

**Minutes of the
Collections, Library, and Archives Committee of the
Board of Directors of the Arizona Historical Society
7 January 2020
929 E. Second St. Tucson, AZ**

Mission: Connecting people through the power of Arizona's history.

1. Call to Order – Greg Scott, Committee Chair

Meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. at the Arizona History Museum, 929 E. Second St.

2. Roll call (Quorum) –

Present in Person: Greg Scott

Present Virtually: Janice Bryson (later Jim Snitzer joined)

Absent: None

Staff Present in Person: Trish Norman, Bill Peterson

Staff Present Virtually: James Burns

3. Call to the Public – Consideration and discussion of comments from the public. Those wishing to address the Board need not request permission in advance. Presentations will be limited to five minutes. Action taken as a result of public comment will be limited to directing staff to study the rescheduling of the matter for further consideration and decision at a later date.

Jay Van Orden, Vicki Schwager, Sandy Chen, and one other AHS member whose name was unclear on the audio.

Mr. Van Orden established his credentials as a former AHS staff member who had participated in collecting many objects over the decades, including a set of type-piece saddles, which were voted on at the October 25, 2019 State Board of Directors meeting for deaccession. Mr. Van Orden had questions about the reasoning for those deaccessions and also about the AHS Collections Management Policy (most recent version approved by the State Board of Directors in August 2018) versus older versions of the policy (dates not mentioned). Questions specifically relate to items or wording from the older policies not included in the newer policies. Chairman Scott referred the matter to staff for further information and also about current collecting policy vs. previous collecting policy. Greg promised that there would be discussion at the State board meeting. Read old policy vs. new policy.

Ms. Chen, a library and archives volunteer, spoke about a deaccessioning project in the Tucson Library and Archives several years ago. She expressed concerns about making sure that the reputation of the organization

is protected in deaccessioning, that all state policies and laws are followed, and that the funds derived from deaccessioning are appropriately spent. How should items be dealt with physically. What about autographed books? Could we start a new Friends board for the library? Can materials be turned over to a private Friends library board

Ms. Schwager identified herself as a volunteer. Quotes from State Board of Directors meetings were read and questions were asked about the revised mission and vision statements for AHS and about the strategic plan. She delivered a letter to Chairman Scott and asked that the questions contained with the letter be answered. Discussion ensued. Chairman Scott directed the matter to be reviewed by the staff and state board of directors.

An AHS member was present and announced his name, but the audio was garbled.

4. Discussion and action, if any, to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2019 meeting.

Bryson moved to accept the minutes as submitted; Norman seconded. All approved.

5. Presentation regarding current deaccessioning standards and best practices and the field-wide evolution in collecting practices for museums.

Dr. Peterson was asked by the committee to present information regarding current deaccessioning standards and best practices in the museum profession.

In preparation for AHS' reaccreditation review by the American Alliance of Museums and the upcoming sunset review and performance audit, staff is working on collections issues that have been identified. Addressing these issues will strengthen the agency as we look to re-accreditation in 2020 and the upcoming Arizona Legislative sunset review in 2022/3.

- **Collections Access** – To ensure the safety of the collections, only staff, trained volunteers, and qualified researchers are to be given access to collections areas. This safety measure ensures that these sensitive storage areas remain secure. There will be sign-in sheets and tracking documents for both volunteers and researchers. Only collections staff will have universal access to physical collections; all other agency volunteers will be asked to sign in and will be escorted or supervised at all times. In the coming year, AHS collections will become more accessible to staff, volunteers, researchers, and the public as we move to a cloud-based collections management software system that will include a public portal.
- **Collecting/Retention Practices** – AHS is focusing its limited resources on objects of high historical value to the people of Arizona. Collections projects will focus on:
 - the direct care of current collections
 - the identification of collections that represent audiences we have not served in the past

- areas of collecting that might prove beneficial to future research as per the AHS mission and vision statements

AHS has discontinued the practice of accepting drop-off donations and will rarely accept unsolicited donations; neither action meets with AAM standards or best practices for collection. Type pieces (objects that are historical and perhaps even valuable yet have no direct tie to Arizona history) are being carefully scrutinized in light of our scarce resources for collections care. We will no longer accept items that are not of museum quality. Candidates for deaccession are

- those no longer relevant to the mission
- type pieces
- those in poor physical condition

This process aligns with current best practices for collections care and management as per the American Alliance of Museums.

Facts about Deaccession

- All funds realized through the deaccession process will be restricted to the care of remaining collections.
 - Criteria for deaccession include low relevance to mission, indirect connection to Arizona history (type pieces), and poor condition. For a complete list of criteria, see the AHS Collections Policy.
 - AHS maintains strict guidelines regarding the deaccession process. Each decision is fully vetted first by the staff collections committee, and then by Board Collections, Library, and Archives Committee, and AHS State Board vote of approval.
 - Any potential sales of objects will be through public outlets with professional vendors, as per best practices.
- **Management Practices** –AHS is obligated to care for those collections by keeping them secure and within climate-appropriate spaces. Portions of AHS collections are currently stored in conditions that pose physical risk to the objects. In Flagstaff, there are collections stored in shipping containers with no climate control or security. Similarly, in Yuma, collections are stored in a donated basement space with no climate controls or security. We are in danger of losing our accreditation or failing a future sunset review due to this situation. As per the AHS strategic plan, we will be moving collections to one of our facilities with the capacity to store those collections properly.

Chairman Scott asked if there were any questions. Snitzer stated support for the current (2018) collections management policy, and expressed concerns about past policies. He discussed reviewing objects in storage in Tucson when on a tour. He asked about significance to Arizona history. He saw a lot of very old things but nothing representing more recent history from 1950s to the present. He asked why. There isn't enough room in storage. Could we just borrow what we need from another museum when we need it? Deaccessioning is much harder to do than accessioning, as it should be. The policy works well. Collections problems need to be addressed for the sunset review.

6. Review, discussion, and recommendations, regarding proposed deaccession of three dimensional collections.

Object fragments from the collection of the Pioneer Museum in Flagstaff were presented for proposed deaccession. They were found on property next to AHS Pioneer Museum at an undetermined time, and have been in the collection for decades. They should not have been collected at the time, and will be handled per state law.

There are also some geospecimens – including piece of uranium. AHS has much better specimens in Tucson if we need them. Uranium samples have been stored with other collections, which are now being evaluated to see if any particles or pieces of uranium got on other objects, which could mean they are contaminated.

Bryson moved to approve the proposed items for deaccession to be considered at the January 17, 2020 board meeting for full board approval. Snitzer seconded. All approved.

7. Review, discussion, and recommendations, regarding proposed deaccession of library and archives items, if any

No library or archives items were proposed for deaccession.

7. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

Dated this 7th day of January 2019

Arizona Historical Society

Greg Scott

Gregory Scott, Committee Chair