

Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas

Scope of Collections

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Introduction

The Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas collects materials that help document the history, pre-history, natural history, and geology of southern Nevada and fulfill its mission to “inspire and educate a diverse public about the history and natural history of Nevada.” With such a broad mission, it is essential that the collections are managed and, in turn, are manageable. It is also important that there is an understanding across the entire museum organization as to what we currently have in the collections, what we aspire to collect, and the purpose and intent of our collecting policy.

The Collections included in the scope are:

- Education - educational materials related to all materials collected by the museum
- Manuscripts, historical newspapers, maps, rare books, and other 2-dimensional (paper) artifacts that are part of the larger Cahlan Research Library
- Library – reference material, including 3000+ non-circulating volumes, clippings & ephemera, and government documents part of the Cahlan Research Library
- History - photographs, three-dimensional artifacts, anthropology, costumes, and textiles
- Natural History - paleontology, geology, entomology, herbarium, and zoology

Purpose

The intention is for this document to be used as a reference and guide in the decision-making processes of the museum. That includes decisions in the planning of networking, outreach, education and accession policies and activities; each of which have a bearing upon the collections the museum holds today and that to which it aspires to have. The purpose of this document, therefore, includes all of the following:

- To ensure that all collecting activities support the museum’s mission
- To determine the priorities for acquisition for each collection area to ensure best use of storage space, archival materials, time, resources, and funding
- To provide more detailed criteria for accepting or refusing donations than those offered within the Collections Management Policy
- To ensure educational material, while not accessioned, is always considered as part of acquisition review and targeting
- To give context and an overview to researchers considering the museum’s collections
- To provide potential donors a checklist to help them evaluate if their artifacts are a good fit for the museum
- To assist and support deaccessioning decisions

Interdependencies

This document should be read in conjunction with the Collections Management Policy and Procedures and the Strategic Institutional Plan (etc. to be added)

Geographical Scope

As a natural history and history museum committed to collecting and preserving material related to Nevada, the museum requires a flexible and inclusive definition of Nevada that is based on physical and human geography.

Physical Geography

This facet of the geographical scope encompasses the general area now known as Nevada and its relationship with current and past physical environments. Curators refer to the following natural areas:

- Mojave Desert
- Northern portions of the Sonoran Desert
- Great Basin

Human Geography

This facet of the geographical scope encompasses the boundaries defined by human behavior. This includes the relationships between political boundaries, cultural affiliations, and the influence of physical geography on human behavior. Collecting is therefore focused on:

- The political boundaries of Nevada, from territory to statehood, and the direct relationship with California, Arizona, and Utah and, to a lesser extent, Idaho and Oregon.
- Cultural affiliations based on ethnicity, language, religion, ideology, shared experiences, etc. This includes American Indians and Native Americans with past and current connections to the region.
- The influence of physical geography and the natural environment on human behavior, such as water use, industry, transportation, etc.

Temporal Scope

As a state museum with the broad mission to inspire and educate the public about Nevada, the concept of having a temporal scope is less important than other criteria. Each potential accession will be considered on its own merits in relation to existing objects and the collecting policy, and how that may represent that period of time. Unless a specific period of time is underrepresented in a collection, the temporal scope for intentional collecting remains undesignated

Collecting Current History / ‘History in the Making’

Overview

There are certain events, both globally and locally, that may trigger the museum to undertake a Rapid Response Collection activity to help future generations reflect on extraordinary moments. These events may range from global events, political changes, activism, local situations informed by larger movements, to cultural phenomena, such as in sport or popular culture.

The nature of the resulting methods, artifacts, and communication, though, will vary as is appropriate for the event concerned.

This document sets out to provide options and suggestions to the curation team rather than prescribe a specific set of procedures when such an event occurs.

See appendix for more examples.

Ethical Considerations

In all such events, the museum must adhere to all professional ethics of collecting and must maintain empathetic and sympathetic communication adopted in line with the following guidelines when the situation is related to a tragic event:

- Do nothing that exacerbates the crisis, detracts from the emergency response, or distracts those who are involved in it.
- Be respectful of the impact of the crisis; be sensitive to the fact that lives are at risk and may be lost
- Museum team members working to collect material will not put themselves at risk
- Be mindful of the potential emotional trauma that may result from collecting materials and offer team members opportunities to disengage
- Work within our collections management policy.
- Maintain standards of assessment, documentation and planning, but recognize the additional need to record appropriate consents for future use and, potentially, next of kin information.
- Ensure that any producers, performers and artists involved are paid a fair price for their work, and that wherever possible provide active support

Community Communication

All communication to the community involved regarding a rapid response collection must include an explanation regarding:

- why the museum is collecting material of any nature

- what and how that the museum will use or access the material in the future
- how the museum will store and care for the material
- how the museum will capture stories regarding the collected materials

Methods of Collection

In a rapid response collection period, there are several methods that may be deployed, three prime examples are given below:

Materials Collected After an Event

This scenario involves materials that need to be collected in a timely manner to ensure they are preserved because they are at risk of being disposed of or destroyed shortly after the event.

An example is the 1 October Harvest Festival Shooting in Las Vegas (2017), where mourners placed objects in memory of those killed at spontaneous memorial sites. The museum worked with local authorities, cultural institutions, and community organizations to assist in collecting, preserving, and recording the materials in the days and weeks following the incident.

