

Collections Management Policy



Museum of Ventura County
Approved December 2019
Board of Directors

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Figure created by Folk Artist Maura Flores Olney





I. Introduction

This document establishes policies regulating all collections activities across the Museum of Ventura County and the Agriculture Museum. These policies direct the Board, Committees, docents, staff and volunteers on professional practices and standards for the care, management, and use of collections owned or managed by the MVC.

II. Scope and Types of Collections

The Museum of Ventura County holds its collections in trust as part of a collaborative partnership with the County of Ventura to ensure long-term preservation and interpretation of the items.

The Museum of Ventura County collects library and archival material, photographs, historic objects, regional fine art and agricultural implements for research, exhibition, publication, education, and interpretation. The significance of an item is determined by its history, artistic merit, and physical condition.

The Collecting Plan provides a framework for collections development and management. Its implementation supports the Museum's mission and vision statements. It guides selection of material for the collections, deaccessioning decisions, planning for collections storage, exhibition needs, and grant writing.

A. Permanent Collections

1. Archive Collection: historically significant records and information that document the history and culture of Ventura County, the Channel Islands, and the region. These materials are original and unique records with particular preservation needs. The collection is available for research by staff and the public and items are subject to special procedures for handling, storage, recordkeeping and exhibition. The items are accessioned and catalogued.
2. Historical Object Collection: historically significant objects that illustrate the development and people of Ventura County and the events that have impacted them. The collection is accessioned with an emphasis on use for exhibition, programming and interpretation as well as research and publication.
3. Fine Arts Collection: fine and decorative arts focusing on works by established and recognized Ventura County and regional artists, and/or works about Ventura County, the California Channel Islands and the surrounding region. These works are accessioned and interpreted through exhibits, educational programs, publications and research.
4. Agricultural Collection: objects that document the history, technology and people involved in the business of agriculture in Ventura County including objects associated with ranches, farms, orchards, truck farming, aqua farming and environmentally controlled farms. These items are accessioned and used in exhibits and programs. They may be restored to working condition to show their functionality rather than only receiving stabilization treatments.

B. Research and Education Collection

1. Research Collection: items are not historically significant, rare, or unique, but are secondary information sources that support rich historical research. These items are meant to be handled and actively used, bringing expected wear and tear. The materials are not accessioned but are cataloged and records are kept of their acquisition and use.
2. Education Collection: objects used for instruction during educational programming and hands-on interpretation. As such, they are meant to be used and consumed over time and therefore, are not accessioned. Likewise, objects in the education collection may be disposed of and replaced without formal procedures. In order to avoid confusion, items donated to the education collection should be clearly stated as such on the Deed of Gift and given a tracking number to distinguish these items from the permanent collection.

C. Rapid Response Collection

These items are collected or solicited by staff and are usually more ephemeral in nature. The items should represent a specific event of national significance that if not collected immediately might not be saved. Staff will document the items establishing the manner collected, context and purpose for the material. These items are not accessioned immediately, but may be used for programs, exhibits, publication, and research. Staff will periodically review the collection to determine if the collecting event or materials are significant enough to be added to the permanent collection. During those reviews, items deemed unnecessary may be discarded.



Traditional Chinese Hat donated by Sol Sheridan

III. Roles and Responsibilities

A. Board of Directors: The Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for the care and well-being of the Collection. With such responsibility, they have the final, overriding authority on all decisions related to acceptance, rejection, deaccessioning and care of the collections.

B. Committees

1. Accessions Advisory Committee: Their primary purpose is to consider potential collections and deaccession of history-related materials. A full explanation is available in the Accessions Advisory Committee Description. They refer their recommendations on all matters to the Board of Directors for approval.
2. Fine Arts Advisory Committee: Their primary purpose is to promote interest, appreciation, education and research in art through exhibits, collection, conservation, and preservation of fine and decorative art for the edification of the Museum audience. They consider potential acquisitions and deaccessions of fine arts related materials. A full explanation is available in the Fine Arts Advisory Committee Description. They refer their collection recommendations to the Board of Directors for approval.
3. Farm Implements Ad Hoc or Agricultural Advisory Committee: Their purpose is to advise in the development and maintenance of the farm implements. A full explanation is available in the Agriculture Museum Advisory and Farm Implements Ad Hoc Committee Description. They act as subject experts and submit their recommendations regarding potential acquisitions and deaccessions to the Accessions Committee.

