



*City of Arts & Innovation*

# Metropolitan Museum Board

**TO: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM BOARD** **DATE: NOVEMBER 8, 2017**

**FROM: MUSEUM & CULTURAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT**

**SUBJECT: REACCREDITATION EFFORT REGARDING MOVING COLLECTIONS OUT OF THE MUSEUM BASEMENT**

## **ISSUE:**

Update on the Museum's reaccreditation effort regarding moving collections out of the museum basement.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive and file an update on the Riverside Metropolitan Museum's reaccreditation effort regarding moving collections out of the museum basement.

## **BACKGROUND:**

### **AAM Directive**

In the decision letter dated November 1, 2016 the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) notified the Riverside Metropolitan Museum that the Museum's reaccreditation decision had been tabled, "so that the museum can address, through planning, some serious deficiencies in collections stewardship".

One of these deficiencies in collections stewardship referred to the storage conditions in the basement of the Museum. "The storage conditions of collections in the basement remain substandard, despite this having been identified as an issue in the last reaccreditation review and with some progress made in the interim...we need to see a plan for, and initial steps taken, to improve basement storage conditions." (Reaccreditation Decision Letter).

"The Archive and Natural History collections need to be moved offsite, out of these basement areas...It is imperative to get all storage out the main building immediately..." (AAM Reaccreditation Site Visit Report, page 3).

### **Preparing the Collections to move out of the Museum basement**

Staff has determined that moving the Archive and Natural History collections to the offsite storage facility would meet AAM's requirements and improve the collections storage conditions. Per AAM, "Rumsey 1 and 2 are offsite storage facilities and are very good facilities with adequate temperature and humidity control; the City of Riverside is to be commended for taking the initiative

to provide these spaces and improve museum storage.” (AAM Reaccreditation Site Visit Report, page 3)

Prior to moving the Archival and Natural History collections out of the Museum basement, the collections needed to be prepared for the move. For the Archival collections, this required identifying all the different collections, surveying their relative locations in the basement, and documenting the number of boxes in each collection. For the Natural History collection, this requires boxing up taxidermy specimens to be moved out of the basement.

## **DISCUSSION:**

**As with most things at the museum in 2017, unearthing one serious problem reveals yet many others.**

### **Natural History Collections**

Staff estimates that the Natural History Collections consist of approximately 27,900 preserved specimens, covering the following disciplines:

- Botany/Clark Herbarium, 9000 plus plant specimens
- Earth Sciences, 9500 plus samples of rocks, minerals and fossils
- Zoology, with more than 9400 specimens of vertebrate animals, insects, mollusks, crustaceans, and other marine invertebrates, plus a small fluid-preserved collection.

The Museum has not been practicing proper care and preservation of the Natural History Collections, especially the taxidermy specimens (764 specimens, some mounted taxidermy and some study skins (no skeletal armature). These range in size from 2” hummingbirds to large grizzly bear skin rugs), leaving them in jeopardy, violating our own collections management policies, neglecting our stewardship duty and public trust.

In the process of assessing specimens for the move, frass (debris or excrement produced by insects) was discovered around many of the taxidermy specimens. Museum curators believe we must assume that the entire Natural History taxidermy collection is infested with dermestid beetles, given their storage conditions and proximity to each other. It is necessary to address the dermestid infestation prior to moving the Natural History collections into the collections storage facilities, so the pests are not introduced there and invade the entire Museum Collection.



*Samples of the Natural History Collection's taxidermy specimens*

Staff has also discovered evidence of frass in some of the specimens on display in the galleries, and believe it will be necessary to cure them as well. This is reasonable given many of those specimens have been out on display, without proper rest periods, for decades.

Had the pest management protocol been practiced regularly, this would have been caught early on and would most likely have helped to avoid having to cure the entire collection now.

A method for curing this type of infestation is to freeze infested objects for two (2) weeks at temperatures of -20° C. Staff is researching options and will develop a plan to cure the specimens, and then move them into the collections facility. Staff will provide an update to the Board when appropriate.

The Botany/Clark Herbarium collections will be addressed in the near future. Their storage is in questionable condition with regard to the whether the cases sealed tightly enough to keep out cigarette beetles — the main herbarium pest. There is also question about the impact of how the specimens are stacked on top of each other.

Curatorial staff believe the Earth Sciences collections of rocks, minerals, and fossils should be alright in the basement.

### Move of Archives out of the Museum Basement

**This has been completed.** More than 1,000 boxes were moved. A staff report about the required move of the archives was presented at the September 13, 2017 Museum Board meeting.