Proactive Material Collection

This scenario occurs when the event is either anticipated, or is of a longer duration, whereby the museum may ask the public to save current and future event-related objects and stories for the museum.

The process to collect involves reaching out to the community and asking them to donate materials related to the event. This is typically conducted through email, website and social media efforts, and is made more effective by engaging the media in the efforts to broaden the potential audience for donations.

An example is a request for objects that remind people of their time during the lockdown of the state due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This would likely comprise of objects or digital material that can help tell the story of how people are coping or managing life under these extraordinary circumstances. This may also include experiences and materials from those on the front lines, such as those working in healthcare, grocery stores, and other essential operations. (See Pandemic Suggested Object List Appendix).

An alternative, non-tragic event related example is the first, and very successful, season of the Las Vegas ice hockey team, the Vegas Golden Knights, when the museum requested donations of any related materials, from ticket stubs to hats, and for members of the public to think of potential donations as the season continued.

Request for the Creation of Related Materials

This scenario involves the museum making a request for the donation of specific materials related to an extraordinary event, and ones that maybe of the general public's own creation.

An example would be to request people write their stories from the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic or create artwork that represented that time.

Looking After the Museum Team and Volunteers

It is important that before the museum initiates a Rapid Response Collection, that they consider the impact of such an activity on the mental health of their team. Some people, and stories may be difficult for team members to listen to and process themselves. Wherever possible, suggested support organizations should be provided prior to the collection, and this information made readily available. It may be prudent to contact HR for advice. It is important that any such collection activity should be made voluntary, so that if a staff member feels unable to be involved that they are given the option to excuse themselves from the project without consequences.

Education Collection

Description/Current Scope

The Education Collection serves as a bridge between the museum and the general public. Objects are used for the traveling trunk program, hands-on programming in the education room and galleries, and for off-site displays at community events. Items in the Education Collection are regularly handled by the public and are subject to being lost or broken. As such, it consists of objects not appropriate for accession into the Permanent Collection, including replicas and real artifacts of lesser quality or unknown provenience.

Strengths (including Type Specimens, Rare and/or Unique Aspects)

Library & Reference

- 20th century magazines
- 20th century newspapers
- 20th century yearbooks
- 20th century Las Vegas maps
- 19th and early 20th century schoolbooks (real and replicas)
- *The Green Book*, reproduction

Photography

- Early 20th century viewfinders
- Viewfinder photos
- Mining photos, copies
- Early Las Vegas school photos, copies

History

- Mining tools
- 19th and early 20th century household tools (real and replicas)
- 19th and early 20th century toys (real and replicas)
- Native American artifacts (projectile points, baskets, woven sandals)
- Communication artifacts (typewriters, phones, cameras)
- Military uniforms and medals
- Showgirl headdresses

Natural History

- Preserved insects (real)
- Skull casts

- Fossils (real, casts, and 3D prints)
- Faunal material (fur, bones, misc. animal parts)
- Plastic models of organisms
- Rocks and minerals

Future Collecting Focus

Future collecting will focus on items that reflect the cultural diversity of Nevada. When possible and appropriate, an emphasis will be placed on collecting original material rather than replicas.

Means of Acquisition

The museum considers objects for the Education Collection when they are offered for donation but not chosen for accession into the Permanent Collection. The museum also purchases objects.

Outside of Scope / Exclusions

One-of-a-kind/rare artifacts with potential value for research or exhibition are not appropriate for the Education Collection.

Implications of Digital and Digitizing

Some objects in the traveling trunks have been photographed so that they can be shared with teachers who aren't able to access the trunks. Although a hands-on experience with the objects is preferred, the museum team is exploring options for digitizing educational experiences for educators, particularly those who are homeschooling because of Covid-19.

Challenges

- Objects in the Education Collection are handled frequently and require a significant amount of maintenance. Many need to be replaced regularly.
- Objects are frequently handled by volunteers who don't have the same professional training as curators.
- The public places higher value on interactions with "real" artifacts, but these are often the least appropriate for use in this collection. It is difficult to find a balance between providing authentic and meaningful experiences for the public and protecting valuable objects.

Opportunities

Because many grant-making agencies put an emphasis on education, there may be grant opportunities for this collection.

Cahlan Research Library

The Cahlan Research Library is the umbrella term for multiple collections that encompass traditional aspects of special libraries, archives, and manuscript collections. The research library houses the reference library, manuscript collections, maps, rare books, and institutional archives.