C. Museum Staff: Museum staff have a primary role in management and care of the collections. Staff serves as the contact between the Museum and potential donors. Although not voting members of the Committees, staff facilitates discussion regarding collections management, including preliminary selection of items based on their professional expertise and crafting the Committee agendas. The Collections Manager attends committee meetings when collections-related decisions are on the agenda.

D. Policy Review: The Collections Management Policy should be reviewed and revised every even-numbered year involving input by key staff members, Committees, and the Board. During this review, staff and Committees can propose amendments to this policy to be approved by the Board of Directors.

IV. Ethics

MVC is committed to following ethical practice procedures as outlined by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and generally accepted professional standards.

MVC is committed to following all laws regarding intellectual property, including copyright, licensing, and any works under the “Fair Use” provisions of federal law.

The Board, Committees, and staff will not accept items based on personal interest and/or private collecting habits or participate in any activities perceived as a conflict of interest. When materials from staff, Committee or Board members or their families are offered for donation, said individuals must excuse themselves from meetings when the agenda includes discussions about whether such materials are accepted into the collections, how those materials may be used and deaccessioning decisions.

Museum staff are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of integrity and conduct to ensure public trust, adhering to all federal, state and local laws and regulations, and protecting the Museum’s reputation and assets.

The Museum will seek to mitigate conflicts between standard museum practice and the specific sensitivities and cultural needs of Tribes or descendent communities specifically regarding storage arrangements, exhibits, and community access for cultural use. MVC will not knowingly acquire illegally or unethically collected material.

The Museum is committed to engaging Tribes and descendant communities in discussion regarding items that qualify for repatriation. The Native American Graves and Protection Act of 1990 (NAGPRA) defines repatriation as transferring legal interest in Native American human remains and cultural items to lineal descendants, Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations.



Detail of Chumash basket attributed to Petra Pico

V. Acquisition and Accessions Policy

MVC may acquire items by means of donations, bequests, purchases, exchanges, conversions of old loans or abandoned property, or any other transaction resulting in clear title transfer. MVC is not required to accept any collections not consistent with the mission and scope of the museum regardless of the acquisition method.

Accessioning is the two-pronged, formal process of transferring ownership of acquired material and incorporating it into the MVC Collection. All new acquisitions must be carefully considered for accession. Only items that will be kept for the foreseeable future will be accessioned. If an item is acquired through donation without the intent to be accessioned, the donor will be notified of that intent at the time of the gift.

A. Acquisition Considerations

Determining a donation's value is the responsibility of the donor. Any monetary valuation must come from an appraisal independent of MVC, staff or members of any Committees or the governing Board.

Title to all items acquired for the collections should be obtained free and clear.

The Museum does not and cannot guarantee the exhibition of any objects. Items, once the legal property of the Museum, may be accessioned, exhibited, loaned or deaccessioned at the sole discretion of the Museum. Any restrictions placed on the donation must be approved through the standard review process ultimately resting with the Board of Directors.

B. Criteria for Accessions

Items offered to MVC must be reviewed regarding parameters outlined in the Collecting Plan. The following criteria shall be considered when considering items for accession:

1. Does the item have a documented history of creation or use within the geographical boundaries of Ventura County? These items are given priority.
2. Is the item from other geographical locations, but relates to the history of Ventura County? Items with no historical or artistic importance to the County may only rarely be considered if they conform to the Collecting Plan.
3. Can proper care be given to the item? Will its acceptance result in substantial expense for care and maintenance?
4. Is the item duplicated in the collection? Is it duplicated, but a better version?
5. Is the item useful for research, education or exhibition?
6. Is the item encumbered or restricted by its intellectual property (copyright, trademark, etc)?
7. Is the object being offered with attached conditions such as perpetual exhibit, etc.?

