



City Council Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE: JANUARY 14, 2025

FROM: MUSEUM DEPARTMENT WARDS: ALL

SUBJECT: DEACCESSION FROM THE MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE'S PERMANENT COLLECTION THREE HUNDRED SEVENTY-THREE (373) OBJECTS FROM THE MEIER COLLECTION, INCLUDING BOOKS AND MAGAZINES (193), DOCUMENTS (79), PHOTOGRAPHS AND PRINTS (27), HOUSEHOLD UTENSILS (20), HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS (13), PERSONAL OBJECTS (4), RECREATIONAL OBJECTS (4), TOOLS (31), AND MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS (2)

ISSUE:

Approve deaccession from the Museum of Riverside's permanent collection of three hundred seventy-three (373) objects from the Meier collection, including books and magazines (193), documents (79), photographs and prints (27), household utensils (20), household objects (13), personal objects (4), recreational objects (4), tools (31), and miscellaneous objects (2).

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council approve deaccession from the permanent collection of three hundred seventy-three (373) objects from the Meier collection, including books and magazines (193), documents (79), photographs and prints (27), household utensils (20), household objects (13), personal objects (4), recreational objects (4), tools (31), and miscellaneous objects (2).

BOARD RECOMMENDATION:

At a special meeting on December 4, 2024, the Museum of Riverside Board, with seven (7) members present for this vote and two (2) absent, unanimously voted to recommend that City Council approve deaccession of three hundred seventy-three (373) objects from the Meier collection, including books and magazines (193), documents (79), photographs and prints (27), household utensils (20), household objects (13), personal objects (4), recreational objects (4), tools (31), and miscellaneous objects (2).

BACKGROUND:

In December 1994, the City of Riverside's Museum Department (then known as the Riverside Municipal Museum) took possession of and accessioned the Meier Collection with Museum Board

approval (April 1995). The collection came from the Duarte (Los Angeles County) California home of William Baird through a donation from Herbert and Margaret Meier. Mrs. Meier was the daughter of William Baird. According to the Curator of History at the time, the entire donation was accessioned by the Museum with the plan to transfer it to the California State Citrus Heritage Park (CSCHP) in Riverside at a later date. In 2018, the former curator stated “the Meier Collection ... was to go into the Large Grower Estate residence once established. ... These items came to the [Museum of Riverside] for accessioning and storage pending full build out of the park, whereupon we would properly transfer designated artifacts and items to the State.”

At its meeting on September 11, 2024, the Museum of Riverside’s Collection Committee voted unanimously in support of recommending that the Museum of Riverside Board forward the recommendation regarding the cultural items and the archival items to City Council. A revised report adjusting the number of objects in this recommendation was approved by the Museum of Riverside’s Collections Committee, which voted by email during the week of October 28, 2024.

DISCUSSION:

The term “deaccession” refers to the procedure of formally removing an object from a museum’s permanent collection, after which the object may be considered for sale, exchange, gift, transfer to another entity, transfer to a collection other than the permanent collection, or – in the case of irretrievably deteriorated objects – disposal.

Although accessioned at the time of acquisition, because these objects were never intended to be part of the Museum’s permanent collection, they were accessioned in error. Their originally intended transfer to the CSCHP notwithstanding, it is the Museum that holds title to the Meier collection objects. The objects were donated in 1994 and have not been transferred to the CSCHP in Riverside for the originally intended exhibition in the “Large Grower Estate residence” during the past thirty (30) years. The Museum has provided storage and care for the entire period. The objects were slated for a facility that is included in portions of the CSCHP’s master plan that have not been developed. There is no immediate expectation that this transfer will take place. Museum staff have determined in consultation with CSCHP staff that the current situation is unlikely to change in a reasonable span of time.

The Meier collection objects fit three deaccession criteria within the Museum’s Collections Management and Exhibition Policies:

1. The object/specimen is outside of the scope of the Museum’s mission and guidelines set by Riverside Municipal Code (Chapter 2.12.), acquisition policy, or is irrelevant to the purposes of the Museum.
2. The Museum is unable to properly preserve or store the object/specimen and to provide proper or adequate environment for their collections.
3. The object/specimen has doubtful potential utilization in the future in the Museum’s exhibition and public programs.

If this deaccession action is approved by City Council, the objects will be sold at one or more auction houses or other appropriate public sales outlets. The funds realized from these transactions will be used in accordance with designated purposes in the Museum’s Collections

Management and Exhibition Policies, i.e., retained until used for an acquisition appropriate to the history collection.



Illustrations capture only a sample of the 373 objects, which are itemized in full in the attachment.



STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

The activities of the Museum of Riverside align with the Strategic Priority, “Arts, Culture and Recreation” and in particular goal 1.1 (strengthening Riverside’s portfolio of arts, culture, recreation, senior, and lifelong learning programs and amenities), goal 1.2 (enhancing equitable access to arts, culture, and recreational service offerings and facilities), and goal 1.5 (supporting programs and amenities to further develop literacy, health, and education of children, youth, and seniors throughout the community).

Museum programs further support the Strategic Priority, “Community Well-Being.” Specific goals supported by Museum programs and partnerships include goal 2.3, which includes strengthening neighborhood identities, and goal 2.5, which points to fostering relationships between community members and partner organizations.

1. **Community Trust** – The Museum’s Collections Committee is composed of Museum staff, Museum Board members, and members of the Riverside community. Strengthening the Museum’s collections in accordance with the Museum’s Collection Development Plan and with the involvement of community members builds community trust and supports the Museum’s mission.
2. **Equity** – Appropriate collection resources enrich the stories that the Museum can tell across all neighborhoods through exhibitions and programs that are offered equitably.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – Thoughtful deaccessioning ensures that resources will be expended to care only for collections that align with the Museum’s mission.
4. **Innovation** – Honing collections is not innovative, but resources redirected to core programs and collections lead to improved programming.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – Strengthening the Museum’s collections in accordance with the Museum’s Collection Development Plan, collection management policies, and mission enhances the City’s ability to preserve Riverside’s history for the future in a considered and judicious manner.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no immediate fiscal impact associated with this report. Deaccessioned objects will be offered for public sale. Following Museum policy and museum field codes of ethics, net proceeds generated by such sales are restricted to future acquisitions for the permanent collection. Proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned objects are deposited into the Special Deposits Fund, Museum Deaccessioned Account 0000721-225252.

Prepared by:	Ann Lovell, Manager of Operations
Approved by:	Robyn G. Peterson, Ph.D., Museum Director
Certified as to availability of funds:	Kristie Thomas, Finance Director/Assistant Chief Financial Officer
Approved by:	Kris Martinez, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form:	Jack Liu, Interim City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Museum of Riverside Board Draft Minutes – December 4, 2024
2. Museum Board Deaccession Recommendation Report – December 4, 2024
3. Meier Deaccession Inventory