Reference Library Collection

Description /Current Scope

Reference Library materials are primarily reference materials for the museum team and general researchers. These include:

- Non-circulating books related to the history, natural history, economy, ethnography, etc. of Nevada. Representative samples of literary works by Nevada authors or works set in Nevada are part of this collection. As a resource for the museum itself, the book collection also covers museum studies, the historiography of the American west, general reference such as historical product catalogs, and material related to global topics important to Nevada history such as gaming, organized crime, prostitution, etc.
- Historical Nevada newspapers in print and on microfilm
- Periodicals
- Mass market films such as documentaries and movies about or set in Nevada.
- Government documents generated from cultural resource studies/inventories
- Phonebooks and city directories.
- Ephemeral/vertical files

Strengths (including Type Specimens, Rare and/or Unique Aspects)

- Books covering the history of Las Vegas, Nevada, and the American west
- Ephemera files covering the history of Las Vegas and Nevada, with an emphasis on Las Vegas casinos, military activities including WWII, nuclear testing, and Hoover Dam
- Biography files on major figures in southern Nevada
- Cultural resources studies of significant areas in southern Nevada

Future Collecting Focus

- Fictional and literary volumes by local authors
- Environment & Ecology
- Natural history
- Museum studies

Means of Acquisition

- Direct purchase by museum through general budget and library restricted fund
- Donation and/or collection by staff
- Gifts from researchers who have used library materials in their works
- Gifts from the Friends of NSMLV, under direction of Librarian/Curator of Manuscripts
- Select volumes included in larger donations, as selected by Librarian/Curator of Manuscripts
- Duplicates from collections

Outside of Scope / Exclusions

- Born digital publications, particularly those that are licensed, such as ebooks
- Wholesale collection of all local publications/periodicals
- Photocopies of original material maintained by other institutions
- Personal book collections
- Periodicals dated after 2020

Implications of Digital and Digitizing

Most books, films, and clippings from publications are copyrighted material and are not suitable for digitization. However, simple born-digital items such as online articles can be saved as pdfs with appropriate attribution and metadata and included within inventories of print collections.

Challenges

Discoverability is a challenge. Multiple formats make it difficult to catalog items in a consistent manner. Additionally, researchers require access to current inventories and at present there is no efficient way to do this for anything other than books.

Preservation of magnetic film is another challenge. The digitization of mass-produced materials cannot be included in grants because of copyright issues, but these materials are at risk of degradation. This risk is exacerbated by unstable environmental conditions. Access to these materials is also an issue because of fragility and because the library does not have dedicated equipment for viewing or listening to this media. Going forward, the museum needs to make the difficult decision as to whether or not it has the capacity to store (and provide access) to these materials.

Storage is another challenge, especially the oversized newspaper volumes. Their current storage on pallet shelving is detrimental to their preservation and make it impossible to access them on demand. These volumes almost all exist in a digital format elsewhere and the museum should make a decision regarding the fate of these volumes.

Opportunities

The Friends of NSMLV have recently taken on the task of assisting the library in developing its museum studies collection. This should help make the collection more useful to staff.

Additionally, identifying methods of sharing collection inventories in a consistent and uniform manner should make it easier for the team to understand and use this portion of the library.

Manuscript Collection

Description /Current Scope

Manuscript collections are paper collections stored together to maintain provenance of the original donor(s) or creator(s). The collections are described in relation to the donor/creator and content. When present, original order is maintained. Otherwise, collections are processed and arranged in a logical and hierarchical manner, but *respect de fonds* is maintained.

Strengths (including Type Specimens, Rare and/or Unique Aspects)

General strengths of the collection include:

- Community groups (political, fraternal, civic, etc.)
- Clark County Civil Defense
- Popular Culture
- Early Casinos and Hotels
- Federal topics such as Hoover Dam, Nellis Air Force Base, and the Nevada Test Site
- Women in southern Nevada

Highlights of the manuscripts collection include:

- The Papers of Helen J. Stewart, the “first lady of Las Vegas”
- Records of the Clark County Civil Defense
- Records of the Pair-O-Dice Club
- The Papers of Barbara Gates, Private First Class in the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corp during WWII
- The Papers of John and Florence Lee Cahlan, historians and journalists active in Las Vegas between the 1930s and 1960s
- Records of the Boulder Canyon Reclamation Project, being an inventory of mines submerged by Lake Mead
- Ohana Magazine, the first Las Vegas magazine for Hawaiians living in southern Nevada

Future Collecting Focus

Targeted collection of historical material related to:

- BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) life and experiences in Nevada
- Conservative groups in Nevada
- Queer life and experiences in Nevada (although the museum will not compete with the LGBTQIA Archives housed at UNLV Special Collections)
- Public health issues, such as Spanish Influenza, HIV, and exposure to above-ground nuclear testing

Outside of Scope / Exclusions

- Photocopies of material maintained by other institutions
- Modern (post 1980) organizational records/archives of government entities
- Material that requires broad restrictions, especially time limits, on access
- Collections stored for other institutions without curation/access agreements and financial support
- Material already heavily represented in the collection
- Plaques and related material that cannot be removed from frames – although these may have a place within the history collections.

Means of Acquisition

- Occasional purchase of significant collections using private museum funds
- Community outreach
- Donation/gift to the museum
- Authentic and meaningful community outreach

Implications of Digital and Digitizing

A digital collections policy, along with procedures, is required. Manuscript collections are increasingly digital, with many new collections representing a hybrid of born-digital, digitized, and physical paper. Currently, the museum lacks the resources to ingest and package large digital manuscript collections.

In terms of digitizing manuscript material, the museum can produce archival scans of letter-sized material. Once digitized, this material is stored on the Digital Projects Drive with the location of archival copies noted in PastPerfect. However, the museum lacks resources (tools, training) to attach metadata and ensure the fixity of the digital artifact itself.

Depending on team availability, the museum can produce low-resolution reference copies to assist researchers who cannot visit the facility.