8. Is the item defamatory or physically hazardous in any way to staff and other collections material?

C. Acquisitions Review

1. MVC Staff reviews potential acquisitions to determine their usefulness within the organization and their qualifications for accession, generating appropriate documentation on the item.
2. An internal memo is sent to the Executive Director detailing the potential acquisition for accession.
3. Staff then recommends the acquisition to the appropriate committee. The committee verifies the appropriateness of the item for the collection. The committee recommends items for acquisition and accession to the Board.
4. A report of items recommended for acquisition is sent to the County.
5. The Board of Directors reviews the recommendation by the committees and can approve an acquisition and accession.



D. Documentation

Following all steps of review and approval, the Executive Director and the donor sign a Deed of Gift transferring legal ownership, without restrictions as to use or future disposition. Any deviations from this policy must be stated clearly on the Deed of Gift and approved by the Board of Directors.

All purchases shall be documented by an itemized receipt.

Accession and registration papers for all acquisitions shall be filed with the appropriate staff member in charge of the collection records immediately following possession of a new acquisition. This shall include any related donor correspondence, title paperwork and all provenance information. These files are maintained in perpetuity.



VI. DEACCESSION

To say that nothing ever leaves a collection condemns the Museum to housing objects that may not be relevant to current goals and creates storage, preservation, and financial difficulties.

Deaccessioning, the process of removing an accessioned object from the collection, improves collections as it refines and focuses them through judicious culling.

The removal of any object from the Museum's collection is a serious transaction. MVC and those responsible for the collection must be cognizant of the ethical and moral implications of deaccessioning, always practicing full disclosure of procedures and acting with prudence. To avoid any appearance of impropriety and to respect original donors, the considerations and procedures below must be followed.

Christening Gown worn by Mary Bard

A. Deaccession Considerations

1. Deaccessioning will be on an item by item basis except for archival and library collections.
2. No object may be deaccessioned, disposed of or removed from the collection without careful review and documentation of clear title.
3. Staff reviews whether there is a public interest, donor relationship or concern for an item that deserves consideration. MVC has no legal obligation to notify donors or their heirs of the deaccession decision; however, exceptions may be made. If so, staff will make reasonable efforts to contact living donors to inform them of the deaccession, but such action shall not be construed as a request for permission.
4. An item must be retained in the collection for a minimum of three years before it qualifies for deaccession.
5. All governmental regulations must be followed where applicable.
6. To avoid negative publicity, MVC should be prepared to explain the decision to deaccession publicly should they be called upon to do so.

B. Criteria for Deaccession

1. Items are no longer relevant or useful for accomplishing stated goals and mission of MVC.
2. Items lack provenance or recorded information to where they are not useful for research or exhibition.
3. Items are duplicated or redundant in the collection. When there are duplicate items and the Museum feels it cannot properly care or store them, items with documented history of creation or use within the geographical boundaries of Ventura County are given priority for retention.
4. Items are in poor or deteriorated condition beyond use or reasonable repair or in a condition that pose a hazard to staff and other items in the collection.
5. Items have been stolen and for which an insurance claim has been paid to MVC.
6. Items were accessioned erroneously into the collection, such as objects without a clear title.
7. Items for which MVC is unable to provide proper care.
8. Items subject of an approved repatriation claim under NAGPRA.

C. Deaccession Review

1. Staff creates a written deaccession recommendation for each item using the previous considerations and criteria. The recommendation should include the reason for the deaccession, known provenance and title information. The recommendation proceeds to the Executive Director for review.
2. At their regular meeting, the appropriate committee reviews the proposal for consideration. A vote to deaccession by the committee refers the decision to the full MVC Board of Directors for final approval.
3. A report of all recommended deaccessions is sent to the County.
4. The Board of Directors has final approval on items recommended for deaccession.
 - a. If the Committee or Board determines that an item should be retained, an explanation should be given to guide staff in future use of the object.

D. Methods of Disposal

The recommended disposal method shall be clearly stated in the paperwork for the deaccession and in the minutes of the Committee. Every effort is made to retain objects of historical or local import in the public sphere.

