in which we are still actively collecting. Our strengths are in large furniture and seating. The gaps lie in smaller decorative arts to place around Edwards Place. We are missing many every day items that would have been used by family and domestic servants.

The Pearson Antique Toy Collection contains items donated by Dr. Pearson. It is a self-contained collection, and much of it has been deaccessioned. We are not actively collecting for this collection.

The Fine Art Collection contains works that have been donated to and purchased by the SAA over its over-hundred year history. We have artwork from many regional and nationally known artists, some worldwide. We are not looking to expand this collection, except when it pertains to artists that were part of the Women’s Art Alliance, Prairie Art Alliance, or the SAA Collective.

The Education Collection is not part of the permanent collection, but contains items that may be handled by the public. These are not historically significant, but are antique in nature. We are actively collecting for this collection, particularly for items related to domestic servants at Edwards Place.

The Library Collection contains items that belong to the Michael Victor II Art Library and do not belong to the permanent collection. These are contained at the art library in the Broadwell building. We are not actively collecting for this collection.

*Recommendations*

We have a preference for the acquisition of items with specific histories and stories rather than general history items; in fact, the histories we are particularly interested in expanding are those of the domestic servants of Edwards Place. Our collection gaps are widest where it concerns the people who worked at the mansion.

We would like to refine the collection to reduce duplications and objects that are not related to the home. This will better free up space for pertinent collections.

We want to continue to interpret the items that have minimal information to better discuss them with the public and improve our understanding of the Edwards family and those at Edwards Place.

Our goal is to improve preservation of the objects; first, through improvement of the current storage and second, through the construction of a new state-of-the-art storage facility.

**Collecting Objectives and Priorities**

*Years 1-5*

1. Collect everyday objects for the servants’ quarters attic space.

2. Remove duplications and objects not related to the family from the collection. Use the funds to purchase objective #1.

3. Organize collections storage to better house objects until a new space is created.

4. Go through all of PastPerfect and add more information about each object.

a. From our own files

b. From further research

5. Collect everyday items and small decorative art items to place on whatnots, etc. in Edwards Place.

*Years 6-10*

1. Build collections storage facility and move collections over to it.

2. Thoroughly clean Fine Art Collection.

3. Get a grant for the Museum Assessment Program (MAP).