Challenges

Over the past decade, a generous scope of collections led to the accessioning of voluminous collections that are not always appropriate for a museum. Hundreds of feet of material remain unprocessed due to limitations in storage, supplies, processing space, and staffing. Related to the issue of size is the ability to apply adequate pest management procedures to large incoming collections.

Manuscript collections often extend into multiple cubic feet of storage, however appropriate museum storage is limited. Many unprocessed collections share space with costume collections in a room with less than desirable HVAC controls and no fire suppression. The pallet shelving in the same room is not conducive to accessing manuscript collections, so it is largely unused.

As mentioned above, the management of digital material is another pressing concern. Researchers expect (and rightfully so) that material be available online. More than scanning a document, digitization is a complex process that requires considerable financial and technical support. Ideally, the museum should have a full-time position dedicated to overseeing digital initiatives across all departments.

Opportunities

The museum is ready to redefine the purpose of the research library to keep its activities in line with the Collections Management Policies & Procedures. A primary example of this is acquiring artifacts with an eye for historical documentation as well as exhibition value. This suggests that most incoming manuscript collections will be in the “small/single item accession” category.

With a defined Scope of Collections, there is an opportunity to assess material for eventual deaccession. Deaccessioning material that no longer fits our scope would allow more resources for developing collections that are representative of diverse historical experiences in southern Nevada.

Map Collection

Description/Current Scope

The museum houses a collection of historical maps that document the American west and Nevada. Various maps contain representations of railroads, streets in major towns (particularly southern Nevada), parcels & subdivisions, and tourist attractions.

Strengths (including Type Specimens, Rare and/or Unique Aspects)

- 19th century maps of Nevada & the American west, including rare editions documenting the expeditions of John C. Fremont
- Early 20th century water rights in southern Nevada

- 1940s – 1960s street and road maps of southern Nevada
- Sanborn maps
- Mining claims of southern Nevada
- USGS Topographical maps
- Subdivision and parcel maps

Future Collecting Focus

- Street and road maps of 1970s to 1980s southern Nevada
- Modern maps & atlases, including gazetteers
- Street and road maps of Nevada areas beyond Clark, Lincoln, and Nye Counties

Means of Acquisition

- Donation/gift
- Trade/transfer between institutions

Outside of Scope / Exclusions

- USGS topographical maps
- Photocopies or printouts of maps
- Maps in digital formats

Implications of Digital and Digitizing

Maps are a popular format that translate well to an online presence. However, the digitization of maps requires large format scanners. The museum would also need a method to display high resolution versions of maps. It is important to note that many of the significant maps in this collection are available from other institutions.

The museum does not have the resources to store born-digital maps, especially maps based on dynamic data sets.

Challenges

Maps are expensive to store. Approximately 200 maps are stored in acidic cardboard tubes. Although the maps have been wrapped in buffered tissue, this is a temporary solution. Particularly challenging are railroad maps that are as long as fifteen feet or more.

Opportunities

The museum may partner with sister institutions such as UNLV, UNR, or Nevada State Library & Archives, for the digitization of maps that do not exist in other repositories.

Rare Books

Description/Current Scope

The research library houses a small collection of rare books related to Nevada history.

Strengths (including Type Specimens, Rare and/or Unique Aspects)

- Las Vegas area high school yearbooks
- 19th century volumes of the proceedings of the Nevada legislature
- Mineralogy of Nevada
- First editions of notable books such as *Life Among the Piutes* by Sarah Winnemucca, the expeditions of John C. Fremont, and several volumes by Dan DeQuille

Future Collecting Focus

- Las Vegas area yearbooks from 1970s to current

Means of Acquisition

- Donation/gift

Outside of Scope / Exclusions

Apart from yearbooks, the museum does not actively seek rare books, but will consider such books when presented. Nevada related rare books are well-represented in collections at UNLV and UNR Special Collections.

Implications of Digital and Digitizing

Most of the 19th century volumes are available online and there is no need to digitize those volumes. However, yearbooks are a valuable resource for researchers and could benefit from digitization.

Challenges

Rare books are currently stored intermingled with regular reference volumes. In the future, separating these volumes and indicating their status in PastPerfect will be useful in addressing preservation concerns. This is especially true for dealing with dramatic fluctuations in humidity. Ideally, rare books would be stored in their own humidity and temperature-controlled area.

Opportunities

With their illustrations, artistic binding, and historical importance, rare books can be compelling artifacts for exhibition.

Institutional Archives

Description/Current Scope

The institutional archive represents the history of the museum. It is arranged by year and includes reports, accreditation documents, flyers, correspondence, program information, photographs, and other material representative of museum activities.

Strengths (including Type Specimens, Rare and/or Unique Aspects)

- Original accreditation and first re-accreditation records
- Plans and documents related to development of the museum facility located at the Springs Preserve
- Newsletters produced by the Volunteer and Docent Council (VDC)
- Correspondence from W.A. Davis regarding the development of his 1990s exhibit at NSMLV

Future Collecting Focus

- Continue collecting printed items
- Digital artifacts
- Material produced by Friends of NSMLV (traditionally, the museum should be the repository for that group's institutional records)

Means of Acquisition

- Collected/produced by staff

Outside of Scope / Exclusions

- Personnel records
- Daily administrative records
- Material related solely to the Springs Preserve

Implications of Digital and Digitizing

Much of this material is now born-digital. Material that is stored on discs and magnetic media are at risk and need to be transferred to server storage.