1. An item may be exchanged, donated, or sold to another tax-exempt, public or educational institution.
 - a. Staff are responsible for locating appropriate institutions. Transfers and exchanges must be acknowledged with an agreement that is signed by representatives of both institutions. Where possible, the receiving institution is responsible for shipping and transportation costs. Items received by exchange are subject to the acquisition and accessions policy.
2. An item may be offered for return to the original donor.
3. An item may be repatriated using NAGPRA guidelines and procedures.
4. An item may be placed into the non-accessioned holdings of the Museum, for example, the education collection where its use may ultimately destroy it.
5. An item may be destroyed if it is deemed to be in a state of advanced deterioration or contamination, and if it cannot be exchanged, donated or sold.
6. An Item may be sold. MVC has a fiduciary responsibility to maximize the value of their return when they deaccession objects. When sale is appropriate the following considerations must be followed.
 - a. Appropriate sellers include both third party auction houses, online auction sites or other venues that provide the public with a reasonable opportunity to acquire the object.

- b. Deaccessioned items will not be sold privately to Museum of Ventura County employees, officers, members of the Committees or Board, or to their families or representatives. The same may not bid on the object at auction, engage a third party to bid on their behalf, or seek to purchase the item.
- c. Any fakes, forgeries, replicas, or reproductions shall be indicated as such.
- d. Funds from the sale of deaccessioned items must be used for the purchase of objects for the collections or for the preservation of objects in the originating collection.



Tools of Artist Omar d'Leon

1. Direct care expenses include conservation costs or any expenses which benefit the long-term preservation of the collection rather than the organization as a whole or general operating expenses.

2. Proceeds may be used for any costs directly associated with acquisitions or disposal including appraisals, shipping, processing, auction fees, or commissions.

E. Documentation

The Museum staff is responsible for implementing the final disposition of deaccessioned items and assuring that a record of the disposition is kept.

Records of deaccessioned objects will be maintained with the permanent collection records in perpetuity. A copy of the recommendation will be maintained in the file. Any accession and catalog numbers are permanently assigned and therefore, cannot be reused.

VII. Loan Policy

A. Loan Considerations

1. Adequate Protection: Including overall security and insurance must be acquired for any loan, either by MVC when seeking the loan or by the party borrowing from the permanent collections.
2. Time Frame: MVC will avoid long-term loans both incoming and outgoing. Loans should always be for a specified period, usually not to exceed one year. All loans, temporary or extended, can be reviewed and extended at that time.
3. Contract Conditions: If unusual conditions are associated with a loan, these conditions must be reviewed by the Executive Director. All parties should agree about special care or requirements.
4. Documentation: Each incoming or outgoing loan must be documented by a signed loan agreement, any additional insurance documents, related condition reports, and pertinent correspondence regarding the loan
5. Responsibility: Museum staff bears responsibility for implementing loans. They shall monitor condition of care, documentation, and plans for use of the loaned materials.

B. Incoming Loans:

Incoming loans play an essential role in MVC's activities as it allows MVC to present meaningful and comprehensive exhibitions, enhance the display of the permanent collection and aid in research projects.

If the incoming loan can be accepted under existing conditions of insurance, security, and environment, the loan may be accepted at the discretion of staff.

MVC exercises the same care in respect to incoming loans as it does in the safekeeping of its own property. Items will be insured under the Museum's fine arts policy against all usual risks while in transit and in MVC possession.

Unless otherwise noted, it is understood that incoming items may be photographed and reproduced for publicity purposes connected with the exhibition and educational use.

Loans will be shipped and packed as arranged with the lender according to professional standards.

It is the responsibility of the lender to notify the Museum

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promptly of any change in address or ownership change of the item. Items on loan, which are left unclaimed after attempts to return them have been unsuccessful, shall be treated according to California Civil Code section 1899, et seq.

C. Outgoing Loans:

MVC should not loan collection items to private individuals as it gives the appearance of private inurement. Any exceptions can only be made with approval from the Executive Director.

Outgoing loans begin with a request by the borrowing institution to Museum staff. The request should include a stated purpose for the loan, description of transportation plans, and specified time frame.

Staff shall review all items requested for outgoing loans to insure the items can withstand the rigors of travel, handling, climate changes, or exhibition. Requests should be made with adequate time for staff to prepare and follow due process.

