



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD

DATE: AUGUST 26, 2020

FROM: COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON NEW COLLECTIONS FORMED

ISSUE:

Receive and file a report on new collections formed.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file a report on new collections formed.

BACKGROUND:

The Collections Committee, which is a staff-level advisory team, includes collections and education staff, one Board member, and two members of the public. It advises staff on philosophical choices affecting collecting directions, reviews recommendations for accessions to and deaccessions from the permanent collection, advises on loan requests and conservation actions, reviews and advises regarding collections-related policy documents, and advises on controversial exhibition themes or other program issues that may be interpreted as problematic from the standpoint of policy.

On July 22, 2020, the Collections Committee reviewed and approved a staff action forming two new collections within the History Division and approved a recommendation that born-digital collections be directed automatically to the Community Collection following Collections Committee review of content.

DISCUSSION:

During the COVID-19 shutdown, all curatorial and education staff (six individuals) were deemed “non-essential” per the governor’s definitions and were placed on COVID-19 leave from March 20 through June 25, 2020. During this period, the COVID-19 episode itself and the protests and social dialog that developed in the wake of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis prompted the creation of two new collections within the History Division of the Museum. These collections fell in the collecting category of “rapid response,” and staff were not in a position to solicit advisory group input prior to launching the collections. In the absence of curatorial and education

staff, the scopes of these collections were defined initially by four of the five administrative and collections staff who continued working. In the case of the COVID-19 Collection, staff consulted with two other museums that had already launched COVID-19 collecting initiatives: the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, Maryland.

Both collections primarily comprise born-digital content, although we have amassed a small quantity of newspapers, newsletters, signage, and emblematic artifacts for the COVID-19 collection. The fact that these new collections are almost entirely digital prompted Katie Gove, Collections Registrar, to prepare documentation protocols for born-digital collections.

COVID-19 Collection

The COVID-19 collection includes content gathered by the administrative and collections staff who continued to work during the pandemic shutdown from mid-March through June 2020 and content submitted by the public. To encourage public submissions, a description of the collection goals was posted on the Museum's website with a digital submission portal (<https://riversideca.gov/form/collecting-covid-19>).

Black Lives Matters Protest Collection

This collection was even more rapidly established, and there is no webpage or upload portal for public submissions. The resources available to us to revise our website do not allow us to move as quickly as this chapter in our history developed.

Documentation of the protests and the reactions in the mostly downtown spaces where the protests occurred are at the core of this collection. The collection is entirely born-digital at present comprising photographs taken by staff who were working, which document the preparation for and aftermath of the protests that began on June 1, 2020 and occurred sporadically over several weeks. Other content includes screenshots from media outlets, news articles, protest organizers' social media notices, and public statements issued by regional entities.

Additional content is desired for both of these collections.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by:	Robyn G. Peterson, Ph.D., Museum Director
Certified as to availability of funds:	Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer
Approved by:	Moises Lopez, Deputy City Manager