Material collected by the Librarian/Curator of Manuscripts is stored on the Digital Projects Drive.

Challenges

Without a digital collections policy, or clear method of collection across departments, this material is impossible for one individual to collect. Additionally, the museum lacks the resources to transfer this material to server storage.

Another challenge is processing and storing the collection in an efficient manner when it exists in multiple formats. While there is a distinct photo storage area for institutional archives, one does not exist for three-dimensional artifacts.

Opportunities

As the museum approaches its 40th anniversary (October 31, 1982 – October 31, 2022), there is an opportunity to create a document (or perhaps an exhibit) detailing the museum's history. This might be a way to communicate the museum's growth as an institution to our stakeholders, which would be beneficial for community outreach, collection development, and fundraising.

Photographs and Primary Source Film Footage

Description/Current Scope

In terms of photographic mediums, this collection has representation that starts from the time of commercially available photography in the mid 1800s, and includes early photography such as daguerreotypes, tintypes, ambrotypes, cyanotypes, platinotypes and albumen prints. There is also a selection of stereographic prints dating from 1880 to the early 1920s. After that time period a majority of the collection is made up of black and white or color prints, with some polaroid examples. There is also a range of 8mm and 16mm film reels, the majority of which require digitization for preservation.

Strengths (including Type Specimens, Rare and/or Unique Aspects)

- Broad representation of photography since mid 1800s
- The construction of Hoover Dam and Boulder City
- Las Vegas aerial views from 1950-60s (predominantly in the J. Florian Mitchell Collection)
- Helen J. Stewart and family
- Unusual small collection of original photographs taken of the last gold mining town created in Nevada, Wahmonie
- Film footage of the Moro dancers from late 1940s-1970s, primarily at the Sahara and El Rancho Hotels and Casinos
- Film footage of the Folies Bergère's first season at the Tropicana Hotel and Casino in 1960

Future Collecting Focus

- Images of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) life and experiences in Nevada
- Images of Las Vegas and southern Nevada towns since 2000
- Images of all outlying towns, especially those that are now ghost towns
- Existing Las Vegas casinos, primarily since 2000
- Mt. Charleston and other landscapes, especially those which have been altered by human activity
- Flora and fauna/natural history of the region
- Southern Nevada railroad
- Southern Nevada agriculture and farming

Means of Acquisition

In order to acquire the target areas, it would be advantageous to network and build relationships with certain community groups, such as the Latino Chamber of Commerce, or special interest groups.

Outside of Scope / Exclusions

If a photograph is in a frame or mat that is signed or labelled in a manner that affects the context of the photo, then the photo will become part of the 3D history collection. All other photographs in frames are photographed, and that photo is attached to the photo record in PastPerfect, and then the photo is removed.

Photographs of places or people outside of the state are excluded, unless they are a significant part of the biography of the person, and therefore contribute to telling their story.

Implications of Digital and Digitizing

All photographs are digitized as part of the cataloging process, both as a low-resolution jpg and a high-resolution tif, and stored on the Digital Collections drive. There is the real possibility that space will run out, and therefore this would be a limitation. A recent audit was conducted to establish the content and condition of the groups of photographic material in the collection. The Museum is using this data to prioritize which accessions are digitized first, based on a combination of rarity, subject matter, and condition.

For moving images, the digitizing process is currently based on having the funds from donations to outsource the digitization. Again, prioritization is based on a combination of rarity, subject matter, and condition.

Challenges

At one time, the museum cataloged reels of moving film as objects. The museum must conduct a full review of these items and then move them to the photography collection for a care and preservation audit. The museum has begun the initial phases of this project, but additional resources are required before completion.

The other challenge are the resources to catalog unprocessed material, although this is a good activity for volunteers who are computer savvy and have an attention to detail.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to apply for grants to digitize the photography collection, particularly the moving film footage as most of that is unique and at risk.

Prehistory & History 3D Collection

Description/Current Scope

The Prehistory & History Collection is primarily comprised of 3-dimensional artifacts created and used by humans, including anthropological and ethnographic material. In addition to prehistorical artifacts, the collection includes historical artifacts dating from the 1800s to the present. The major developments of both state and local history guide the composition of this collection.

With six other state museums in various locations, we emphasize southern Nevada material, while not excluding other pertinent areas. In the past, curators built the History Collection by collecting according to a variety of themes representative of Nevada's history. These themes include mining, ranching, federal projects, railroads, and gaming. These themes remain a relevant guideline for collecting, but the museum's maturation, as well as the broadness of the themes, dictates the creation of a more defined scope.

Many of the strengths listed below require individual consideration. In the coming year, the museum team will identify discreet groupings (i.e. sub-collections) and explore their own strengths, challenges, opportunities, etc. Likely sub-collections include Costumes & Fashion, Casino & Gaming, and Communication. For now, Anthropology is the only sub-collection defined in this document.