Items loaned for publication or public exhibition must be appropriately reviewed in accordance with ongoing copyright and trademark restrictions. Where restrictions do not exist, loan materials should be acknowledged as "Courtesy of Museum of Ventura County."

Institutions or agencies must agree to provide adequate care of items received on loan. Packing and shipping of loaned items must be in accordance with professional standards.

Every effort will be made to grant loans of objects to Tribes and descendant communities for exhibition, research, or ceremonial events.

The costs of outgoing loans will be borne by the borrowing agency making the request.

D. Old Loans, Unclaimed Loans, and Objects Found in Collections:

Although it is not uncommon for staff to find undocumented objects among their collection, staff should attempt to limit future occurrences through appropriate documentation procedures.

If the owner of the property is known, staff will document their due diligence to contact the owner. If the owner does not reclaim his property or if the owner is unknown, staff will follow all procedures as stated in California Civil Code section 1899, et seq. to take ownership of the items, documenting the process.

If an institution or individual claims ownership of the object, the burden of proof rests with the claimants. The claimants must submit a formal statement indicating their desire to retain ownership. MVC must respond formally to any

written submission of intent to preserve an interest in property on loan to the museum in a timely manner. That response does not validate the claim.

Disposal of objects falling under this category must be carefully undertaken. Disposal decisions should be based on an estimated risk of an interested party coming forward.

E. Temporary Custody

Other than loans, objects may be placed in MVC custody for consideration for acquisition and accession, attribution, examination or identification, or replication.

Upon taking possession of the object, appropriate staff will maintain proper documentation recording a written description of the item, its condition, and the contact information for the owner.

While in the temporary custody of MVC, staff will give the object all prudent care. The MVC's insurance policy will cover temporary custody items that are accompanied by a receipt. Objects will be placed in MVC custody for a specified period. At the end of that period, the owner should be notified regarding the status of their property and its availability for retrieval. Extensions of the temporary custody can be granted at that time and acknowledged in writing.

Objects left unclaimed after attempts to return them have been unsuccessful shall be treated according to California Civil Code section 1899, et seq.

No. _____

VENTURA COUNTY PIONEER MUSEUM

Received of _____

Photo (album 5-P. 11) Carne Family

Photo (album 5-P. 34) Baker

(Picnics)

Photo (album 5-P. 2) Hanging Rock

Signed Mrs. B. L. Saeger

Date Sept 24-1947

Pioneer Museum receipt from 1947

VIII. Care of Collections Policy:

The care and preservation of the collection is the responsibility of the entire Museum, including all members of staff, docents, volunteers, and the Board of Directors. The Museum has a legal, ethical and professional obligation to provide proper physical care for its collections.

a. **Protection of the Collections Under Extreme Conditions:**

Although every effort will be made to care for the collections, MVC recognizes that fire, theft, vandalism and natural disaster are always potential threats. Staff is responsible for the continuing development and evaluation of appropriate security systems and will prepare recommendations for changes where appropriate.

1. Fire: MVC recognizes the vulnerability of the collection to fire. Appropriate fire protection systems and emergency procedures will be installed, developed, and maintained as funding allows.

2. Theft and Vandalism: MVC shall maintain a record system that documents and monitors the collections to have available all necessary information in the event of theft or destruction. In case of theft, photographs and all available information shall be available to proper law enforcement agents to assist in the recovery of stolen collections.

3. Natural Disaster: Recognizing the vulnerability of the collections to natural disaster, MVC is committed to developing a Disaster Plan with directives for staff reviewed annually.



Items recovered from the Thomas Fire, Courtesy of Natalie Gula

b. Ongoing Preventative Care

MVC staff is responsible for a program of regular inspection of the collections on exhibit and in storage and their ongoing care. This includes the inspection of temperature, relative humidity, pests and light levels in both storage and exhibit areas.

Environmental conditions will be monitored and managed for collections in storage and galleries with the goal to obtain and maintain the professional standards.

MVC staff will develop and implement a plan for the periodic review of the inventory and of the location of the collections. On an irregular basis, staff will perform a spot check of the collection to determine the accuracy of the records system. If collection items appear to be missing, staff will conduct a search procedure to review the files, the history of the object, and potential locations for the missing object.

c. Insurance

Insurance for the collections will be maintained by MVC. MVC staff will review insurance requirements of the collection to secure balanced and effective coverage at reasonable cost. Recommendations for changes in collection insurance coverage will be made to the Board of Directors.



