

A Dozen Ideas for Reaching Out to Your Community

1. Organize a workshop or other program and advertise it via a community calendar.

Design your workshop to be of interest to your primary audience. Workshops for the public might cover researching your family history on the web, digitizing family photographs, or learning the history of your house.

2. Sponsor a lecture by a researcher who has used your collection. If the researcher has published a book, consider doing a book signing and sale, and ask the author to donate a portion of the proceeds to your repository.

3. Approach your institution's newsletter editor or community relations department with an article idea for American Archives Month. Hold an open house or tour of the archives. Engage staff throughout your organization by inviting them to participate in a trivia contest on your internal website.

4. Call your local schools and volunteer to speak to students.

Use American Archives Month as an opportunity to build an interest in a career in archives among 6th or 8th or 10th graders. Tell them about the hidden treasures in your repository – and what fun you have as an archivist. (For more, see the special pull-out section in this American Archives Month PR Kit.)

5. Volunteer your organization as a resource for students preparing National History Day projects. SAA endorses this year-long nationwide effort whose objectives include providing students with the opportunity to work with and analyze historical documents and other primary source material. Many state archives participate in

National History Day. See www.nationalhistoryday.com.

6. Organize a walking tour of a neighborhood documented by your repository.

7. Write letters to the editors of your local newspapers about the importance of access to public records, or another topic that will allow you to tie in a message about the importance of archives and the work of archivists.

8. Invite your local media representatives for a tour of your repository. American Archives Month is an opportunity to begin a relationship that can last throughout the year.

9. Invite your governor, federal and state legislators, and local officials to participate in your Archives Month event(s). Arrange for a gubernatorial

or mayoral proclamation in advance, and submit photos of the presentation to newspapers and newsletters.

10. Schedule appointments with your members of Congress during district visits to discuss the importance of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission and the Partnership for the American Historical Record. For more information on the agency and the proposed initiative, see www.archivists.org or www.statearchivists.org.

11. Broadcast your archives message on a local radio or cable television station.

12. Contact your state archives to determine how your repository might participate in an established statewide program. ■

Tried and True!

Archives throughout the country participated in American Archives Month in 2006. Here are some examples of what they did. (For more ideas, see the Council of State Archivists website at www.statearchivists.org.)

The California State Archives coordinated statewide efforts that included “Family History Day” at the state archives; three exhibits at the Charles Schulz Museum and Research Center; “Imposing Order: Contemporary Photography and the Archives” at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and

the grand opening of the Santa Clara County Archives.

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History provided all visitors free genealogy workbooks for use in tracing their family trees.

The National Archives, New York City, offered a lecture entitled “Finding Family: Using Library and Local Government Records,” followed two days later by “Immigrant Research Day” with an expert from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The New Mexico Commission of Public Records, State Records Center and Archives, celebrated “Recovering Women’s History: An Exploration into the Historical Record” with events throughout the state that included exhibits, lectures, a women’s symposium, and historical film screenings.

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference coordinated region-wide activities based on the theme “Archives Bridges from the Past to the Present.” The Columbia Archives in Columbia, Maryland, sponsored an open house featuring hands-on preservation tips, video screenings, archival photos, documents, and fun memorabilia.

The Archives of the History of American Psychology at the University of Akron held a public event featuring a brief history and overview of the collection, a presentation on film preservation and the future conservation work needed to maintain the collection, and a screening of the 1951 film “Our Nation’s Mental Health.”

Open your doors! Information fairs, exhibits, lectures, open houses, tours – any of these ideas can introduce key audiences to your repository’s treasures and help raise awareness about the important work of archives and archivists. ■