Strengths (including Type Specimens , Rare and/or Unique Aspects)

- Showgirl costumes from Folies Bergère, a long running production at the Tropicana Hotel and Casino, and other major productions
- Casino & gaming artifacts – examples include the Wichinsky slot machine collection, furniture, uniforms, and casino giveaways such as matchbooks, ashtrays, swizzle sticks, etc.
- Communication artifacts, primarily telephones and record albums
- Artifacts related to the federal government's presence in Nevada such as Hoover Dam
- An 1876 Frederick Dellenbaugh painting of the Old Ranch, the first known illustration of a non-native settlement in the Las Vegas Valley

Future Collecting Focus

- Artifacts created and/or used by traditionally underrepresented communities
- Artifacts related to the "every day," particularly in the years between 1890 and 1930, and 1980s to present,

- Items that represent activities that no longer take place or are at risk of disappearing, such as various domestic arts and specific consumption behaviors such as renting videos
- Political movements (see also Rapid Response Collecting)
- Artifacts related to new professional sports leagues associated with Nevada
- Artifacts from other areas of the state, particularly northeastern Nevada and rural communities

Means of Acquisition

- Donations
- Occasional purchases
- Transfer or exchange with other institutions
- Like the photo and manuscript collections, authentic and meaningful community outreach may help build areas of representation

Outside of Scope / Exclusions

- Artifacts not directly linked to Nevada and its industries, unless a strong case can be made for its importance to this area
- Visual art, unless from an underrepresented community and/or with a significant representation of Nevada experiences
- Material already heavily represented in the collection

Implications of Digital and Digitizing

The collection requires a policy outlining how artifacts will be photographed for inclusion in online exhibits and collections. This requires establishing digitization priorities based on both access and preservation.

Challenges

The plethora of material related to gaming culture can easily overwhelm a collection and the team responsible for its care. It is essential that curators adhere to a strong scope of collections and accessions policy. Additionally, the collection requires a thorough inventory and audit, including location information of artifacts and identification of duplicates for eventual deaccession. The completion of such an inventory/audit will be a useful tool for developing future collecting goals.

Opportunities

The various cultural institutions in southern Nevada have different collecting strengths and focuses. Once the museum has thoroughly assessed and cataloged its history collections,

exchanges and transfers with other museums may assist the museum to fill significant gaps in the collection.

Establishing procedures for photographing and cataloging historical objects will provide many opportunities for online exhibits through PastPerfect VirtualExhibit as well as increase access to collections via PastPerfect Online. Sharing this information with the public will also increase our visibility, thereby strengthening our relationship with the surrounding community.

Anthropology

Description/Current Scope

Anthropology collections include ethnographic artifacts from modern cultures from Nevada and surrounding regions. This collection also includes archaeological artifacts and samples obtained through permitted excavation on state land as well as personal collections from various federal and state land managing agencies. The museum has accepted some culturally sensitive artifacts to ensure that they are cared for while they undergo the processes of repatriation or return to federal entities.

Strengths (including Type Specimens, Rare and/or Unique Aspects)

- Basketry from Paiute and Shoshone tribes
- Tule duck replicas from known artists
- In the education collection, stone tools from unknown locations
- Examples of organic archaeological materials from National Park distribution
- Metates and manos
- Southwestern pottery including Mata Ortiz pieces
- Incised stone artifacts from surrounding federal lands

Future Collecting Focus

- Only permitted excavation materials will be accessioned into the archaeological collections, with accompanying curation agreements and monetary support
- Legally collected ethnographic material from Nevada and surrounding areas, particularly basketry that reflects regional artisans and tribes
- Contemporary Native American regalia and clothing from local groups

Means of Acquisition

- Federal repository agreements
- Purchased or donated from tribal members
- Purchase or donation from the public, if legally obtained

Outside of Scope / Exclusions

- Artifacts from outside Nevada and the surrounding regions will not be accessioned into collections and every effort will be made to return the materials to state, federal, and tribal owners if applicable
- Artifacts without provenience
- Materials in poor condition
- Material the museum cannot properly take care of in perpetuity

Implications of Digital and Digitizing

All cataloged artifacts and material are photographed for documentation purposes, but no sensitive artifacts will be uploaded to the PastPerfect web catalog.

Challenges

Funds to purchase Native American baskets and clothing are not available. Care must be taken to verify the artifacts so that the museum is not party to trafficking of illegal artifacts or unethical reproductions. The museum should not compete with the Lost City Museum's goals of collection, and communication must remain open during this process.

Opportunities

There is a wonderful opportunity to reach out to local tribes to ask if and how they would like to contribute to the museum's collections. This is especially true of local artisans who are using traditional methods to produce contemporary art.

Natural History

Description/Current Scope

The Natural History collection consists of a variety of biological specimens, artifacts, and earth science materials that reflect the diversity of Nevada. Beyond plants and animals, the collections also include geological and paleontological materials from Nevada, the Mojave Desert, the Great Basin Desert, and the Southwestern region as defined by geography, biota, and cultures. Many of the natural history collections in Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas are held in trust through repository agreements or loans for federal and state agencies.

In the following sections, the Natural History collection is organized using the main categories of Biology and Earth Sciences, with significant sub-collections described.

Biology

Description/Current Scope

The Biological collections consist of flora and fauna representative of Nevada and the surrounding regions. Botanical collections include a Lepidoptera host plant herbarium and 3-dimensional plants such as cacti, seeds, and grasses preserved for exhibit and educational purposes. Zoological collections consist of entomology, taxidermy, mammal furs, bird skins, and articulated and disarticulated bones representative of species found in Nevada.