Rehousing keys with archival material

d. Documentation

Collection documentation ties intellectual information to the physical object and therefore must be clear, permanent and comprehensive.

The Museum shall maintain records appropriate for the professional management of its collections. These records shall include all necessary documentation for the registration, recording, and utilization of all objects making up the collections.

MVC staff will periodically review collection records to ensure that required documentation and proper maintenance of the records is ongoing.

Appropriate documentation will be kept regarding movement of items in the collection.

Types of Records

1. Legal Documents including Transfer Agreements, purchase receipts, and Deed of Gifts: The formal agreements between donors, transfer institutions, purchase sources and MVC transferring the title of the object must be signed by both the donor and by an authorized agent of MVC.
2. Accession Files: An individual file folder containing all the information concerning a specific accession or object. It includes pertinent documents, and all related correspondence. It should also contain a photograph of the object and a complete record of the location, movement, use, and conservation of the object while in custody of MVC.
3. Collections Database: The Collections Database will be kept updated with current information regarding the legal status, location, description and condition of each object. Where appropriate, hard copies and digital backups of these records should be maintained.
4. Library & Archives Database: The Library & Archives Database(s) will be kept updated with current location, legal status, description, and other metadata deemed relevant and helpful for research purposes. Library and Archives best practices will be applied whenever possible. Items will be made available via a publicly accessible online database, with digitized objects connected to items when possible.
5. Loan Documentation: All associated loan documentation should be kept.



IX. Access

Public access to collections is expected and encouraged. Every attempt shall be made to make item records available via a publicly accessible online database. It shall be a goal of MVC to publish its collections, or a portion of its collection, in a publicly accessible digital portal.

Detail of 1920s coat fabric

Access to the physical collections by non-staff members shall be by appointment only. Visitors requesting access to the library must do so by appointment or during its regular operating hours.

Researchers, docents, volunteers, and interns may be granted access and will be monitored. Access is granted on a case-by-case basis depending on the need to use specific items or records. Staff reserves the right to refuse or withdraw access for individuals who do not follow museum procedures including proper object handling.

Staff reserves the right to deny access to researchers and visitors of materials that are culturally sensitive without prior consent from Tribes or descendant communities. Access to these materials for consultation under NAGPRA should be scheduled in advance to ensure adequate time with staff. To streamline the process, requests should be made by tribal chairpersons, authorized NAGPRA representatives, or individuals at similar level of community authority.

MVC recognizes that some information such as the value of artifacts and personal donor information is confidential. For that reason, collection records containing secured information will be available only to those engaged in collection management procedures.

Permission must be obtained to use images or materials for a purpose beyond personal use, including, but not limited to, publication or reproduction. If records, plans, or object reproduction or duplication is requested, MVC will require that the individual or agency pay all costs for processing, including staff time for executing the request. Staff will determine the charges associated with such work. The request may be refused if the condition of the item is unstable.

A. Intellectual Property

Intellectual Property refers to tangible expressions of intellectual or creative pursuits such as inventions, designs, images, and creative works that are treated in legal spheres as property. Museum will ask donors to transfer all title and interests to items, including copyright and intellectual property. If not granted, the Museum will seek to secure exclusive or non-exclusive copyright license on all acquisitions for which title is transferred. The Museum will credit the copyright holder in any published materials with the credit line that they specify.

When the donor does not own copyright or when the copyright ownership cannot be determined, the Museum will exercise all prudence with the material. Staff may refuse to accept a reproduction or copying order, if in its judgement, fulfillment of the order violates copyright law.

If MVC does not hold copyright, the Museum is not obligated to request licensing on behalf of a third-party requestor, but it can inform them of any known copyright information. It is the user's responsibility to determine whether their activities involving collections materials qualify as "fair use" or if they are liable for copyright infringement. In line with current copyright law (title 17, United States Code) staff will furnish photocopies or digital reproductions for private study, research or educational purposes.