*Museum Basement space where archives were*

*Archives stored in Collections Facility*

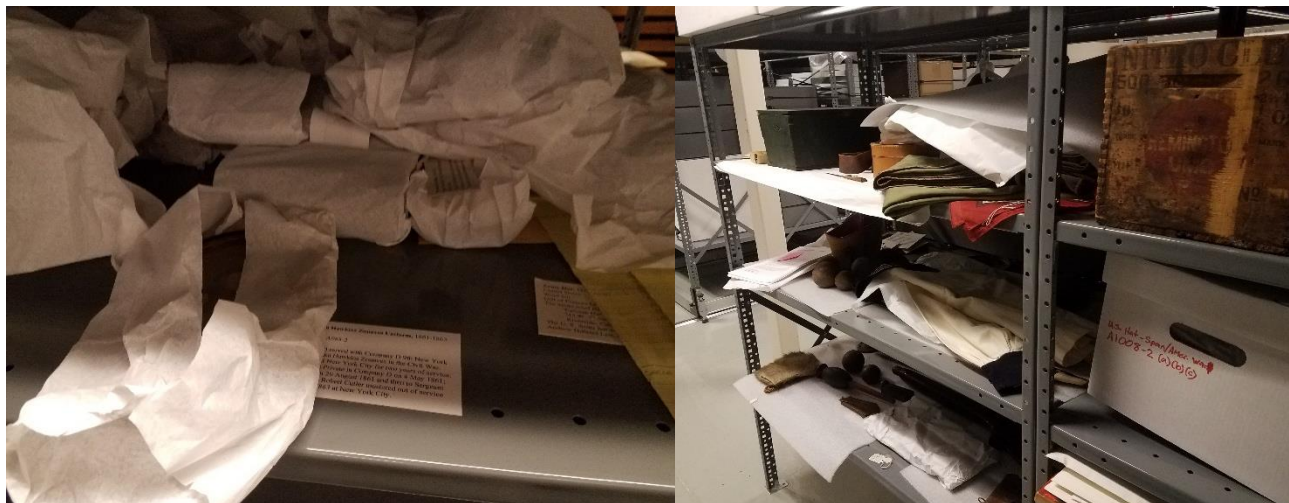
### **Collections Storage Facilities**

The Museum's collections are housed in two (2) storage facilities referred to as "Rumsey 1" and "Rumsey 2" in honor of the donor of the Museum's founding collection. Rumsey 2 is shared with Riverside Government TV studio (GTV). In addition to preparing the collections for the move, the collections storage facilities needed to be prepared to make space for the Archival and Natural History collections. Staff investigated a number of options to maximize space for collections storage. Through this investigation, staff discovered a litany of serious problems that must be addressed in order to proceed.

1. The collections storage space has been mismanaged. It has been used as storage space for non-collections items, while Museum collections have been stored in unacceptable

conditions in the Main Museum basement. Examples of non-collections items stored in the collections storage facility include the research library, a large cage for an iguana, and a very heavy cement fountain wall from the Fox Theater measuring 5' by 8' 6". They had to be moved out.

2. Museum items had to be reorganized to create space.
3. Many museum items from prior exhibits have not been put away properly, and are in the way.



*Objects from prior exhibits, not properly put away.*

4. More shelving is needed – staff is now working on procurement.
5. The Museum built a garage next to the building so that the Government TV (GTV) van would have a place to park. Prior to the construction of the garage, the van was parked in Rumsey 2 which was out of compliance with fire regulations and had a detrimental effect on Museum objects. The garage was permitted by the building department, but there is no record of a fire permit, and the Museum did not seek approval by the business park's home owner's association (HOA). In all likelihood, the garage will have to be removed.
6. The facility is out of compliance with Fire Safety Codes and the Building Safety Codes:

#### Rumsey 1 violations:

##### California Fire Code (CFC) Section 105.1

- A. Provide a copy of the approved building permit for the wood stairs and storage area above the offices, or remove.

Further investigation revealed that there is no approved building permit for the wooden stairs and storage area that was constructed by Museum staff between 2007 and 2009 above the offices. The Building Official conducted a site visit and determined it must be removed. The objects stored above the offices must also be moved. Removing the stairs and office to make room for additional shelving was estimated at \$20,000.

- B. Finalize building permits through the Fire and Building Department for storage racks and shelving installed in or around 2008.



## CFC Chapter 32

- C. Lower plastics to a max. height of 6' and all other to a max. height of 12'.