Strengths (including Type Specimens, Rare and/or Unique Aspects)

- Herbarium of Lepidoptera Host Plants, including some endangered species
- Lepidoptera collection, including some endangered species and aratypes
- 3-Dimensional cacti
- Taxidermized mammals and birds
- Bird skins (NPS long term loan)
- Animal Osteological comparative collection

Future Collecting Focus

- Entomological specimens representative of museum pests and common species found in traps
- Entomological specimens of pollinators such as bees and flies
- Taxidermy specimens of amphibians, reptiles and fish
- Articulated osteological comparative specimens
- Through federal partnerships, herbarium specimens of local biomes

Means of Acquisition

- Field collection of entomological specimens within the museum and outside the museum
- Accepting amphibian and reptile donations and permitted field collecting with the purpose of taxidermy
- Donations and/or purchases of articulated osteological specimens
- Pursue partnerships with local federal agencies to provide room for herbarium specimens

Outside of Scope / Exclusions

- Specimens that have no connection to Nevada or surrounding regions
- Specimens with no or little provenience
- Specimens in poor condition

Implications of Digital and Digitizing

All biological specimens are photographed for cataloging purposes. Lepidoptera and herbarium specimens will be uploaded onto global networks with data and images.

Challenges

There are limited funds for taxidermy or purchases of articulated osteological materials. The size of the overall collection, especially Lepidoptera and other entomological specimens, is another challenge. The lepidoptera collection alone, which is in the process of being cataloged by volunteer experts, contains over 20,000 specimens.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to involve local biologist, botanist, federal agencies, and citizen scientist in the future collecting, documentation, and processing of current and future biological specimens.

The George T. Austin Herbarium (Biology Sub-collection)

Herbarium specimens found within the natural history collections represents samples of Lepidoptera host plants from every county in Nevada. There are also some specimens from California, Utah, and Arizona. These specimens are connected to the Lepidoptera collection at the museum and at the McGuire Center in Gainesville, Florida.

These specimens were collected by George T. Austin (1943-2009) the first curator of natural history at Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas and published as, *Holoartic Lepidoptera Larval Hostplants of Butterflies in Nevada* by GT Austin and PJ Leary 2008, vol. 12, No.1-2 after he left the museum in 2004 to work for the McGuire Center of Lepidoptera and Biodiversity Center in 2004. He left his unmounted specimens behind at NSMLV.

Strengths (including Type Specimens, Rare and/or Unique Aspects)

- Representation of Nevada flora
- Association with collected Lepidoptera specimens
- Some endangered species

Future Collecting Focus

- To collect and document any missing plant specimens or specimens that have little to no location information that are listed in the publication with a focus on specimens from Clark County

Means of Acquisition

In field collection of plant materials during specific times of the year to obtain the best quality specimens with diagnostic physical features.

Outside of Scope / Exclusions

Plant specimens that do not have any location information, no clear identification below Family taxon, and do not have a clear association to George Austin's breadth of work will not be included in this collection.

Implications of Digital and Digitizing

All herbarium specimens that meet the criteria will be digitally photographed to the New York Botanical societies specifications and uploaded to a global network within SEiNet for the Intermountain Regional Herbarium Network.

Challenges

Beyond his original publication, the museum lacks the original field notes from George Austin making it difficult to reconstruct location and specimen related data. Therefore, several of the 3000 plants will not be included in the online or PastPerfect catalog.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to involve local botanist, federal agencies, and citizen scientist in the future collecting, documentation and processing of current and future herbarium specimens.

Earth Science

Collections that are part of the earth science collections include minerals, rocks, and paleontological specimens, and samples. These collections either come from Nevada and surrounding regions or represent special examples of these types of specimens

Strengths (including Type Specimens, Rare and/or Unique Aspects)

- Ichthyosaur (*Shonisaurus popularis*) type specimen and 5 other individuals belonging to the US Forest Service
- Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument Pleistocene mammal collections
- Valley of Fire Cretaceous dinosaur fossil collection
- Bureau of Land Management Pleistocene mammals
- Sponges and coral invertebrate fossils from Clark County

Future Collecting Focus

- Invertebrate fossils from Nevada specifically trilobites
- Minerals specimens with provenience
- Rock specimens with provenience

Means of Acquisition

Field collection of local specimens, seek donations from local collectors, and purchases

Outside of Scope / Exclusions

- Unprovenienced rocks, minerals, or fossils
- Fossils from outside of Nevada and surrounding regions
- Duplicate specimens of rocks, minerals, or invertebrate fossils that do not belong to federal agencies
- Off-gassing minerals or radioactive materials that the museum can not properly house

Implications of Digital and Digitizing

All specimens are photographed for catalog purposes. Vertebrate fossils may be added to a global network in the future.

Challenges

The collection is already quite large, especially the ichthyosaur fossils. Space is a consideration for any large vertebrate or invertebrate fossils. We are still unpacking and cataloging BLM material from the 1990s that needs to be processed before any directed collecting takes place. There is also a need to cull some of the unprovenanced materials from the collections to make room for material with known context.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to involve local invertebrate collectors, geologists, and citizen scientist in future collecting, documentation, and processing of current and future material.

Ichthyosaurs (Earth Science Sub-collection)

Description/Current Scope

Ichthyosaurs collected on US Forest Service Land in the 1950s - 1970s by John C. Camp are housed at the Museum. They were transferred to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Natural History Museum in the 1970s after Camp passed away. In the 1990s they were transferred to the Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas when the UNLV Natural History Museum changed scope. There are a minimum of 6 individual ichthyosaurs as determined through repeating bone elements. Specimen A is the most complete ichthyosaur and is the type specimen for *Shonisaurus popularis*, the official state fossil named by Camp in a 1980 publication posthumously.

This large oversized collection is unique in the paleontological world and significant to the understanding of life in Nevada during the Triassic Period. These specimens date to 215 million years ago and represent a fraction of what was located at the locality in the Shoshone Mountains and within what is now called the Berlin-Ichthyosaur State Park, which is leased from the US Forest Service.

Strengths (including Type Specimens, Rare and/or Unique Aspects)

- Ichthyosaur (*Shonisaurus popularis*) type specimen and 5 other individuals belonging to the US Forest Service
- Potential for 2 more type specimens, yet to be confirmed
- Great opportunity for significant publishable research on this collection

Future Collecting Focus

Though there is ongoing research on the locality from which these specimens originated there is no repository agreement that comes with monetary support for additional specimens to be curated at the Museum. Since we do not have a paleontologist on staff those specimens are being sent to the Utah Natural History Museum for preparation and storage.

Means of Acquisition

At this time there is no intention of additional specimens collection that would be housed at the Museum.

Outside of Scope / Exclusions

Since this a very specific collection any fossils and samples collected outside of the known localities would not be included into this collection

Implications of Digital and Digitizing

Each element and part has been photographed in preparation for cataloging into the Past Perfect database. There is potential to have this included in a global vertebrate paleontological database through iDigBio

Challenges

- Because of the oversized and weight of these collections it is difficult to access upon researcher demand without several people assisting.
- Poor housing is starting to affect the preservation of some of the large plaster casted elements
- There is a serious need to rehouse this collection, but there is no financial support from the museum or Forest Service.
- It would take a significant amount of time, supplies, and people to rehouse this collection to best practices.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to partner with neighboring institutions in learning how to stabilize plaster casts, further preparation of the specimen jackets, and scientific research. We are currently working with Vanderbilt University in establishing a workshop on caring for and creating stable jackets for oversized paleontological material. The Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument is also interested in these methods as well as in the preparation of fossil specimens. Unfortunately, this partnership does not at this time include the Las Vegas Natural History Museum that have paleontologists on staff and a preparation lab.

Appendix 1

Pandemic Suggested Object List

Below is a suggested list of objects being collected globally, which may assist with future collecting projects. The intention is to collect items that could be used in an exhibit.

Objects

Types of objects to be collected include:

- face masks and other PPE equipment created by organisations and volunteers especially where the design taps into the variety and creativity of DIY face masks
- hand sanitizer, masks, gloves, smart thermometers
- correspondence sent by political leaders or other organisations relevant to the pandemic, e.g. the stimulus checks signed by President Trump, in the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson sent a personal letter to all UK households about the coronavirus outbreak
- social distancing posters, both physical and digital
- craft and home-made articles, with an emphasis on creativity throughout the crisis, for example, painted rock that reads “This Too Shall Pass”, as well as children’s paintings of rainbows
- posters and other objects from anti-lockdown supporter demonstrations in various cities
- a chart of a child’s daily schedule or other examples of lockdown home-schooling
- people’s journals

Photographs

Photographic records could include the following:

- people involved in specific pandemic activity, e.g. a person seated at a sewing machine making fabric face masks
- business signs and adoption of social distancing requirements
- places, such as the empty streets of cities during the height of the lockdown, e.g. the Las Vegas Strip or empty New York streets or of building being sanitized by workers wearing hazmat suits
- The public’s support for front line workers, with the fly pass of fighter jets over cities, Christmas lights in gardens and notices in front windows
- people’s political response to the lockdown with claims of infringement of human rights and conflicting with the constitution

Appendix 1 – contd.

Pandemic Suggested Object List – Appendix – contd.

Stories

Collecting stories can be both proactive and after the fact. Examples include the following, but are by no means a finite list:

- social media sharing: share their “positive and negative experiences... these could be things like hygiene notices, images of your working from home set-ups, diaries or empty shopping aisles.
- Collecting stories by phone or Zoom conference call
- Canadian Museum of Human Rights is asking people to [create and share](#) videos responding to the question: “What acts of kindness have lifted your spirits during the Covid-19 pandemic?”
- community partners to collect their experiences too, through the written word, videos, interviews and so on.
- a project that asks people to “create a snapshot of history from your own home” by collecting newspaper and magazine clippings; drawing pictures and writing letters and diaries; and keeping scrapbooks. (This was Tenby Museum and Art Gallery in South West Wales has launched a Museum of Memories).
- collecting project exploring how football, hockey, basketball clubs, etc. have handled the lockdown and how players and fans are reacting and responding to the pandemic.
- Social media stories discussing issues around isolation and mental health