Lowering plastics to a max. height of 6' has been completed. Moving all others to a max height of 12' is underway, but there is not adequate room in Rumsey 1 to accommodate all of the objects that are currently stored above 12'. It was determined that pursuing a high pile application was not an option because it would require costly modifications to the sprinkler system.

### Rumsey 2 violations:

#### CFC Section 105.1

- D. Provide a copy of the approved building and fire permits for the garage in the parking lot. This has been completed.

#### CFC, Section 901.6

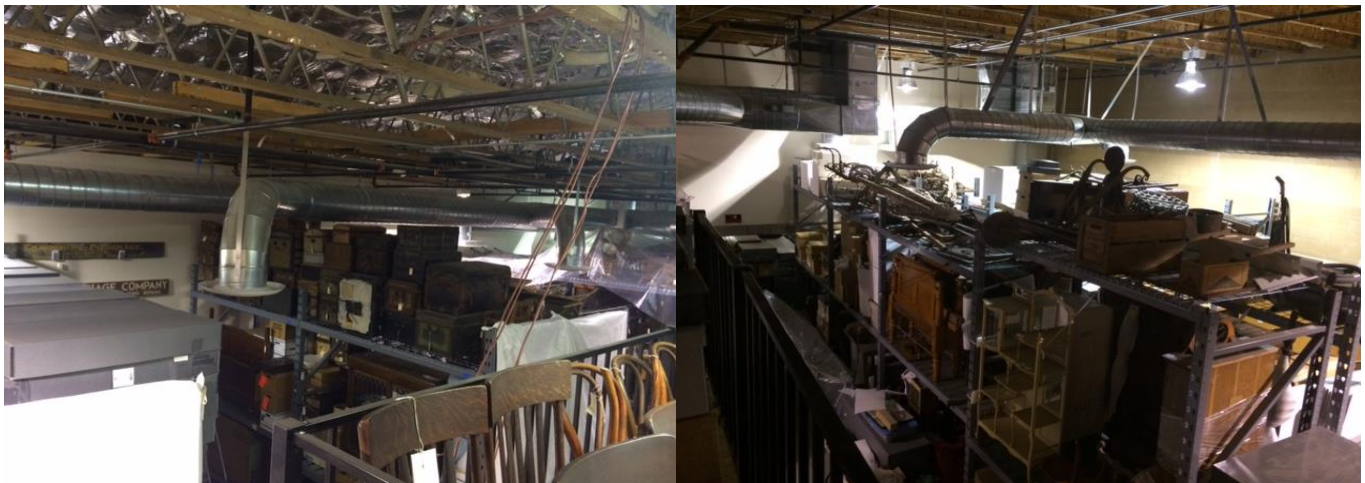
- A. Remove the batting on the ceiling obstructing the fire sprinkler heads. Provide a copy of the required annual testing and maintenance records of the fire sprinkler system.

Batting was installed on the ceiling of Rumsey 2 and it was installed in a way that obstructs the fire sprinklers. Staff is working with the City's General Services Department to have the batting removed and reinstalled so that it does not cover the fire sprinklers, to provide documentation of fire sprinkler system maintenance and testing and to replace missing signage.

- B. Replace missing signage on the exterior Fire Department water connection.

#### CFC, Chapter 32

- C. Lower plastics to a max. height of 6' and all other storage to a max. height of 12' per fire permit F16-0167. Install restrictions signage.



*Examples of items stored above fire code limit*

- D. Complete the permit process for the storage racks through the building department.

The permit process for the storage racks has been completed.

Next steps to comply with AAM requirements and Building and Safety and Fire regulations include:

Natural History collection

1. Boxing up taxidermy specimens to prepare the specimens to be moved into freezer.
2. Freezing specimens to eliminate pests.
3. Moving Natural History specimens to collections storage facility.

Collections Storage Facility

1. Completing permit processes.
2. Moving objects below 12'.
3. Installing required signage.
4. Removing and reinstalling batting on ceiling.
5. Completing fire sprinkler system testing and maintenance.
6. Resolving unauthorized garage construction with HOA.
7. Configuring collections storage to accommodate objects moving from Museum basement and down from height above 12'.

**Staff will provide an update on the above issues to the Board when appropriate.**

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The fiscal impact of this report is unknown at this time and will depend on costs of addressing the issues with collections and the collections storage facility.

Approved by:                      Alexander T. Nguyen, Assistant City Manager/Acting Museum & Cultural Affairs Director